

APPROACHING CONFLICTS OVER TIME IN COUNSELING SUPERVISION:
PERSPECTIVES OF WISE MINORITY SUPERVISORS

by

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DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to my grandmothers, my parents, and my husband.

Without their stories, struggles, and strength, I would not be who I am today.

“Putting your story into words
will show the people who have shared your struggle
they are seen and they are heard.”

– Morgan Harper Nichols

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	xi
ABSTRACT.....	xii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Conflicts in Supervision.....	3
Supervisor Factors and Development.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	10
Assumptions.....	12
Delimitations.....	13
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	14
Clinical Supervision.....	14
Conflicts in the Supervisory Relationship.....	17
Definition.....	20
Types of Conflicts in Supervision.....	20
Conflicts of Power.....	21

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	Page
Unmet Expectations and Complimenting.....	22
Differences in Theoretical Orientation or Worldview.....	23
Role Conflicts and Ambiguity.....	24
Countertransference and Supervisor Factors.....	25
Supervisee Factors.....	26
Factors Outside the Supervisory Relationship.....	27
Other Conflicts.....	28
Approaching and Minimizing Conflicts in Supervision.....	28
Impacts on the Working Alliance.....	30
Approaching and Addressing Conflicts.....	32
Supervisee and Supervisor Development and Conflicts.....	34
Wise Supervisor’s Perspectives.....	38
Minority Supervisor Development.....	40
Summary.....	42
 3. METHODOLOGY.....	 43
Paradigmatic Assumptions.....	43
Qualitative Methodology.....	44
Research Design.....	45
Purpose Statement.....	47
Research Question.....	48
Instrumentation and Role of the Researcher.....	48
Sample Description.....	50
Data Collection and Storage Procedures.....	52
Data Analysis.....	53
Trustworthiness.....	56
Limitations.....	58
Summary.....	58
 4. RESULTS.....	 60
Research Participants.....	61
Demographic Characteristics.....	62
Interview and Journal Processes.....	64

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	Page
Individual Participant Textural Structural Descriptions.....	66
Kevin.....	66
Steve.....	67
Connie.....	69
Michelle.....	70
Paula.....	72
Diana.....	74
Beth.....	75
Rhonda.....	77
Themes.....	78
Role of the Supervisor.....	79
Guiding Supervisee Growth.....	80
Giving Feedback.....	80
Ensuring Ethical Practice.....	82
Workplace Setting.....	84
Personal Style and Values.....	85
Supervisor Development.....	86
Experience Over Time.....	86
Externalizing Versus Internalizing Conflicts.....	87
Increased Competence.....	89
Personal Views of Conflict.....	92
Positive and Negative Views.....	92
Comfort and Discomfort.....	93
Conflict Skills.....	95
Supervisory Relationship.....	96
Cultural Competency.....	97
Structure.....	99
Summary.....	101
 5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	 103
Overview of the Research Process.....	103
Themes.....	104
Role of the Supervisor.....	104
Supervisor Development.....	105
Personal Views of Conflict.....	106
Conflict Skills.....	106

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	Page
Discussion of Findings.....	108
Connection to the Literature.....	109
Limitations.....	113
Recommendations.....	116
Conclusion.....	119
REFERENCES.....	121
APPENDICES.....	126

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Participant Demographics.....	63
2. Themes.....	79

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A Demographic Survey.....	127
B Nomination Survey.....	130
C IRB Approval Form.....	132
D Informed Consent.....	134

ABSTRACT

LINDSAY NICOLE AYERS

APPROACHING CONFLICTS OVER TIME IN COUNSELING SUPERVISION:
PERSPECTIVES OF WISE MINORITY SUPERVISORS

Under the direction of MORGAN E. K. RIECHEL, Ph.D.

Conflicts in the counseling supervision relationship have not been given much consideration in the research literature despite the fact that they occur frequently (Quarto, 2002). The purpose of this study was to explore wise, minority supervisor's perceptions about their approaches to conflicts in the supervisory relationship, including if and how their approaches have developed over time. Using the following research question as a guide, "What are the lived experiences of wise, minority supervisors' growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision?" the goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of how wise minority supervisors approach conflicts and how their approach has grown or developed across their career. By examining perceptions related to these factors, supervisors received insight about approaching conflicts in supervision. Due to the lack of research concerning minority supervisor development and supervision conflicts, semi-structured interviews with wise, minority, counseling supervisors were conducted using phenomenological methods of inquiry. Transcripts were analyzed and four core themes were extrapolated from the data and discussed. Recommendations for future counseling supervision research and practice were discussed along with limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Supervision is “widely promoted as an essential aspect of ethical and effective therapy and is seen as the cornerstone of continuing professional development” in the counseling profession (Wheeler & Richards, 2007, p. 54). At the most fundamental level, counseling supervision has two central purposes. According to Bernard and Goodyear (2019), supervision is primarily meant to promote the supervisee’s professional development, including education and support. Second, supervision should ensure client welfare through evaluation and gatekeeping (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). At its core, supervision is a relationship between supervisor and supervisee who work together to grow and develop professionally. Regarding supervision, the ACA *Code of Ethics* (2014) indicates:

Counselor supervisors...aspire to foster meaningful and respectful professional relationships and to maintain appropriate boundaries with supervisees and students in both face-to-face and electronic formats (p. 12).

Considering that the primary purpose of counseling supervision is supervisee development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019), a multitude of empirical studies and resources describe, examine, and evaluate models of supervisee development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Carifio & Hess, 1987; Holloway, 1994; Bordin, 1983; Reising & Daniels, 1983). Much of the supervision literature has focused on supervisee

development through self-awareness, skills development, self-efficacy, and theoretical orientation (Wheeler & Richards, 2007; Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). While there is consensus that supervisee development is judged to be highly important by many researchers, less attention has been given to supervisor development (Granello, Kindsvatter, Granello, Underfer-Babalis, Hartwig Moorhead, 2008). Watkins's (1993) model of supervisor development as well as Stoltenberg, McNeill, and Delworth's (1998) model are frequently cited and will be discussed. Finally, there exists much literature on the importance of developing a strong supervisory relationship and working alliance in counseling supervision (Bordin, 1983). According to Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1982), the supervisory relationship, or working alliance, is often noted as the primary vehicle in which supervisors enhance the development of supervisees.

Quarto (2002) defines the supervisory working alliance as "the degree to which a supervisory dyad collaborates to achieve mutually agreed upon goals and tasks in addition to the strength of their emotional bond" (p. 24). Much of the literature around the supervisory relationship and the working alliance addresses how to build the working alliance and the impacts of having a strong working alliance (Bordin, 1983). Bordin (1983) argues for three aspects which form a collaborative working alliance: mutually agreed upon goals, agreed upon tasks of the supervisor and supervisee, and partnership bonds. The literature focuses on how to build a strong working alliance; however, conflicts in the working alliance have been less focused on in the literature, especially as it relates to approaching conflicts that may hinder the working alliance and the supervisory relationship.

Conflicts in Supervision

Conflicts in the counseling supervision relationship have not been given much consideration in the research literature despite the fact that they occur frequently (Quarto, 2002). Few researchers have addressed conflicts as an important construct as they relate to the working alliance, supervisee development, and supervisor development (Quarto, 2002; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). Moskowitz and Rupert (1983) found that 39% of participants had experienced a major conflict with a supervisor, oftentimes with the conflict leading to termination of the supervisory relationship. Conflicts in supervision have been shown to impede the supervisory working alliance and supervisee development (Tracey & Sherry, 1993; Quarto, 1992). Tracey and Sherry (1993) found that when there is greater harmony and agreement between the supervisor and supervisee, the working alliance will strengthen. The inverse was also found to be true: when the working alliance is weak, more conflicts will occur. Negative impacts on the working alliance have consequently been shown to negatively impact supervision outcomes and supervisee development and training (Worthington & Rohlike, 1979).

The developmental levels of both the supervisee and supervisor have been examined as they relate to conflicts in the supervisory relationship (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993; Reising & Daniels, 1983; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Quarto, 2002; Worthington & Rohlike, 1979). Studies have shown that conflicts occur at every level of supervisee development; although, the types of conflicts and frequency of conflicts tend to change as a supervisee develops over time (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993). Few studies have

examined supervisor factors, such as developmental level or years of supervision experience, as they relate to conflicts in supervision (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001).

Supervisor Factors and Development

According to Carifio and Hess (1987), the ideal supervisor is supportive, noncritical, empathetic, respectful, genuine, flexible, invested, open, and shows concern. Much research has explained the parallel process between supervision and counseling, and therefore, the literature connects what is known about effective counseling to effective supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Bordin, 1983). Rogers (1957) stated that supervision must model the counseling process as supervisors exhibit empathy, understanding, and unconditional positive regard toward their supervisees. There is much debate, however, on which supervisor behaviors, characteristics, and qualities maximize the supervisory relationship and therefore lead to better supervisee outcomes (Worthington & Rohlike, 1979). Little attention has been paid to the developmental path of supervisors and how supervision can be used to influence supervisor development (Granello et al., 2008; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993; Quarto, 2002). Even less is known about supervisor's perceptions of and behaviors surrounding conflicts and ruptures to the working alliance in the supervisory relationship.

Quarto (2002) found that a supervisor's number of years providing supervision to supervisees was a significant factor with regard to supervisor's perceptions of how much conflict occurs in supervision, with less experienced supervisors perceiving a greater amount of conflict than their more experienced counterparts. Supervisor development and addressing conflicts is important to the field of counseling supervision because if the

supervisor is “stagnated” and not developing, he or she is likely to facilitate a stagnated process for the supervisee (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993). Conflicts between supervisors and supervisees, as well as how conflicts are addressed and managed, are a powerful window into the ways supervisors develop and navigate the working alliance in supervision. The few studies that have addressed supervisor development will be investigated further in this document. Another primary hindrance to a strong supervisory relationship, and therefore positive supervision outcomes, that will be further explored is supervision conflicts.

Significance of the Study

There is a lack of research concerning the qualitative exploration of conflicts in the supervisory relationship from the supervisor’s perspective and as it relates to supervisor development and growth in approaching conflicts. Numerous studies have documented this absence of research as well (Quarto, 2002; Granello et al., 2008). Quarto (2002) wrote, “relational conflict in the counseling supervision relationship has not been given much consideration in the research literature despite the fact that it occurs frequently” (p. 24). Loganbill et al. (1982) also argued for the need to explore the more “complex relationship-oriented” aspects of supervision (p. 32).

When research has been conducted on more complex aspects of the supervision relationship, it has often focused on the perceptions of supervisees (Quarto, 2002; Reising & Daniels, 1983; Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993; Heppner & Roehlke, 1984; Moscovitz & Rupert, 1983). There is a need to understand conflicts and how conflicts are approached

from the supervisor's perception, specifically supervisors who are considered to be knowledgeable or wise, who have experience approaching conflicts (Quarto, 2002).

Nelson, Barnes, Evans, and Triggiano (2008) argue that supervisors often neglect to handle or mishandle conflicts because they lack the skills required to address conflict effectively. Only one study found examined supervisory conflicts using qualitative methodologies (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001); however, this study did not examine how conflicts were addressed by supervisors. Very little is known about supervisor development in general, but also how supervisors develop in approaching conflicts (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). There is also a documented need for research on diverse and minority supervisors including how minority supervisors develop in the field (Quarto, 2002; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Page, 2003). Further investigation on the topic provides a deeper understanding of supervisors' experiences of conflicts and how they approach conflicts and will clarify the existing literature on supervisor development and the approach of conflicts. Finally, it has important implications for supervision research, including how supervisors experience conflicts, approach conflicts, supervisor development, and the process of working through conflicts in supervision.

Purpose of the Study

This study utilized a qualitative, phenomenological methodology to explore wise, minority counselor supervisors' perspectives surrounding the phenomenon of conflicts in supervision and particularly how the supervisors approached conflicts and how their methods of approaching conflicts developed over time in their career. By exploring wise

supervisors' perceptions around approaching conflicts in supervision, four themes emerged from the data to highlight minority, wise supervisors' perceptions.

This study hoped to encapsulate, observe, and understand supervisors' perceived experience of conflicts in supervision, the supervisory working alliance, and the development process of the supervisor surrounding how they approach conflicts. The purpose of this study was to thoroughly explore supervisor's perceptions of conflicts in the supervision relationship, and to better understand how conflicts are approached. An emphasis was placed on several supervisor developmental models and the supervisors' perceptions on their development with approaching conflicts. Because phenomenological research allows the researcher to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of an individual's lived experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Moustakas, 1994), it was the appropriate methodology of the study. The purpose of exploring supervisors' experiences with conflicts was to better understand how supervisors perceive approaching conflicts over time in their careers, thus improving our knowledge base of supervisor development and conflicts in supervision. This study intended to understand conflicts in supervision from the perspective of wise, minority supervisors to enhance our understanding as a whole. No study has investigated minority supervisors regarding conflicts in supervision.

In this study, "wise" counseling supervisors were interviewed. Nelson et al. (2008) also examined "wise" counselors' philosophies of conflict in supervision. The authors defined "wise counselors" not by age or years of experience, which is confirmed in the literature to be not directly indicative of highest-level supervisor development, but by recommendation by their professional peers as excellent or wise supervisors (Nelson

et al., 2008). In the study, these “wise counselors” were “seen as superb face-to-face clinical trainers who were relied upon by their communities to provide excellent supervision” (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 173). The researchers assumed that having been nominated by their professional peers as “wise counselors,” these supervisors would have learned from challenging supervisory relationships and developed skills they could articulate. According to Moustakas (1994), essential criteria for the selection of research participants in phenomenological methods are that the participant has experienced the phenomenon and is interested in being interviewed and understanding the nature of the phenomenon. Following Moustakas’ guidelines, the researcher recruited eight participants who have experience and credentialing as clinical counseling supervisors, who are Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), who had an interest in the topic, who identified as members of a racial minority group, and who were willing to participate in a recorded interview. A “wise” supervisor was defined in the study as a clinical supervisor who, regardless of age or experience, is regarded as wise by a professional peer. All eight participants were nominated by a professional peer as being wise, clinical supervisors who are relied on by their peers and community to provide excellent clinical supervision. For the purpose of the study, a wise supervisor was more specifically defined as someone who exemplifies the ethics of the profession, is engaged in the field and working actively with supervisees, and who is often sought out for mentorship and supervision. Additionally, a wise supervisor as defined in this study is someone who has attained a minimum of a graduate level training, education, and supervision in counseling and has the credentials of an Approved Clinical Supervisor (ACS) or equivalent credential.

The principal research question of this study was, “What are the lived experiences of wise, minority supervisors’ growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision?”

Examining the primary questions occurred through more specific questions such as:

- *How would you define conflicts in supervision? Has your definition changed over the course of your career? If so, how?*
- *What is your experience with conflicts in supervision? What did conflicts look like? Has your experience with conflicts changed over the course of your career? If so, how?*
- *What is/are your approach(es) to conflicts in supervision as a supervisor? Has your approach to conflicts changed over the course of your career? If so, how?*

These questions were meant to develop a rich understanding of supervisors’ experiences of conflicts as well as how they approach conflicts during supervision. Knowledge was also gained to understand factors associated with the conflicts that occurred and if and how supervisors developed overtime in approaching conflicts. Gaining an understanding of this phenomenon will provide supervisors and future researchers with helpful information about how supervisors perceive approaching conflicts in the supervision relationship.

Theoretical Framework

A phenomenological design was applied to portray the essence of each participant’s experience as a supervisor. A primary goal of phenomenological design is to understand the meaning behind an individual’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). The study

used a postmodern or post structural paradigmatic approach with the goal of the research being to highlight multiple points of view. Postmodern research views knowledge as multi-faceted and fragmented, and reality is thought to be nearly impossible to represent (Tracy, 2020). This study focused on the perspectives of eight different counseling supervisors regarding approaching conflicts in supervision.

Postmodernists believe that one must dig below surface interpretations to find many layers of meaning. Tracy (2020) describes this type of data collection as being root-like, interconnected and weaving. Rather than observing what is happening to make concrete assumptions and explanations about phenomena, postmodernists realize that nothing can be represented unproblematically or wholly. Instead, postmodernists choose to view one small aspect of a phenomena and realize that it has something to say about a very small sliver of what actually exists (Tracy, 2020). Through a postmodern theoretical view, the current study aimed toward examining multiple ways of being, all of which are considered uncomplete and simply a part of the whole way of being.

Definition of Terms

The essential concept that was examined is supervisor approaches to conflicts. The term “conflicts” was used rather than “conflict,” as it is assumed many conflicts occur throughout the duration of the supervisory relationship (Quarto, 2002). Conflicts were defined as the individual’s phenomenological evaluation of “ruptures” between the supervisory working alliance (Bordin, 1983). There exists some definitional confusion in the present literature surrounding conflicts and ruptures in the supervision relationship; therefore, in the current study, the participants were asked to define conflicts in

supervision for themselves. According to Quarto (2002), the term “supervisory conflicts” refers to “one’s perceived refusal to behave in accordance with how another wants one to behave in regard to the process of supervision” (p. 25). According to the literature, the term “conflicts” refers to ruptures in the supervisory working alliance due to differences of power (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Mueller & Kell, 1972), unmet expectations (Tracey, 2002; Moskowitz & Rupert, 1983; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001), differences in world view or theoretical orientation (Heppner & Roehlke, 1984; Hess, 1987; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001); role conflicts or role ambiguities (Olk & Friedlander, 1992), supervisor factors and countertransference (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993), and factors outside the supervision relationship (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). The purpose was to understand the various perspectives of supervision conflicts and how these conflicts are approached.

For the purpose of this study, supervisor development referred to active years of supervising counseling supervisees for the purpose of practicum, internship, licensure, or for other professional development. Supervisor development, however, has not always been seen as directly relating to supervisor experience or years of experience (Granello et al., 2008). Worthington (2006) believes this may be due to the lack of training many supervisors have in how to effectively supervise; therefore, supervisor development level will also be considered in line with the four-stage supervisor development model proposed by Watkins (1993), as well as professional credentialing in supervision.

Watkins (1993) identified four stages in the clinical supervisor’s development: role shock, role recovery and transition, role consolidation, and role mastery. The

model's first stage, known as role shock, is determined by new supervisors entering the role of supervisor and being overwhelmed by it, thus they retreat into structure. The second stage, role recovery and transition, is determined by supervisors beginning to recover, collect themselves, and recognize their skills as a supervisor. In this stage, supervisors begin to take steps toward developing a supervisor identity. The third stage, role consolidation, begins as supervisors become more consolidated in their identity and reach higher levels of openness, competence and skill in supervision. Lastly, the fourth stage, role mastery, is defined by the supervisor reaching the highest level of functioning, where a sense of "master supervisor" has been achieved in identity and skill (Watkins, 1993, p. 59). Most important to the supervisor's development are the levels of supervisor identity formation and skill development, and therefore, the growth of the supervisor involves fundamental changes across these two variables (Watkins, 1993).

Assumptions

Similar to counseling, supervision has the potential to do harm (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). As an associate licensed counselor and current supervisee under direction and supervision in the southeastern United States, the current researcher has observed and experienced the impact that unaddressed or poorly approached conflicts has on counseling supervisees, supervisors, and the supervision relationship. Supervisors often assume that the supervisory relationship is one-dimensional or unable to create harm in supervisee's lives. Anecdotally, it would appear that supervisors who are unwilling to approach conflicts in supervision or who are more uncomfortable experiencing conflict inadvertently create tension or even hostility in the supervisory

relationship. In general, the current researcher believes that underlying and unacknowledged conflicts in any relationship have the potential to negatively impact both individuals. For the study, bracketing and reflexive journaling were utilized to address the researcher's assumptions and biases.

Delimitations

A primary strength of this study is its contribution to the literature through qualitative narratives of individual supervisor experiences. Very little research has been conducted on the experiences of counseling supervisors as they interact with supervisees and approach difficult conversations such as conflicts. The lived experiences of minority supervisors' approaches to conflicts in supervision have yet to be explored in the existing literature. The phenomenological method of inquiry promoted reflection for the supervisors as well as the researcher and permitted flexibility for interpretation on a construct that has been examined very little.

This study utilized a phenomenological, qualitative methodology to explore wise, minority counselor supervisors' perspectives surrounding the phenomenon of conflicts in supervision and particularly how the supervisors' methods of approaching conflicts developed over time in their careers. By exploring wise supervisors' perceptions around the development of conflicts in supervision, four themes emerged from the data to highlight wise, minority supervisors' perspectives on conflict development. This study offered an individual approach to understanding the supervisor developmental processes in approaching conflicts.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following chapter reviews the literature pertaining to conflicts in clinical supervision as well as how supervisors minimize, address, and approach conflicts based on supervisor development, including for minority supervisors. Models of supervisor development will also be included.

Clinical Supervision

According to Wheeler and Richards (2007), clinical supervision is considered a key aspect of “ethical and effective therapy” and is seen as “the cornerstone of continuing professional development” (p. 54). According to Bernard and Goodyear (2019) supervision has two central purposes including to foster the supervisee’s professional development in a “supportive function” and to ensure client welfare through gatekeeping and monitoring (p. 13). The American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) further describes that a goal of counseling supervisors is to “aspire to foster meaningful and respectful professional relationships” with supervisees (p. 12).

Most of the current literature surrounding clinical supervision is related to supervisee self-awareness, skills, self-efficacy, frequency of supervision, theoretical orientation, and support for clients (Wheeler & Richards, 2007; Heppner & Roehlke, 1984); however, little research has focused on supervisor behaviors, attitudes, and developmental models. For example, Ronnestad and Skovolt (1993) argue that the

developmental level of the supervisee is what should determine “good supervision” (p. 396). In their article, they presented an overview of supervision practices and themes for both beginning level and advanced graduate level supervisees. For the beginning supervisee, high levels of structure and skill focus are key to good supervision; however, performance anxiety is also pervasive thus there is a need for modeling and structure from the supervisor. For more advanced supervisees, Ronnestad and Skovholt (1993) argue that an explicit contract is needed in supervision as there is a greater likelihood of tension in the supervision relationship. It was determined that for all levels of supervisees though, the quality of the supervisory relationship is critical for effective supervision.

Similarly, Heppner and Roehlke (1984) investigated the effect of supervisee experience or developmental level on supervisee’s expectations of critical incidents that occurred within supervision and how supervisor behaviors contributed to supervisory effectiveness. The Supervisory Behaviors Questionnaire (SBQ) was used to assess 18 beginning supervisees, 19 advanced practicum supervisees, and 12 doctoral students. Findings explained that supervisee’s satisfaction was consistent across training levels; however, more experienced supervisees preferred supervisory behaviors that challenged them to grow from interpersonal issues that impacted their counseling. Less advanced supervisees wanted supportive supervisory behaviors that enhanced the supervisory relationship.

Most studies on counselor or supervisee development have used self-report measures and have focused solely on early supervisee development, such as practicum students (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993). Even in studies with a variety of “counselor

experience levels,” the more experienced supervisees are often first year internship students or doctoral students, and the supervisors are often less experienced, advanced graduate students (Ronnestad and Skovolt, 1993). All in all, the literature is missing a key piece of the supervisory relationship experience, particularly the perspectives of more experienced, or wise, supervisors. Supervision has been shown to change over time as supervisees develop (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019), and the supervisory relationship has been determined to be a primary teaching tool in clinical supervision across supervisee developmental level due to the belief that “supervision requires highly individualized personal attention which is designed to attend to the unique personal and professional attributes of a trainee” (Loganbill et al., 1982, p. 4).

Bernard and Goodyear (2019) explain that a positive supervisory relationship is characterized by good rapport, empathy and respect. A strong and trusting relationship is key within a supervisory relationship as is the supervisor’s willingness to recognize the supervisees developmental needs in supervision. The supervision environment is one in which supervisees and supervisors interact like peers while sharing experiences and being confronted with various issues (Quarto, 1992). The supervision relationship is widely studied with a focus on what makes a strong, positive supervisory relationship or working alliance.

Worthington (1984) used the Supervision Questionnaire (SQ) to examine supervisee’s perceptions of the working alliance and supervisory relationship. He surveyed 237 supervisees to assess perceptions of supervisor behavior with a 5-point, Likert rating. Worthington (1984) discovered that supervisors who built a strong

supervisory relationship were rated higher in terms of satisfaction with supervision by their supervisees. However, this questionnaire failed to look at poor supervisory behaviors, such as conflicts, and their impact on the supervisory relationship.

Although a strong working alliance has been shown to decrease ruptures or conflicts in the supervisory relationship, Quarto (1992) writes that supervisees are confronted with various issues throughout their training. According to Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1982), supervisee issues must be addressed again and again at increasingly deeper levels throughout supervision as he or she gains more experience. Therefore, the development of the supervisee and the supervisor are important factors in communicating about issues (Loganbill et al., 1982). Quarto (1992) argues that it is the supervisor's role to assess the supervisee's stage of development with regard to competence, emotional awareness, autonomy, identity, respect for individual differences, purpose and direction, personal motivation, and professional ethics. With much emphasis being placed on the supervisor's role and responsibilities in supervision, little attention has been given to supervisor development and the lived experiences of supervisors.

Conflicts in the Supervisory Relationship

According to Moskowitz and Rupert (1983), clinical supervision is not only a relationship where the supervisor teaches the supervisee, supervision is also a complex interpersonal interaction which has the potential to experience a magnitude of interpersonal experiences much like all other human relationships. Sources of tension in the supervisory relationship have been discussed by several authors. For the most part, these discussions have highlighted the types of conflicts frequently seen in the

supervisory relationship (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Mueller & Kell, 1972; Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993; Tracey, 2002; Korinek & Kimball, 2003) and the importance of managing conflicts in order to strengthen the supervision working alliance (Korinek & Kimball, 2003; Nelson et al. 2008). Bordin (1983) explains that ruptures are very common in the supervisory relationship, and numerous authors have explained the importance of discussing conflicts.

In a study that investigated supervisees' perceptions of conflicts in the supervisory relationship, Moskowitz and Rupert (1983) determined that 39% of supervisees indicated having experienced a major conflict with a supervisor in regard to differences in theoretical orientation, the supervisor's style of supervision, or personality differences. Gray, Ladany, Walker, and Ancis (2001) conducted interviews with supervisees about counterproductive events that occurred in supervision. Most often, supervisees attributed their experiences of counterproductive events to their supervisors dismissing their thoughts and feelings (Gray et al., 2001). Participants also believed that the counterproductive event weakened the supervisory relationship and changed the way they approached their supervisors.

Similarly, another study examined supervisee developmental level, the supervisory working alliance, trainee attachment style, and negative supervisory events to determine the impact negative supervisory events can have on supervisee development (Ramos-Sanchez, Esnil, Riggs, Wright, Goodwin, Touster, Ratanasiripong, & Rodolfa, 2002). Results showed that participants who reported negative events in supervision also indicated that supervision negatively influenced their training experience and supervisory

experience. The supervisee-client relationship was also negatively impacted by negative supervision experiences potentially due to lower supervisee confidence levels and feeling inadequately prepared (Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002).

Negative supervision experiences, such as conflicts, have also been shown to have significant negative impacts on supervisees' growth. Ramos-Sanchez et al. (2002) discovered that negative supervision experiences had several long-term implications on supervisees' careers, such as causing supervisees to question their choice of career and possibly changing their career plans. Conflicts in supervision have been shown to lead to supervisees loss of self-efficacy, mistrust of the counseling profession as a whole, and chronic extreme stress (Nelson et al., 2008). Quarto (2002) described that supervisees reported a lack of perceived support in conflictual supervisory relationships which included feeling guarded, unsafe, powerlessness, stress, and fear. Other symptoms of conflicts in supervision include feelings of hopelessness, disillusionment, and failure, as supervisees may feel they are inadequate as therapists or have inadequate support to succeed as therapists (Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002).

Although these articles provide helpful information about conflicts in supervision, the research is limited from the standpoint of only investigating supervisees' perspectives of conflicts. Few articles have explained theoretically why conflicts exist in supervision other than to explain that the supervisory relationship is much like any other relationship, and therefore conflicts, negative experiences, and ruptures are likely to occur between supervisees and supervisors (Quarto, 2002).

Definition

Supervisory conflicts have been defined in the current literature in multiple ways. Most definitions include a focus on the conflict experience's impact on the supervisee such as, "any experience that was hindering, unhelpful, or harmful in relation to the trainee's growth as a therapist" (Gray et al., 2001, p. 371). Quarto (2002) examined control and conflict in the supervisory relationship as they relate to the working alliance. He defined conflict behaviorally as, "One's perceived refusal to behave in accordance with how another wants one to behave with regard to the process of supervision" (Quarto, 2002, p. 25). Other studies tend to focus on one type of conflict that can be more operationally defined and measured such as role conflicts (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001).

Very few studies define conflicts, and many use a variety of terms to examine conflicts such as negative supervision events, ruptures, tension, or counterproductive events (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993; Veach, 2001). Korinek and Kimball (2003) describe conflicts as "problematic" and "inevitable" in the supervisory relationship. For the purpose of the current study, conflicts were defined by the research participants. However, a discussion of the common factors and types of conflicts most often seen in the supervision literature are included and used as a guide for understanding conflicts in the current study.

Types of Conflicts in Supervision

Seven primary types of supervision conflicts are written about, examined, and explored in the literature. Each of these categories will be further examined and described below.

Conflicts of Power

Clinical supervision is a power disproportionate relationship due to its evaluative and gatekeeping nature (Nelson et al., 2008). Nelson and Friedlander (2001) argue that the hallmark of successful supervision is the resolution of conflict that occurs due to the natural power imbalance of supervision. Power is often present in dyadic relationships in which the supervisor, or the supervisee, has greater status in some way. In their study, Nelson and Friedlander (2001) interviewed supervisees regarding negative experiences in the supervisory relationship. The most pervasive pattern was the occurrence of power struggles between the supervisor and supervisee. Most often, power struggles were observed in which the supervisee had greater status than the supervisor. For example, the supervisee had considerable clinical experience prior to entering the supervisory relationship or the supervisee had expertise in an area that the supervisor did not. Lastly, power conflicts occurred when supervisees were older or had more life experience than their supervisor. Each power struggle caused conflicts in the supervisory relationship as supervisees felt the supervisor reacted as if threatened (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001).

Ronnestad and Skovolt (1993) explain that unresolved professional power struggles can create disputes about what procedures or techniques to use and can “easily ruin the supervisory relationship” (p. 400). For example, if a supervisor is unwilling to listen to a supervisee’s perspective on reporting child abuse because he or she is more experienced and determines to move forward with his or her option, the supervisee may feel unheard and frustrated. Korinek and Kimball (2003) urge supervisors to also pay attention to power differences in the supervisory relationship such as diversity issues.

Nelson et al. (2008) found that conflicts often arose from differences in supervisor and supervisee personality, gender or race-based differences, and misunderstandings coming from these differences. Nelson, Gray, Friedlander, Ladany, and Walker (2001) interviewed supervisees and found that many viewed supervisors' criticisms and negative behaviors as abuses of power.

Unmet Expectations or Complementing

A second type of conflict described in the supervision literature is that of unmet expectations between supervisor and supervisee, also referred to as complementing. When one member of the supervisory relationship does not behave in an expected manner, typically the supervisee does not "complement" the supervisor and behave expectedly, there tends to be more conflict in supervision (Tracey, 2002). The opposite is also true, Tracey (2002) found that if a supervisee responds in a more complementary manner to the supervisor's wishes, there will be less conflict in the supervisory relationship. Oftentimes, the supervisee will become dissatisfied with the style of supervision provided by the supervisor due to unmet expectations for the supervision meeting, and this will lead to more conflict (Moskowitz & Rupert, 1983). Nelson and Friedlander (2001) discovered a similar trend in higher conflict resulting from disagreements about what should occur during supervision. Supervisees also reported conflicts due to viewing the supervisor as remote, too busy, or uncommitted to the supervisory relationship; therefore, their expectations for the supervisory relationship were unmet (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). Moskowitz and Rupert (1983) describe that

personality styles may differ between supervisor and supervisee, leading to disagreements and potential conflict.

Korinek and Kimball (2003) write that incompatible goals can result in conflicts. Because both supervisor and supervisee have expectations for the supervision experience, the degree to which their goals and expectations match will determine the strength of the working alliance. Differences in goals can include a supervisor desiring to foster the supervisee's development and growth while the supervisee is focused on getting the supervision hours needed to obtain credentialing. Differences in goals and unmet expectations are "almost sure" to create conflict (Korinek & Kimball, 2003).

Differences in Theoretical Orientation or World View

Oftentimes supervisors and supervisees differ in terms of their theoretical orientation as clinicians or they have broader world view differences that can create opportunities for conflicts. Korinek and Kimball (2003) found that therapy orientation differences are common sources of conflict in supervision. For example, a supervisee may have previously learned a different way to intervene with clients and may feel challenged, or forced, by a supervisor to practice in a different way. It could also be difficult for supervisees to shift from an individual to a systemic model based on the preferences of their supervisor (Korinek & Kimball, 2003). Moskowitz and Rupert (1983) claim that differences in preferred model of therapy result in conflicts that are more difficult to resolve than conflicts created by supervision style or unmet expectations.

In their study to examine differences in supervision across levels of counselors-in-training, Hepner and Rohlke (1984) surveyed beginning practicum students, advanced practicum students, and doctoral interns with regard to the interpersonal influence processes in the supervisory relationship, supervisees' perceptions of supervisor behaviors contributing to effective supervision, and supervisees' perceptions of the most important critical incidents that occur within supervision. Results showed that beginning and advanced practicum students reported critical incidents in supervision as related to self-awareness issues whereas more advanced supervisees in the doctoral internship reported critical incidents related to personal issues, or world view issues, that impacted therapy (Hepner & Rohlke, 1984).

Role Conflicts and Ambiguity

Role conflicts are defined by supervisees having to function in more than one role with the supervisor, such as the supervisor also taking part as a clinical director, the supervisee dating someone who the supervisor had counseled, or a supervisor attempting to befriend the supervisee (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). Role conflicts have been shown to increase supervisee anxiety as well as dissatisfaction with work and supervision (Olk & Friedlander, 1992). Korinek and Kimball (2003) describe role conflicts as a "lack of clarity regarding the expectations for one's role, the methods of fulfilling them, and the consequences for effective or ineffective performance" (p. 297-298). They also explain that it is up to the supervisor to discuss appropriate boundaries and roles as well as to develop clear communication around roles for the supervisee (Korinek & Kimball, 2003).

Olk and Friedlander (1992) also write that role ambiguity is shown to diminish with increased supervision experience on the part of the supervisor.

Countertransference and Supervisor Factors

The supervision process itself is led first and foremost by the supervisor. The structure of the supervision hour and the strength of the working alliance rests on the competency and willingness of the supervisor to set a positive example for the supervisee. Examples of conflict surrounding countertransference and supervisor factors include the supervisor going through personal problems, which become a problem in the supervision relationship due to inappropriate disclosure (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001), supervisor behaviors such as threatening, inflexibility, withholding, or unfair evaluation of the supervisee (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001), supervisees feeling triggered by a supervisor (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993), and a lack of confidence in the supervisor, supervisor defensiveness in response to feedback, and even burnout (Nelson et al., 2008). Korinek and Kimball (2003) also describe a potential source of conflict between a supervisor and a supervisee as an unconscious attempt to pattern the supervisory relationship after past relationships. The term “isomorphic process” is often used in supervision, as in clinical work, to describe how the interactions between supervisor and supervisee may resemble other relationships. Oftentimes, conflicts can occur if supervisors are unaware of isomorphic processes occurring in the supervisory relationship (Korinek & Kimball, 2003).

Nelson et al. (2008) argue that supervisors often neglect to handle or mishandle conflicts because they lack the skills required to address conflict effectively. One factor

the authors found that lead to conflict in the supervisory relationship was “supervisor gatekeeping anxiety” where the supervisor feels discomfort related to evaluating or gatekeeping for the profession, and therefore fails to address problems early on in supervision. Because the managing of conflict rests on the supervisor in the supervisory relationship as the member with more authority and, typically, more experience, it is important to further examine and study supervisor behaviors in approaching conflicts well and minimizing supervisor behaviors and factors that lead to increased conflicts in the supervisory relationship (Nelson et al., 2008).

Supervisee Factors

Supervisee factors most commonly explored in the literature surrounding conflicts in supervision are those related to performance anxiety of new counselors in training who are less developed and less confident in their skills as counselors (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993; Korinek & Kimball, 2003). Nelson et al. (2008) refers to this factor as evaluation anxiety, which is shown to produce supervisee resistance and is often viewed by supervisors as defensiveness. When a beginning supervisee makes a mistake or is unsure how to proceed with a client, it is well documented that he or she will feel anxiety bringing this mistake to the attention of the supervisor (Nelson et al., 2008). Supervisees often feel reluctant to address more difficult cases, in particular those surrounding domestic violence, substance abuse, or sexual dysfunctions (Korinek & Kimball, 2003). Supervisees may also have difficulty disclosing unethical or unprofessional behavior and may have inadequate skills to handle difficult cases (Nelson et al., 2008). Korinek and Kimball (2003) suggest it is up to the supervisor to be aware of the impact of anxiety on

beginning counselors and create a supportive, relational environment for vulnerability and processing anxiety related to beginning as a counselor.

Factors Outside the Supervisory Relationship

Oftentimes conflicts can occur within the supervisory relationship that have very little to do with the supervisory relationship itself. The primary example of this type of conflict described in the literature are problems at the work site of the supervisor and supervisee, often referred to as a tense institutional culture at the work site (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993; Nelson et al., 2008). Ronnestad and Skovolt (1993) argue that the institutional culture where the supervisor and supervisee practice may have a strong impact on supervision. If the institutional culture is well defined and provides direction and guidance, tension and conflicts are likely to diminish; however, if the institution has a vague culture or is prone to many internal conflicts itself, the structure is not available to guide the supervisee or the supervisor.

Conflicts have also been explored in the case that either the supervisee or supervisor does not identify with the institutional culture or workplace guidelines (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993). This can be particularly difficult for supervisees working with supervisors who represent antagonistic views to that of the workplace culture (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993). Nelson et al. (2001) also note that a lack of institutional support may impact the supervisory relationship. Unsupportive or conflict-ridden institutions may place pressure on supervisors to produce beyond their capacity (Nelson et al., 2001); therefore, the supervisory relationship may experience the pressures of the larger institutional conflict.

Other Conflicts

A final, but important, factor that has been described in the literature surrounding types of conflicts in the supervisory relationship are tensions brought into, or transferred into, the supervisory relationship from tension between the client and therapist (Nelson et al., 2008). Similar to isomorphic processing mentioned previously, conflicts can occur in the supervisory relationship between supervisor and supervisee as a result from conflicts that occur in clinical work between client and counselor.

Approaching & Minimizing Conflicts in Supervision

Despite the amount of attention on conflicts in the clinical supervision literature, there are surprisingly little data regarding how conflicts have been successfully, or unsuccessfully, managed, approached, and addressed by clinical supervisors in the field. Little is known about what happens to the supervisory relationship or supervisor when conflict resolution is difficult or impossible to achieve (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). The data that exists suggest that unresolved conflicts have a negative impact on the supervisee's overall learning experience (Moskowitz & Rupert, 1983). Opposingly, the resolution of conflict has been said to be the hallmark of successful supervision between supervisor and supervisee (Mueller & Kell, 1972).

Moskowitz and Rupert (1983) report that personality-based conflicts were more resistant to change whereas supervisory-style conflicts were least resistant to change. However, Korinek and Kimball (2003) report that conflicts manifest mostly around disagreements or differences regarding the supervisee clinical work, such as case conceptualization, therapeutic intervention, and case management issues such as

requirements for record keeping. It is difficult to know conclusively which experiences lead to larger conflicts in supervision or which types of conflicts are experienced most often. Another factor unanswered by the current literature is which types of conflicts are easier or more difficult to address.

Nelson et al. (2008) narrowed the supervision factors contributing to frequent conflicts into four categories: “agency context and challenges, relational factors, supervisor factors, and supervisee factors” (p. 178). Notably similar to the types of conflicts already discussed, the authors further mentioned conflicts surrounding agency, or institutional, factors such as the high demands placed on supervisees for service delivery and paperwork, lack of clear expectations for supervisors about what they were to monitor and evaluate in the supervisee, and agency inflexibility regarding supervisee needs (Nelson et al., 2008).

In a study conducted by Nelson et al. (2008), supervisors were interviewed regarding their experiences of conflicts in supervision and their successful strategies for addressing conflicts. Dependable strategies listed by the supervisors were contextualizing conflicts in light of the supervisees’ developmental needs, seeking consultation, self-coaching, processing conflicts with supervisees, accentuating supervisee strengths, and withdrawing from supervisee dynamics (Nelson et al., 2008). In the same study, the researchers argued that many difficulties that occur in supervision can be mitigated through a strong supervisory working alliance. Quarto (2002) also argued that the degree to which a supervisory dyad collaborates to achieve mutually agreed upon goals and tasks, in addition to the strength of their emotional bond, will reduce conflicts of power in

the supervisory relationship. Thus, building a strong working alliance minimized conflicts. Wheeler and Richards (2007) use the term “working alliance” to define supervision as a whole stating that supervision is simply “a working alliance between the supervisor and [supervisee]” (p. 54). Many studies put the responsibility of strengthening the working alliance and thus minimizing conflicts on the role of the supervisor (Korinek & Kimball, 2003; Nelson et al., 2008; Quarto, 2002). Korinek and Kimball (2003) wrote that supervisors should make an effort to align with their supervisees to strengthen the working alliance, considering the supervisory relationship has been often noted as the primary vehicle in which supervisors enhance the development of supervisees.

Impacts on the Working Alliance

Considering the importance of the working alliance on supervisee development and positive supervision outcomes, threats of conflicts which could negatively impact the working alliance in the supervisory relationship should attempt to be minimized or addressed (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993). Ronnestad and Skovolt (1993) argue that the supervisory relationship impacts supervisee learning on every developmental level, from novice trainees to more advanced level trainees. Quarto (2002) found that supervisors and supervisees perceived conflicts in supervision to impede the supervisory working alliance. Inversely, the working alliance can be a by-product of how conflicts are navigated throughout the supervision relationship (Quarto, 2002). Results from the supervisee’s participant surveys indicated that conflict is negatively correlated with rapport building, understanding client issues, and supervisees identifying with their supervisor (Quarto, 2002).

Whereas most of the literature in supervision is conducted through supervisee or supervisor report, Tracey and Sherry (1993) examined supervisor and supervisee behavioral interaction in the supervisory relationship. In their exploration of supervisor and supervisee complementarity, defined as “the extent to which each behavior by one participant elicits behavior that fits from the other participant,” the researchers discovered that when there is greater harmony and agreement between supervisor and supervisee, the working alliance will strength (Tracey & Sherry, 1993, p. 304). Conversely, when the supervisory working alliance functions on a “process level” the authors termed “implicit disagreement,” the working alliance is likely to weaken (Tracey & Sherry, 1993).

Many authors place the responsibility of strengthening the working alliance on the supervisor. Nelson et al. (2008) claims that if the supervisor handles conflicts well, the supervisee has an opportunity to learn “critical lessons” about managing conflict situations with clients in an educational rather than a harmful way (p. 172). Helpful supervisors, therefore, normalize supervisees’ anxieties and support their acceptance of uncertainty. Supervisors are also challenged to encourage supervisees to take risks. Korinek and Kimball (2003) similarly claim that supervisors should assess their supervisees’ unique learning style to determine how to best meet their needs and minimize conflicts. Supervisors should maintain a positive and supportive attitude toward supervisees, identify and encourage supervisees’ strengths, provide honest and respectful feedback, be careful not to blend support with criticism, and have an attitude of humility. The authors claim that supervisors should acknowledge to the supervisee their belief that the supervisee has the potential to be a good therapist (Korinek & Kimball, 2003).

The literature also illustrates the importance of the supervision contract in minimizing and approaching conflicts in supervision. Korinek and Kimball (2003) argue that the supervision contract be the supervisor's main tool in reducing conflicts upfront. The supervision contract should outline expectations and logistics, clarify the supervision relationship, list goals, describe the supervision methods used, describe how clinical issues will be reviewed, and specify evaluation procedures (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). The supervision contract should also include how conflicts should be addressed, potentially listing a third party who can help in conflict resolution (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Lastly, details should be included regarding the termination of the supervision relationship should there be significant conflicts which are unable to be resolved. The supervision contract is meant to balance hierarchy and power, according to Korinek and Kimball (2003), by developing a contract that argues for shared responsibility between the supervisor and supervisee for learning and evaluation. However, the authors argue that the responsibility of knowing when to confront conflicts lies with the supervisor. Nelson et al. (2008) also stresses the importance of communicating supervision expectations and goals clearly and early on, which was shown to lead to less severe conflicts and a better supervisory working alliance.

Approaching and Addressing Conflicts

Few articles explore and describe ways for supervisors to approach and address conflicts rather than simply minimize conflicts once they occur. Korinek and Kimball (2003) explain that this process involves metacommunication or communicating with one another about the process in the supervisory relationship. They encourage supervisors to

approach conflicts by addressing situations that could lead to conflict head on in a straightforward, but respectful manner. Mueller and Kell (1972) also share that supervisors and supervisees should be aware of and openly discuss sources of discomfort and disagreements in the supervision relationship. Chen and Bernstein (2000) argue that conflict resolutions should be collaborative between the supervisor and supervisee, not competitive. And lastly, Nelson et al. (2008) suggest reflective methods for working through conflicts such as attending to contextual factors that influence conflicts in the supervisory relationship and being attune to the supervisee's developmental needs. They recommend that supervisors should think a great deal about the challenges and conflicts they experience in supervision. Another method of addressing conflicts is through self-coaching where the supervisor recognizes and accepts his or her own limitations and approaches conflicts patiently and flexibly. Supervisors are encouraged to empathize with supervisees and work from a developmental model to draw out supervisee strengths (Nelson et al., 2008). Authors also report the importance of seeking out consultation when approaching conflicts in supervision (Nelson et al., 2008, Mueller & Kell, 1972).

Lastly, Watkins, Reyna, Ramos, and Hook (2015) explored supervisor apology as a reparative intervention for a ruptured supervisory alliance. In their article, the authors list five supervisor components to repairing a ruptured supervision alliance. First, the supervisor must be open to examining his or her supervisory work and engage in ongoing self-reflection. Second, the supervisor is sensitive to signs of conflicts in supervision, such as supervisee withdrawal or diminished responsiveness. Third, the supervisor identifies the presence of a rupture and internally processes how to proceed with

repairing the rupture. Fourth, the supervisor brings the rupture up in supervision for processing with the supervisee. Lastly, the supervisor and supervisee work to achieve a resolution that is satisfactory and restores the supervision alliance (Watkins et al., 2015). Apart from the five steps to repairing a rupture in supervision, Watkins et al. (2015) report that apology is a powerful reparative intervention that supervisors can use to address conflicts with supervisees.

Supervisee and Supervisor Development and Conflicts

Although there is a large emphasis placed on communication and matching the developmental level of the supervisee when addressing conflicts in supervision, very little research has been conducted to determine how supervisors approach conflicts across their career lifespan and development. There is a need for clarity on how supervisors develop in general, but also as supervisor development relates to conflicts in supervision (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993; Quarto, 2002). Increased knowledge on the topic could aid novice supervisors and supervisors in training in approaching conflicts at the beginning of their career without having to learn over time by experience. According to the literature, conflicts have been shown to occur at every level of supervisor development, and studies have reported conflicting results regarding which developmental stage is met with higher levels of supervisee conflict, with some reports stating that conflict is higher for less experienced supervisors over more advanced supervisors and others stating the opposite (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993). Ronnestad and Skovolt (1993) also argue that a stagnated supervisor, one who is not growing and developing, is likely to facilitate a stagnated process for the supervisee, likely leading to negative supervision outcomes.

In one study, Worthington and Rohlike (1979) examined the relationship between supervisor behaviors and supervisor effectiveness. A list of 42 supervisor behaviors were compiled from informal interviews of supervisors. After the fact, supervisees rated the 42 supervisor behaviors as either descriptive or non-descriptive of their supervisor's behavior on a 5-point Likert scale. Supervisors also rated the 42 supervisor behaviors as they perceived the behaviors' importance to good supervision. Results displayed that the supervisors considered giving accurate feedback to be the cornerstone of good supervision, while confrontation came second in importance. Supervisees' ratings of satisfaction with supervision were best predicted by having a good relationship with the supervisor and giving supervisees direct help with their counseling skills (Worthington & Rohlike, 1979). Thus, the behaviors supervisors believed to be important to supervision were not always the same as those behaviors that significantly correlated with supervisees' ratings of satisfaction with supervision.

Ronnestad and Skovolt (1993) found that conflicts and supervision dissatisfaction peaked in more advanced supervisees. They argue that relational conflict in supervision occurs more frequently with advanced supervisees considering these individuals have more experience with the counseling process yet still rely on their supervisors in various situations. This could also occur because beginning supervisees are more dependent on the supervisor but also less ready for supervision. Reising and Daniels (1983) also confirmed this statement in their finding that advanced supervisees were readier for confrontation than novice supervisees.

Fewer studies examine supervisor development and conflicts. Nelson and Friedlander (2001) describe novice supervisors may become competitive with supervisees as a way to compensate for their uncertainty about their own competency as a supervisor. Similarly, Quarto (2002) brings up a facet of the supervisory relationship which is that more novice supervisors tend to exhibit a more demanding interpersonal style, which can lead to conflicts of power. In his study, Quarto (2002) found that more novice supervisors tended to perceive a higher amount of conflict in the supervisory relationship in comparison to more experienced supervisors. His results confirmed that, similarly, conflicts occur when supervisors are not aware of the developmental stage of the supervisee and fail to match their control of the supervision with the supervisees developmental needs (Quarto, 2002). Beginning supervisors often report more frequent difficulties with supervisee resistance, more frequent feelings of inadequacy, and more frequent difficulties in determining what interventions to suggest to supervisees (Granello, Kindsvatter, Granello, Underfer-Babalis, and Hartwig Moorhead, 2008).

Prior to understanding how supervisor development and experience level influences conflicts and approaching conflicts in supervision, a discussion on supervisor development as a whole is necessary.

Models of Supervisor Development

Developmental supervision models have been a primary focus of supervision research over the last few decades (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Consequently, supervisors have been encouraged to attune to the developmental needs of their supervisees as they develop from beginning counselors in training to fully licensed

professionals (Loganbill et al., 1982). Granello et al. (2008) claim that while supervisee development is well examined in the literature, little attention has been paid to developing strategies to enhance the expertise, and wisdom, of clinical supervisors. They quote that Watkins' (1993) model of supervisor development remains the most frequently cited in the literature.

In his model, Watkins (1993) identified four stages in the clinical supervisor's development: role shock, role recovery and transition, role consolidation, and role mastery. The model's first stage, known as role shock, is determined by new supervisors entering the role of supervisor and being overwhelmed by it, thus they retreat into structure. The second stage, role recovery and transition, is determined by supervisors beginning to recover, collect themselves, and recognize their skills and abilities as a supervisor. In this stage, supervisors begin to take steps toward developing a supervisor identity. The third stage, role consolidation, begins as supervisors become more consolidated in their identity and reach higher levels of openness, competence and skill in supervision. Lastly, the fourth stage, role mastery, is defined by the supervisor reaching the highest level of functioning, where a sense of "master supervisor" has been achieved in identity and skill (Watkins, 1993, p. 59). Most important to the supervisor's development are the levels of supervisor identity formation and skill development, and therefore, the growth of the supervisor involves fundamental changes across these two variables (Watkins, 1993).

Stoltenberg, McNeill, and Delworth (1998) proposed a model of supervisor development in which there are three structures within which development can occur:

self-other awareness, motivation, and autonomy. In their Integrated Developmental Model (IDM) for supervisors, they propose three developmental stages. Level 1 includes supervisors who are anxious in affect, dualistic in thinking and rigid in their behaviors. Beginning level, or novice, supervisors rely on others for support, such as a supervisor or consultant. Supervisors in Level 2 are oftentimes in a stage of confusion and conflict. They have difficulty finding a balance of support and confrontation with supervisees (Stoltenberg et al., 1998; Granello et al., 2008). Lastly, in Level 3, supervisors are more integrated in their supervisory role. They have a strong motivation to be supervisors and are more able to function with autonomy.

A large question in the literature on supervisor development is whether years of experience as a supervisor equals higher levels of supervisor development and wisdom. Two studies (Vidlak, 2002; Stevens, Goodyear, & Robertson, 1997) found that experience did not necessarily lead to higher levels of development in supervisors. Stevens et al. (1997) explained that growth in supervisory development was related to training in supervision and not previous experience. Thus, most supervisors “simply might not improve with experience” (Worthington, 1987, p. 206). Worthington (2006) later confirmed that supervisors do not “clearly improve with age” and are “neglected or given minimal attention by most professional environments yet are expected to change with age and to age with quality” (p. 158).

Wise Supervisor’s Perspectives

The ideal supervisor is supportive, noncritical, empathetic, respectful, genuine, flexible, invested, open, and shows concern (Carifio & Hess, 1987). The current study

seeks to explore how wise supervisors perceive their approach to conflicts and if and how their approaches have developed over time. Nelson et al. (2008) examined “wise counselors” philosophies of conflict in supervision as well as their “dependable strategies” for addressing conflict effectively (p. 173) The authors defined “wise counselors” not by age or years of experience, which is confirmed in the literature to be not directly indicative of highest-level supervisor development, but by recommendation by their professional peers as excellent or wise supervisors (Nelson et al., 2008). These “wise counselors” were “seen as superb face-to-face clinical trainers who were relied upon by their communities to provide excellent supervision” (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 173). The researchers assumed that having been nominated by their professional peers as “wise counselors,” these supervisors would have learned from challenging supervisory relationships and developed skills they could articulate. 12 supervisors were interviewed using questions such as “How would you define conflict in supervision?” “Can you describe your general philosophy of conflict and conflict management in supervision?” and “What are your most dependable strategies for working with conflict in supervision?”

All of the supervisors interviewed were Caucasian and ranged in experience from 7 to 30 years (Nelson et al., 2008). Several core themes were found from the interviews including the primary theme “openness to conflict.” The participants viewed conflict as “necessary and beneficial” and saw supervision as a context for supervisees “to learn to accept feedback” and deal with interpersonal issues (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 177) All the participants recognized the power imbalances in the supervision relationship and the relational anxiety supervisee’s often have about supervision. Many of the participants

modeled vulnerability and transparency to address the power difference and grant permission to be genuine. A common theme in the supervisors was a sense of humility. They expressed awareness of their own shortcomings. Most of the study participants also grounded their approach to supervision and conflict in supervision in a developmental approach. One limitation from the study was the population of only Caucasian supervisors, most of whom were female. Also, the study did not account for how the wise supervisor's approach to conflicts developed or grew over the course of their career, a question the current study sought to understand.

Minority Supervisor Development

The field of professional counseling is becoming particularly diverse, and little research focuses on supervisor development in minority populations. According to the ACA (1990), supervisors must keep in mind individual differences in the supervision relationship such as gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and age, and supervisors must understand “the importance of these characteristics in supervisory relationships” (p. 30). The most recent ACA *Code of Ethics* (2014) indicates, “Counseling supervisors are aware of and address the role of multiculturalism/diversity in the supervisory relationship” (p. 13). The ACA *Code of Ethics* also states that counselors are to communicate and practice with cultural appropriateness and must consider cultural implications in encounters with clients and supervisees. In relation to the ACA *Code of Ethics* standards, the literature explores many facets of cultural competence in counseling supervision including types of multicultural competence, methods and suggestions for

developing cultural competence in supervisees, and ethical decision making when facing a potential conflict of cultural competency in the supervisory relationship.

One thing to note regarding multicultural competency, and a very important aspect of counseling supervision, is the concept of power. The supervision relationship is innately hierarchal and therefore power differential exists between the supervisor and supervisee (Page, 2003). Power dynamics can be heightened when differences in culture are present. It is up the supervisor, as the one holding “the highest power in the supervisory relationship” to acknowledge power differences, promote an open supervisory relationship, and model multicultural competency and advancement (Cook, 1994, p. 132).

Race and ethnicity differences have the potential to create power differentials in the supervisory relationship impacting the supervisory relationship, expectations for supervision, client care and treatment planning, and evaluation (Cook, 1994). Research has shown that when a supervisor and supervisee are of different races, many of the conflicts in larger society related to race may impact the relationship and learning process (Page, 2003). Oftentimes, if the supervisor is unwilling to discuss race in supervision, there exist negative impacts for supervisees not only in the supervision relationship, but also in working with clients of diverse backgrounds (Cook, 1994). With appropriate consideration and discussion, however, race differences have the potential to create a space for cultural identity growth in both the supervisor and supervisee (Page, 2003).

Many of the race related dynamics in supervision can be paralleled to the long history of race-based oppression in Western society. Power dynamics in the supervisory

relationship nearly always mirror larger social power dynamics. When a supervisor is of a majority race and the supervisee of a minority, there are multiple power differentials at play, and the two will often relate to one another based on their racial identity and understanding from a larger social context (Cook, 1994). If the supervision pair are willing to discuss racial power differentials, both have the potential to advance in their racial identity development (Cook, 1994). According to Johnson (2013), culturally competent supervisors convey acceptance of cultural differences in supervision while helping supervisees examine the impacts of their cultural background on clients. For the purpose of the current study, minority supervisors were interviewed to gain more diverse perspectives on conflicts in supervision and supervisor development. No studies on conflicts in supervision have examined minority supervisor perspectives.

Summary

The literature review examined the base of knowledge surrounding conflicts in supervision, approaching conflicts in supervision, and supervisor development, including minority supervisor development. Gaps in the literature were also discussed, and the current study offered a pathway to address those gaps in the literature. The present study gathered qualitative data concerning the perspectives of wise, minority supervisors on approaching conflicts in supervision. The study had a developmental focus with the intent to determine if and how the supervisors' approaches to conflicts changed over time in their careers as supervisors. Minority supervisors were interviewed to address a gap in the current literature.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology of the study by addressing the paradigmatic assumptions, qualitative and phenomenological methodology, study procedures, research questions, sample description, research design, data collection procedures, data analysis methods, trustworthiness, and limitations. It concludes with a chapter summary.

Paradigmatic Assumptions

This study used a postmodern or post structural paradigmatic approach with the goal of the research being to highlight multiple points of view. Postmodern research views knowledge as multi-faceted and fragmented, and reality is thought to be nearly impossible to represent (Tracy, 2020). Postmodernists believe that one must dig below surface interpretations to find many layers of meaning. Tracy (2020) describes this type of data collection as being root-like, interconnected and weaving. Rather than observing what is happening to make concrete assumptions and explanations about phenomena, postmodernists realize that nothing can be represented unproblematically or wholly. Instead, postmodernists choose to view one small aspect of a phenomena and realize that it has something to say about a very small sliver of what actually exists (Tracy, 2020). Through a postmodern theoretical view, the current study aimed toward examining

multiple ways of being, all of which are considered incomplete and simply a part of the whole way of being.

Throughout the study, transcendental philosophy was used to define how knowledge is generated. According to transcendental philosophy, all objects of knowledge must conform to experience (Moustakas, 1994). Knowledge is subjective and resides in the subjective sources of the self, including one's perception, imagination, and apperception (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenology, perception is the primary source of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). However, no one perception, or even multiple perceptions, exhaust the possibilities of knowing and experiencing; therefore, the perceptions that emerge from different angles of looking are calling horizons. According to horizontalization, every perception matters and adds something important to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) argues that perception opens a window onto things and brings fresh perspectives. Those perspectives are then followed by the act of judgement. When a subject makes a judgement on a phenomenon, the necessary first phase is perception (Moustakas, 1994). Lastly, transcendental philosophy claims that no scientific discovery is ever complete. New and fresh meanings are forever in the world and the process is ongoing to discover meaning and knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). The process of discovery is infinite and endless.

Qualitative Methodology

Stemming from the post structural paradigmatic approach, a qualitative methodology was used. Qualitative research is a broad approach to studying various social phenomena. It is about immersing oneself in a scene and trying to make sense of it

(Tracy, 2020). The qualitative researcher is intrigued by the complexity and multi-faceted meanings that participants attribute to different interactions in life. Thus, qualitative research takes place in natural settings and focuses on context. Qualitative research is also pragmatic, interpretive, and based on the lived experiences of individuals (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the qualitative research process, data collection consists of using open ended questions, often in an interview or similar format, to permit the participants to generate their own responses. Qualitative research provides insight into interpersonal relationships, groups, organizations, cultures, and other contexts.

The qualitative researcher views phenomena holistically and self reflects in the inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Critical self-examination is an important factor for qualitative research. Because each person views the nature of reality as being layered and multi-faceted, the researcher searches for stories that open up multiple themes and highlights multiple points of view (Tracy, 2020). The goal of the qualitative researcher is to highlight chaos, show multiple points of view, and examine the relativism of meaning (Tracy, 2020).

Research Design

A phenomenological design was applied to portray the essence of each participant's experience. Phenomenology does not test hypotheses or form theories; however, it focuses on the appearance of things (Wertz, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). A primary goal of phenomenological design is to understand the meaning behind an individual's experience by examining an entity from many sides, angles, and perspectives until a unified vision of the essences of the phenomenon is achieved (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological approaches seek to explore and describe an experience, rather than explain or analyze (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This method is neither inductive nor deductive, rather it describes characteristics, clarifies meaning, and gives structure to the phenomena (Wertz, 2005).

Phenomenological study describes collective lived experiences of several participants (Creswell & Poth, 2016). It is rooted in questions that give direction and focus on meaning, themes, and interest (Moustakas, 1994). This methodology captures dimensions that all of the participants have in common and is able to explore phenomena that is often complex in structure (Wertz, 2005). Themes are then developed from the experiences of the participants and connected to create a comprehensive picture (Vagle, 2018). The intent of the research was to summarize individual experiences into a thick description of a universal essence of the experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher is also intimately connected with and interested in the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

As previously mentioned, in phenomenology, perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, and perception cannot be doubted (Moustakas, 1994). The whole process of perceiving an experience takes on a character of wonder as fresh perspectives are brought forward and knowledge is born (Moustakas, 1994). Perception is viewed as the path to access truth, and knowledge is arrived at through rich descriptions that “make possible an understanding of the meanings and essences of experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 84). Because perception is the key element and source of knowledge in phenomenological design, the research is thus derived from first-person

reports of life experiences. According to Moustakas (1994), the freedom from suppositions in the research is called the Epoche.

In the Epoche, the researcher sets aside biases and preconceived notions about the experience and phenomenon through bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). All preconceived notions and previous knowledge and experience are considered invalid (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological Epoche does not eliminate all things or deny the reality of everything; however, it sets aside the natural attitude and biases of everyday knowledge. The Epoche is a way of being, a “preparation for deriving new knowledge,” and a “process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The Epoche requires attention and concentration in order to create a fresh vision without imposing judgments on the experience. However, the Epoche is only the first step in coming to know things. The next steps, Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis of Meanings will be discussed during the data analysis procedures.

Purpose Statement

This study utilized a phenomenological, qualitative methodology to explore wise, minority counselor supervisors’ perspectives and perceptions surrounding the phenomenon of conflicts in supervision and particularly if and how the supervisors’ methods of approaching conflicts developed over time in their careers. By exploring wise supervisors’ perceptions around the development of conflicts in supervision, themes emerged from the data to highlight wise, minority supervisors’ perceptions on conflicts.

Research Question

In phenomenological design, the research question is the focus and guide. According to Moustakas (1994), the research question must be carefully constructed, every word chosen deliberately and ordered so that the primary words capture attention and guide the process of seeing, reflecting, and knowing. This phenomenological study used one primary research question in order to explore wise, minority supervisors' lived experiences about how they developed over the course of their careers in approaching conflicts in the supervisory relationship.

The research question addressed was: "What are the lived experiences of wise, minority supervisors' growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision?"

Instrumentation and Role of the Researcher

The individual, qualitative researcher is the primary instrument in the data collection and analysis processes (Tracy, 2020; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research is by nature constantly influenced and impacted by the researcher. Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained that bracketing of the researcher's personal experiences is important in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to perceive the phenomenon with fresh eyes. Bracketing is described as recognizing where the researcher's personal insight is separated from the collection of the data. Bracketing has also been described as a task of the Epoche (Moustakas, 1994). Tracy (2020) explained that sincerity and self-reflexivity are critical to good qualitative research. This includes being genuine, vulnerable, honest, and aware of one's own identity throughout the research process. The researcher is encouraged to practice self-

reflexivity by sharing one's motivations to conduct the study. Therefore, participants and readers will feel assured that researchers have considered their role and impact.

The current researcher's interest in pursuing this study was due to her professional experience in clinical supervision as an Associate Professional Counselor (APC). For example, at different times this author had several personal experiences and anecdotal conversations with other supervisees who reported having conflicts with their clinical supervisor that were either poorly handled or not addressed. Since the current researcher has had these experiences and conversations with other supervisees and supervisors, this experience remains a bias. The current author wondered if gaining the perspectives of wise supervisors regarding approaching conflicts and how their conflict approach has developed over time would lead to insights in supervisor development and in approaching conflicts in supervision effectively. However, the author attempted to bracket her biases through reflexive journaling and sincerity in her research approach.

It is also important to address that interviewing took place across differences in social identities (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Research about differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and so on have taken up a large place in the qualitative research field as of late (Page, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). There are some who argue that interviewing those with a same or similar background or social identity risks the researcher assuming too much tacit knowledge, or the underlying, unarticulated contextual understandings of individuals (Tracy, 2020). Marshall and Rossman (2016) explain that researchers should not avoid interviewing participants just because they do not share some aspect of social identity. For this study, the current

researcher was a Caucasian female of European and Hispanic descent living in the southeastern United States. In many ways, the current researcher is considered a part of the majority social group. The author was sensitive to and thoughtful about these cultural issues and identities. Although the author did not share several social identities with potential participants, she shared a professional identity with the participants as a professional counselor.

Sample Description

Participants were selected for the study using purposive and snowball sampling techniques (Tracy, 2020). Since the study utilized a qualitative, phenomenological design, Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended purposive sampling of 5-10 wise supervisors. Eight counseling supervisors of a racial minority were selected for this study. According to Moustakas (1994), essential criteria for the selection of research participants in phenomenological methods are that the participant has experienced the phenomenon and is interested in being interviewed and understanding the nature of the phenomenon. Following Moustakas' guidelines, all the supervisors chosen to participate had experience and credentialing as clinical counseling supervisors, were Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), had an interest in the topic, were willing to participate in a recorded interview, and identified as a member of a racial minority group.

Wise supervisors, for the purpose of the study, was defined as clinical supervisors who, regardless of age or experience, are regarded as wise by a professional peer (Nelson et al., 2008). Nominating supervisors were asked through a survey to share why the supervisor, who they nominated, was considered wise. All of the participants were

nominated by another clinical peer as being wise, clinical supervisors who are relied on by their peers and community to provide excellent clinical supervision. A wise supervisor was also defined as someone who exemplifies the ethics of the profession, is engaged in the field and working actively with supervisees, and who is often sought out for mentorship and supervision. Additionally, a wise supervisor as defined in this study is someone who has attained a minimum of a graduate level training, education, and supervision in counseling and has the credentials of a counseling supervisor. Another aspect of this sample is that the wise supervisors identified as a racial minority member. This was to address the gap in the current supervision literature on conflicts, in which studies have been conducted with primarily Caucasian supervisors (Nelson et al., 2008). Using a snowball sampling strategy, nominating supervisors were contacted via email and asked to nominate a wise supervisor for potential recruitment in this study. Three nominators, who were university faculty members and counseling supervisors at the researcher's current university, were emailed to begin the nomination process for participant recruitment. All three professors nominated a wise supervisor. All three wise supervisors agreed to participate in the study. After the initial three interviews, the following five participants were nominated by other participants in the study. A total of 12 supervisors were nominated for the study. Two of the nominated supervisors were unable to schedule an interview, responding that they did not have time to participate. Two of the nominated supervisors did not identify as members of a minority racial group and opted out of the study. The remaining eight supervisors met criteria for participation and were interviewed.

Data Collection and Storage Procedures

The researcher completed the required ethical training, Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), in order to submit a research proposal to Mercer University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). After obtaining IRB approval, the researcher emailed potential nominators via professional contacts. Once a nominator responded with a nomination for a wise supervisor in their community, the participant was emailed regarding participation in the study and the nominator was asked to respond with the reason for their nomination. Once the participants responded with a willingness to participate, the researcher contacted them via email to determine whether they were qualified for the study. All the participants filled out a demographic survey online. Once the participant was approved as meeting criteria for the study, the researcher emailed both the informed consent and a request to schedule a video interview.

The study incorporated semi structured video interviews through Zoom. Broad, open ended questions were used in order to gain information from the participants (Tracy, 2020). The interviews were audio and video recorded and detailed notes were taken of observations during the interviews. Data were stored on a password protected computer, and interviews were transcribed verbatim into an electronic word processing document by Zoom. A spreadsheet was also used to store a third location of the data and to help in organizing the data (Tracy, 2020; Vagle, 2018). Pseudonyms were used for each participant in order to remove identifying information and protect the confidentiality of the participants. Only the primary researcher had access to the participant names, video recordings, and interview transcriptions.

Based on Creswell and Poth's (2016) recommendations for designing qualitative interview protocols, the researcher focused on six interview questions.

- *How would you define conflicts in supervision? Has your definition changed over the course of your career? If so, how?*
- *What is your experience with conflicts in supervision? What did conflicts look like? Has your experience with conflicts changed over the course of your career? If so, how?*
- *What is your approach to conflicts in supervision as a supervisor? Has your approach to conflicts changed over the course of your career? If so, how?*

The interview questions were meant to develop a rich understanding of supervisors' experiences of conflicts as well as how they approach conflicts. The questions were also meant to develop an understanding of whether their approach changed over the course of their career, and if so, how their approach changed. During and after the interviews, the researcher journaled notes in order to gather rich data and bracket any prior knowledge or experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Analysis

Once the initial demographic surveys, interviews, and observations were collected, the researcher used the Zoom transcriptions and the video recordings to listen to all the recordings and check the transcriptions for accuracy. The researcher read the entire transcription to get acquainted with the interviews as a whole (Vagle, 2018). A line-by-line reading was conducted, and notes were taken to identify horizons in the data.

Horizontalization takes place in this phase as each horizon or “expression” is considered to have equal value and is marked on the transcript (Lee et al., 2013). The second line-by-line reading allowed the researcher to copy and paste each participant’s excerpts and descriptions into a new document (Vagle, 2018). This document was an excel file in which quotations and data were kept for each of the individual participants. This process allowed the researcher to determine invariant constituents and assess whether the horizons contained a sufficient essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Individual descriptions of the phenomenon were collected and then clustered and thematized to develop a description of the essence and structures of the common experience of approaching conflicts (Moustakas, 1994).

The horizons and clusters were placed in a codebook that was stored in a spreadsheet. The researcher maintained an ongoing journal of ideas and feelings related to the interviews, horizons, data analysis, and emerging themes throughout the data analysis process. The researcher also processed the bracketing and journaling with her committee advisor for the study as well as with an external auditor who was a mental health professional in the field of counseling. Following bracketing, the interview transcripts from the participants were analyzed using Moustakas’ (1994) and Vagle’s (2018) approaches to data analysis. The researcher served as the primary data analyst. Following the preliminary analysis, the horizons, textural structural descriptions, and themes were shared with the external auditor to solicit feedback.

Phenomenological Reduction was utilized to describe in textural language what the researcher saw (Moustakas, 1994). The qualities of the experience became the focus

at this point in the data analysis, and Phenomenological Reduction required that the researcher look and describe, look and describe, look again and describe. During the Epoche, the researcher removed all preconceived notions, but during Phenomenological Reduction, the phenomenon and experience were examined in relation to self (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994), Phenomenological Reduction is a way of seeing and listening with a conscious intention of opening oneself up to the phenomena in one's own right with texture and meaning. This process also included horizontalization, meaning the researcher can never exhaust completely one's experience of things no matter how many times the phenomenon is viewed (Moustakas, 1994). The data collection and analysis are never-ending processes; and although a stopping point was reached, the possibility for discovery is endless (Moustakas, 1994). In Phenomenological Reduction, the researcher returns to the self, and each horizon of the phenomenon allows one to understand the essence and nature of the experience deeper.

Following Phenomenological Reduction, the next step in the data analysis was Imaginative Variation. This task seeks possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying frames of reference, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). The aim was to close at structural descriptions of the experience, or "how" the experience of the phenomenon came to be what it is. This included describing the essential structures of the phenomenon, recognizing underlying themes or contexts, considering universal structures that may relate, and searching for exemplifications that vividly illustrate the structural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Lastly, according to Moustakas (1994), the final step in the phenomenological analysis process was to integrate the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a wholistic statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole. Essence is defined as that which is common or universal (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the researcher's purpose was to find the common or universal themes of the participants related to the phenomenon. However, Moustakas (1994) writes that the essence of any experience is never totally exhausted. The analysis or textural-structural synthesis represents the essences at a particular time and place from the limited vantage point of the one researcher.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to credibility, dependability, and truthfulness in the research (Tracy, 2020). Tracy (2020) argues that if a report is trustworthy, "readers feel confident in using its data and findings to act and make decisions" (p. 235). Marshall and Rossman (2016) asserted that qualitative research by nature is an interpersonal process and depends on the interpersonal skills of the researcher. Qualitative research involves building trust, maintaining good relations, and sensitively considering ethical issues (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers are responsible for demonstrating their trustworthiness and ensuring quality in their work.

For the current study, at least three methods were utilized to build trustworthiness and credibility. The primary procedure included a thick description of the data (Tracy, 2020). Thick description was achieved by providing detailed material details about the processes and activities (Tracy, 2020). Another trustworthiness procedure included a

level of transparency in the process through the keeping of a reflexive journal of self-reflection. This journal included personal thoughts, reactions, biases, and other emotions that arose from the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher also included in the journal feelings related to the data, interviews, phenomenon, horizons, and emerging themes throughout the data analysis process. The researcher processed the bracketing and journaling with both her committee advisor for the study as well as another mental health professional in the field of counseling. A third method was member checks with the participants. The process of member checking informed the data analysis throughout the interview process. During the first interview, the participant, Kevin, ended the interview by giving a summary of his thoughts on conflicts in supervision. The researcher found this summary to be very helpful to highlight the essences of Kevin's experience that he wanted to emphasize. Thus, each of the following interviews ended by asking the participant to share his or her summary of what had been discussed to check that nothing was missed and gather his or her final thoughts. The researcher checked in with the participants at the conclusion of each interview in order to build trust and assure their responses were being reported accurately. The summaries ended up providing rich data that helped in data analysis. They gave the researcher insight into what each participant found the most salient about their interview and which topics they wanted to highlight again at the conclusion of the interview. Many of the final themes and interpretations were included in the summaries by the participants. The participants were also asked at the conclusion of the interview if they would like to include anything else that was unaddressed and if they would like to nominate another participant for the study.

Five of the participants nominated another supervisor. None of the participants wished to add anything else to their interview.

Limitations

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), all proposed research projects have limitations. There were a few limitations with the methodology of this study. First, the interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, which resulted in varied responses. However, the goal of the qualitative research is to examine the perceptions of participants about the nature of a phenomenon during a particular place and time, therefore, replicability was not a goal of the qualitative research. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the qualitative researcher should spend prolonged time in the field. Due to the nature of the video interviews, a limitation was that the researcher did not have access to prolonged time with the participants during the interviews and data collection. In the future, the researcher would like to spend prolonged time in the field with the supervisor, observing his or her supervision. Lastly, participants were interviewed from a wide geographical area, which was made possible by the Zoom interviews; however, this prevented the researcher from being able to sit with the participants in person and meet them in person. Also, the participants were all licensed in the southern and southeastern United States. Further limitations to the study's design and analysis will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Summary

While limitations existed for the proposed study, no published qualitative study has explored wise, minority supervisors' perceptions on their approaches to conflicts in

supervision and how their experiences and approaches have changed and developed throughout the course of their supervision career. Eight wise supervisors were selected to participate in this study. Data were collected using Zoom video interviews and every effort was made to maintain participants' confidentiality throughout the process.

Interview questions were designed to allow participants to address the research question from multiple points. The phenomenological study generated common themes of the participants' perceptions of the essence of the phenomenon that fills a gap in the supervision literature regarding conflicts in supervision, how conflicts are approached, and how approaches develop across supervisor development. No published qualitative studies on conflicts in supervision examine the perspectives of minority supervisors.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Previous chapters have discussed the literature surrounding conflicts in supervision, as well as how conflicts have been addressed and experienced by supervisors. Despite the amount of attention on conflicts in the clinical supervision literature, there are surprisingly little data regarding how conflicts have been successfully, or unsuccessfully, managed, approached, and addressed by clinical supervisors in the field. No studies have focused on the perspectives of minority supervisors. Little is known about what happens to the supervisory relationship or supervisor when conflict resolution is difficult or impossible to achieve (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). The data that exists suggest that unresolved conflicts have a negative impact on the supervisee's overall learning experience; however, supervisor development and growth is often unaddressed in the literature (Moskowitz & Rupert, 1983). Oppositely, the resolution of conflict has been said to be the hallmark of successful supervision between supervisor and supervisee (Mueller & Kell, 1972). Few articles explore and describe ways for supervisors to approach conflicts, and no articles found address how the supervisors' approach to conflicts developed or changed over time in their career. A gap exists in the literature in regard to the lived experiences of wise, minority supervisors' approaches to conflicts and how their approaches have changed over time.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore wise, minority counselor supervisors' perspectives surrounding the phenomenon of conflicts in supervision and particularly if and how the supervisors' methods of approaching conflicts developed over time in their careers. Using a phenomenological design, this study used one primary research question in order to explore wise, minority supervisors' lived experiences about how they developed over the course of their careers in approaching conflicts in the supervisory relationship. The research question addressed was: "What are the lived experiences of wise, minority supervisors' growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision?"

This chapter presents the results from the analysis of the data collected regarding eight wise supervisors' perceptions of their experiences with and approaches to conflicts in supervision. Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher sought to understand the lived experiences of wise supervisors. The goal of the analysis was to develop comprehensive descriptions and themes of the shared structures underlying the individual supervisors' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Only the participants' descriptions of their experiences with conflicts were considered, and the researchers' biases and knowledge of the existing literature were bracketed (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Participants

Eight participants were selected for the study based on the participant criteria and their willingness to participate in the interview. Participants were all nominated by a colleague as someone who is considered a wise supervisor based on the selection criteria.

In line with Mercer University IRB guidelines, informed consent was obtained before any interviews were conducted.

Demographic Characteristics

Personal and professional demographics were included in a demographic survey that was emailed to all participants. All of the participants identified as a member of a racial minority group. Their years of experience as a clinical supervisor ranged from 1.5 years to 23 years of experience. The mean years of supervisor experience was 12.3 years. Personal demographical statistics included age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Three (37.5%) of the eight participants were age 30-39 (n=1, 12.5%) or 40-49 (n=2, 25%). Five (62.5%) of the eight participants were age 50-59. The sample was majority female (75%) followed by male (25%). The sample was also majority Black or African American (62.5%) followed by Puerto Rican (25%) and Asian (12.5%).

Professional demographic statistics included participants' highest degree earned, professional counselor licensure type and state, supervision credential, and years of experience supervising. A majority of the participants held a doctorate degree (62.5%) followed by a master's degree (37.5%). The entire sample was licensed as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) or equivalent in their state. The participants were all licensed in the southern and southeastern United States. All the participants held either the supervisor credential of Certified Professional Counselor Supervisor (CPCS), Approved Clinical Supervisor (ACS), or equivalent. Table 1 presents demographic characteristics for participants in this study (n=8).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym and Gender	Age Range	Race/Ethnicity	Highest Degree Earned	Licensure Type	Supervisor Credential	Supervisor Years of Experience
Kevin, male	40-49	Black or African American	Doctorate degree	LPC	CPCS	10
Steve, male	50-59	Black or African American	Doctorate degree	LPC	ACS	15
Connie, female	50-59	Asian	Doctorate degree	LPC	CPCS	23
Michelle, female	30-39	Black or African American	Master's degree	LPC	CPCS	1.5
Paula, female	50-59	Puerto Rican	Master's degree	LPC	CPCS	2
Diana, female	50-59	Puerto Rican	Doctorate degree	LPC	LPC-S	12
Beth, female	40-49	Black or African American	Master's degree	LPC	CPCS, ACS	21
Rhonda, female	50-59	Black or African American	Doctorate degree	LPC	CPCS	14

Interview and Journal Processes

As described in chapter 3, the following procedures were followed for data collection and analysis. Video interviews took place with each participant via Zoom. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour. With participant permission, the interviews were also video recorded and transcribed via Zoom. Paula's video did not work due to technical difficulties on the participant's laptop. Beth elected to not be on video. Both interviews were conducted and recorded by audio only. All other interviews were conducted and recorded by video without incident. The interview recordings were then watched by the researcher, and the Zoom transcriptions were corrected and verified. Participant responses were transferred into a spreadsheet for hand coding.

The researcher took notes during and following each interview focusing on thoughts from each interview, as well as preliminary codes and themes (Vagle, 2018). To increase validity, member checking was conducted following the interviews. The participants were asked to summarize their experiences and approaches to conflicts, and the summaries were utilized to begin data analysis procedures. A summary was also given to the participants, and the participants were asked if they would like to include anything else in the interview. None of the participants wished to add anything.

Prior to data analysis, the researcher also attempted to bracket any prior experiences with conflicts in supervision and suspend past knowledge, a process consistent with phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher maintained an ongoing journal of ideas and feelings related to the data, interviews, phenomenon, horizons, and emerging themes throughout the data analysis process (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher also processed the bracketing and journaling with her committee advisor and another mental health professional in the field of counseling. Following bracketing, the interview transcripts from the participants were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) and Vagle's (2018) approaches to data analysis. The researcher served as the primary data analyst. Following the preliminary analysis, the horizons, textural structural descriptions, and themes were shared with another mental health professional to solicit feedback.

First, the researcher read the entire transcriptions to get acquainted with the interviews as a whole (Vagle, 2018). A line-by-line reading was conducted, and notes were taken to identify horizons in the data. Horizontalization took place in this phase as each horizon or "expression" was considered to have equal value and was marked on the transcript (Lee et al., 2013). The second line-by-line reading allowed the researcher to copy and paste each participant's excerpts and descriptions into a new document (Vagle, 2018). This document was an excel file in which quotations and data were kept for each of the individual participants. This process allowed the researcher to determine invariant constituents and assess whether the horizons contained a sufficient essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Individual descriptions of the phenomenon were collected and then clustered and thematized to develop a description of the essence and structures of the common experience of approaching conflicts (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher engaged in imaginative variation by developing various possible perspectives from the themes of each participant (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, textural structural descriptions were developed for each participant. This included both verbatim examples from the

participants' interview transcripts and abstracted meanings from the data. The textural structural descriptions were integrated into unified themes that capture the experience of approaching conflicts as a whole (Moustakas, 1994).

Individual Participant Textural Structural Descriptions

Eight wise supervisors participated in the study. The following section includes individual textural structural descriptions of each of the participants.

Kevin

Kevin is a Black/African American male in his 40's. He is a counseling supervisor and LPC in his state. Kevin has 10 years of experience as a supervisor. Kevin was nominated as being a wise supervisor by a colleague at the university where he is a professor. The nominator stated about Kevin, "I rely on Kevin and consider him a wise supervisor because of his experience and knowledge with teaching and supervising professionals in our field."

Meeting with Kevin made the researcher feel excited since this was the first interview conducted. Kevin was on the video interview from his office and was euthymic and excited for the interview. Regarding his definition of conflicts in supervision, Kevin defined conflicts as "unmet expectations in the [supervisory] relationship" that create tension. He described experiences of conflicts with supervisees not being on time, issues of professionalism, doing harm to clients, not completing paperwork, differences in theoretical orientation, and even cultural differences in the supervisory relationship. Kevin believed that conflicts are to be expected in supervision, however, because it is a

setting where supervisees are continuing to grow. Only when a supervisee is “negligent,” either in client care or self-care, could the conflict become larger.

Kevin said that his definition and experiences with conflicts in supervision have grown over time to “not view conflict as something negative, but really as an opportunity for growth.” Kevin spoke often about the growth process and how conflicts are a part of this growth process. His approach to conflicts is based on the supervisees’ growth and the nature of the relationship with the supervisee. Kevin said that conflicts can bring a “level of anxiety” in the sense of, ““Man, I wonder how this is going to unfold? What the ramifications are?” This can actually brew feelings of anxiety within [supervisors]. So, one's ability and this is my ability to cope with those, you know, with those anxious moments so that I'm not driven by my emotions, but I'm rather driven by an objective manner to address what needs to be addressed.”

Steve

Steve is a Black/African American male in his 50’s. He has been a counseling supervisor for 15 years and is a LPC in his state. Steve was nominated by a colleague who said about Steve as a wise counselor, “Many people look to [Steve] for his advice and guidance and mentorship. He is consistent and thoughtful in his approach and people feel comfortable around him. His students/supervisees often talk about the positive impact he has had on them professionally.” The researcher met with Steve via Zoom, and Steve presented himself as a self-assured and knowledgeable supervisor. He was very open to the discussion about conflicts in supervision.

Regarding his definition of conflicts in supervision, Steve defined conflicts as “natural moments in the supervision process where the tension between values and beliefs can intersect.” He was one of the two supervisors who said that his definition of conflict in supervision has not changed over the course of his career as a supervisor. He attributed this to his excellent training and supervision of supervision early on as a supervisor. Steve was one of the supervisors who said that he “embraced conflict.” He believes that conflicts are a natural part of supervisee development and are a necessary part of supervisee growth, even “critical.” He also said that conflicts are beneficial for him as a supervisor but can create anxiety for both the supervisor and supervisee.

Steve spoke directly about the cultural aspect of conflicts in supervision. He shared an experience of conflict with a Caucasian female supervisee who had a bias against an African American male client and who experienced transference with Steve. When Steve discussed this with her in supervision, she was resistant and aggressive, which led to conflict. Steve described this conflict in the supervision relationship as a “very powerful interaction with her” where the supervisee was able to connect the bias with her upbringing and grow from the conversation in supervision. Steve said of the conflict, “We had to work through the initial angst and the initial anger to get to the point where we developed those skills [of humility and cultural competence], but we had to work through [the conflict] before we got there.” Steve said that his experiences with conflicts have changed over the course of his supervision career. Earlier on he took the conflicts more personally and internalized them. Now, 15 years into his career as a supervisor, Steve said he has more comfort in dealing with conflicts in the moment. He

sees them as developmental issues in the supervision process rather than internalizing them about himself. He spoke often about the developmental nature of supervision, both for the supervisee and supervisor. Steve was very passionate as he said, "I've learned over time to put [the conflicts] within the context of development." He also used an Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) supervision model to approach conflicts.

Steve said that he approaches conflicts "in the moment." He looks for inconsistencies and addresses them directly, and then processes the conflicts after they occur. Steve also said that he seeks consultation and supervision regarding conflicts in supervision. He takes into account the relationship with the supervisee, their personality, development, culture, and whether the conflict is new or ongoing.

Connie

Connie is an Asian American female in her 50's. She is a LPC in her state and has been a counseling supervisor for 23 years. Connie was nominated as being a wise supervisor by a former supervisee. During the interview, Connie was at her home office. The researcher felt that Connie responded to questions easily and with confidence. As a group supervisor primarily, her responses related often to the group supervision process. Connie defined conflicts in supervision as being on a "continuum" from a "gentle challenge," "resistance," "disagreement," or "misunderstanding" to a "complete blowout," "argument," or "external reaction." She stated, "Conflicts are a part of supervision." Connie spoke often about the supervisory relationship and the importance of knowing one's supervisees in order to understand conflicts. She said that conflicts are not necessarily negative, but can often lead to growth and development, a stronger

supervisory alliance, and greater trust in the supervision relationship. Earlier on in her career as a supervisor, Connie said that she may have missed the more subtle conflicts, whereas now she is more comfortable addressing conflicts head on and even using conflicts as an intervention in group supervision. Her confidence with approaching conflicts has increased over time in her career. She said, “Earlier on I would’ve made it about me.”

Connie approaches conflicts “right away” in group supervision, “otherwise [conflicts have] the potential to continue to build, grow resentment, grow mistrust, and then end up in a blowout.” Her approach has changed over time in her career as her awareness of conflicts has grown and as she has experienced an “increased willingness to address conflicts in group.” She said she is much more flexible now than she was earlier on in her career. Connie described her approaches to conflicts as talking about boundaries, being proactive in her supervisory informed consent about expectations and how conflicts will be addresses when they arise, creating safety and trust in the supervisory relationship by getting to know her supervisees and who they are as “cultural beings,” and getting to know their biases.

Michelle

Michelle is a Black/African American female in her 30’s. She is a LPC in her state and has been a counseling supervisor for 1.5 years. She has supervised counselors in two different work settings, and she was nominated by a peer supervisor for the study. Michelle was excited to participate in the interview. She was very surprised and honored to be considered a “wise supervisor” and to be nominated for the study. She provided

answers freely, but with some nervousness. Michelle defined conflicts in supervision as “disagreements or misunderstandings.” She said that her definition of conflicts in supervision has not changed over the course of her career as a supervisor. Michelle spoke primarily about conflicts within the systems and workplace where she supervises. She wanted to become a supervisor due to her own poor experiences with supervisors and supervision. She described it as a “sink or swim experience.” Michelle said she often feels isolated as a supervisor, being the only clinical supervisor at her work setting. The conflicts that she shared related to navigating workplace challenges with non-clinical staff, demanding and unprofessional directors and staff, and a lack of communication in the workplace environment overall. She views her role as a supervisor as an advocate for her supervisees in the work setting where she works. Michelle’s approach to conflicts in supervision is to gain feedback from peers before approaching the conflict. She spoke very highly of a peer supervision group that she was a part of at a previous job where she felt supported as a supervisor.

Michelle said that earlier on as a supervisor she was scared of the responsibilities of a supervisor. She reflected on her fear and shared her thoughts, “How do I help this [supervisee] flourish without tearing them down?” Michelle considers herself to be “easygoing” and “laid back” but has grown as a supervisor in her comfort with giving feedback and addressing conflicts. “I’m still working on it and growing,” she said. She believes that patience for the supervisee’s individual differences is important to approaching conflicts. She also believes that dealing with her own discomfort with conflicts has helped over time.

Paula

Paula is a Puerto Rican female in her 50's. She is a LPC in her state and has been supervising for two years as a supervisor and manager in a community counseling setting. Paula manages two clinics. Paula was nominated as a wise supervisor by a colleague from her clinic who said that Paula "has played a lead role in the organization that I work for and has exemplified an ability to make business minded decisions in order to serve as many people as possible through counseling and other mental health services." Paula was nominated by her colleague as being a wise supervisor due to her "years of experience, leadership role [in the organization], great rapport with her team and supervisees, and she is respected by other professionals inside and outside of the organization."

The researcher met with Paula over Zoom, but Paula's video had difficulty connecting. The researcher asked Paula if she would like to reschedule the interview, but Paula said that audio would be fine. Therefore, the interview took place by audio only and was recorded and transcribed in Zoom. Paula presented herself as a self-assured and confident supervisor. She was open to the discussion about conflicts in supervision, and her experience was unique from the other supervisors interviewed in that she spoke mostly about workplace conflicts with other supervisors who she manages. In addition to her role as a counselor and clinical supervisor, Paula has a large administrative role at her worksite and manages other supervisors.

Regarding her definition of conflicts in supervision, Paula defined conflicts as "differences in style" or "disagreements." Paula described herself as being openminded and flexible. She said her definition of conflicts has changed as she has grown as a

supervisor. However, she stated multiple times during the interview, “I have always been this way.”

Paula’s experiences with conflicts in supervision ranged from having to write up supervisees for late documentation, “confronting” with “constructive criticism” supervisors who had been reported to Human Resources (HR) by their supervisees and writing up a supervisee for providing fraudulent doctor’s notes to get out of work. Paula said earlier on in her career as a supervisor she was less “savvy” to noticing conflicts, but she has an increased awareness to “confront” conflicts now.

Respect was very important to Paula. She used the word 10 times throughout the interview to describe her relationship with her employees, other supervisors at her site, and her supervisees. She described “a look” that she will give and that her supervisees have mentioned to her. Her supervisees and employees respect her feedback, and this enables her to address conflicts and have a positive outcome in conflicts with her supervisors and supervisees. Paula said, “They know I care about them.” Paula described her approach to conflicts as confrontational. She described herself as very assertive, but not aggressive. She sees this as contributing to her success in her organization. Her advice was, “Always listen and be flexible and be open minded and show that you care about the person because they pick that up quickly. If they see that you're just a manager and you don't care, you're just interested in your clinic making money or whatever you're doing, then that comes across quickly.”

Diana

Diana is a Puerto Rican female in her 50's. She shared during the interview that English is her second language. She is a LPC in her state and has been a counseling supervisor for 12 years in both private practice and university settings. She is a counselor educator and was nominated by a colleague at the university where she teaches. Meeting with Diana felt encouraging. Diana was on the video interview from her office and was euthymic and excited for the interview. She shared during the interview that she recently finished her doctorate degree and also conducted qualitative research. Regarding her definition of conflicts in supervision, Diana defined conflicts as “disagreements without resolution” that can arise from differences of opinion or a supervisees unwillingness to receive feedback. She admitted that earlier on in her supervision career, she came in “naïve” thinking everything would be “wonderful and positive.” Over time she has learned to be firmer with boundaries, more assertive, and more direct in approaching conflicts. Diana also said that her supervision model has changed over time and she uses a Discrimination Model (DM) to approach supervision and conflicts.

Diana spoke about cultural differences with a supervisee who she experienced conflict with. The supervisee was from a culture where her leadership was not often questioned. The supervisee had a difficult time accepting feedback and direction from Diana. The supervisee also needed improvement with counseling skills and needed to increase her self-awareness and other awareness. Diana said that the supervisee was very unwilling to accept feedback and thought she “knew it all.”

Diana said of the experience, "I had to be more direct in terms of, 'I am not attacking you. I am making sure that you grow in this process.' And so it was challenging because there was one moment when her affect was negative. She was frowning. I mean all her facial expression looked mad. And so, I remember saying, 'Okay, I see your facial expression telling me that you're not comfortable with what we're talking [about]. I see something is making you upset. It looks like you're even frustrated or mad. Talk to me about it so we can talk about it.' 'I'm fine,' [the supervisee responded confidently]." To approach conflicts, Diana takes a collaborative approach, using support and unconditional positive regard. She is also very selective about who she will supervise and takes very few supervisees, only after a lengthy interview process. Overall, Diana said she does not like conflict, but she recommended working through one's own personal issues with conflict and not running away from conflicts in supervision.

Beth

Beth is a Black/African American female in her 40's. She is a LPC in her state and has been a counseling supervisor for 21 years. Beth runs a supervision private practice and most of her supervision is conducted via telehealth. Beth also trains and educates counseling supervisors and was nominated by a fellow supervisor who said about Beth, "I've attended continuing education courses with [Beth] and she presents and educates [on supervision] very well. She is a very knowledgeable supervisor and leader." During the interview, Beth opted not to have her video camera turned on, so the interview was conducted via audio over Zoom. She responded to questions easily, quickly, and with confidence. Beth's interview was the most interesting to the researcher because, although

she spoke to similar experiences of conflicts, her perspective about supervisee autonomy, growth, and conflicts was unique from the other participants.

Beth defined conflicts as “common, predictable, expected,” and “a part of the growth process.” “Conflicts can look like misunderstandings.” Beth said that she views conflicts in supervision as the supervisee growing into a new stage of development. The supervisee begins to question the direction of the supervisor because it does not fit with their style. Beth said that earlier on as a supervisor she felt more “entitled” in her role as a supervisor, but now she has more respect for the supervisee and their thoughts and opinions. She feels like less of an “imposter” and more confident. Like other supervisors, Beth spoke to supervisor development and growth, but she talked about supervisors having a lot of fear and that fear leading them to supervise with an authoritarian approach versus guiding supervisees. She claimed that workplace setting is a large factor in conflicts as well as the supervisor’s professional identity. “Does this supervisor want to supervise or is he or she required to do so by the work site?”

During the interview, Beth shared about an “intercultural conflict” experience that she had with a supervisee she taught and supervised. Beth reflected that, at the time, respect was important to her as a supervisor, and she felt disrespected by the supervisee. Now, she said, she has less need for validation. Now, she approaches conflicts with non-judgment, “benefit of the doubt,” acceptance, and autonomy. She takes conflicts less personally than she used to and described a philosophical shift from “this is on me” to “this isn’t about me.” Beth also said she values peer consultation and group supervision to approach conflicts. When sharing about the intercultural conflict, Beth said,

“At its core, [the supervisee] didn't really get me and my view of the world and I probably didn't get her and her view in the world. And I felt that there were some things that I should be, you know, teaching and she did not respect my authority. And perhaps she was not wrong only in the sense of, we had not built the kind of relationship where she could trust me. So, you know, as a supervisor, I take responsibility for that. The onus is on me to develop the relationship, and I think our relationship was underdeveloped. So, when I needed to give her feedback that was critical feedback, she couldn't receive that feedback from me, because the relationship wasn't there. So, I feel like I have grown a lot since that event. I mean, when I reflect back on it now, I see it a lot differently than I did then, you know, back then.”

Rhonda

Rhonda is a Black/African American female in her 50's. She is a LPC in her state and has been a counseling supervisor for 14 years. Her experience as a supervisor includes teaching master's students during clinical seminar for seven years and now, she supervises in a private practice setting and in a community counseling setting where she also has an administrative role. Rhonda was nominated for the study by Beth, another study participant. Beth nominated Rhonda as a wise supervisor because she is “a great mentor to clinicians and is a trusted advisor on clinical and supervisory matters.” The interview took place via Zoom and Rhonda was at her home office. She was very interested in the study, as it related to her dissertation topic from years past. She asked many questions at the beginning and end of the interview about the researcher and

research. During the interview, the researcher experienced Rhonda as being very friendly and open.

Rhonda defined conflicts in supervision as supervisees being unwilling to accept feedback or having low self-awareness. She said that both of these conflicts can stifle the supervisees' growth and development. Rhonda spoke often throughout the interview about both the growth and development of the supervisee and of the supervisor. She said earlier on in her supervision career, she felt conflicts resulted from her idea that, "I am right and [the supervisee] is wrong." Over time, her "role" as a supervisor shifted from "I'm right" to be more open to the supervisees' perspective, and she does not personalize conflicts like she may have earlier on. Rhonda also spoke to her approach and experiences of conflicts changing over the course of career as she discovered her supervision model through continuing education and training. She described having a decision-making model and seeking peer consultation as ways she approaches conflicts. Rhonda also said that she now recognizes she does not have all the answers. She believes she is continuing to develop as a supervisor as she gains more experiences with conflicts. She said she sees more conflicts in her administrative role than she does in supervision, since she can choose her supervisees. She has a thorough screening process before working with a supervisee.

Themes

In order to gain an understanding of the research question, six interview questions were asked as a part of three overall questions about the participant's definition of conflicts in supervision, their experiences with conflicts in supervision, and their

approaches to conflicts in supervision. The textural descriptions of the individual participants were collected prior to clustering and thematizing the experiences of the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). The interview questions were designed to understand the participants' lived experiences and growth processes in approaching conflicts in supervision. The four themes identified were role of the supervisor, supervisor development, personal views of conflict, and conflict skills. The themes are shared in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes

Theme	Properties of the Theme
Role of the Supervisor	Guiding Supervisee Growth Giving Feedback Ensuring Ethical Practice Workplace Setting
Supervisor Development	Personal Style and Values Experience Over Time Externalizing Versus Internalizing Increased Competence
Personal Views of Conflicts	Positive and Negative Views
Conflict Skills	Comfort and Discomfort Supervisory Relationship Cultural Competency Structure

Role of the Supervisor

Role of the supervisor, in the current study, speaks to how the supervisors viewed themselves, their responsibilities, and roles as a supervisor. This theme emerged from responses to all of the interview questions. The supervisors had varying responses about their definition of conflicts and experiences with conflicts, but they all spoke to their role

as a supervisor generally and their role as a supervisor in approaching conflicts. Their view and role as a supervisor also impacted what kinds of conflicts they experienced and how they approached conflicts. Properties of this theme, role of the supervisor, include a) guiding supervisee growth, b) giving feedback, c) ensuring ethical practice, d) workplace setting, and e) personal style and values.

Guiding Supervisee Growth. All of the supervisors said that a role of the supervisor is to guide the supervisees' growth process. For example, Kevin spoke at length about the role of the supervisor to aid in supervisee growth. He said, "Our key responsibility as supervisors is to assist in the growth and the preparation of our supervisees." Another participant, Steve, shared, "Effective supervision is about meeting people where they are and helping them grow and develop." All eight participants used the term growth or growth process in relation to the supervision process, the supervisee, and their role as a supervisor. In response to a conflict she had with a supervisee, Diana said, "I am not attacking you. I am making sure that you grow in this process." Beth explained, "I view my role with [the supervisee] as, you know, supporting [him or her] in a holistic way. Being a more effective therapist, but also, ideally, a human being who can contribute effectively, not just to the profession, but to the world." Connie also explained an experience she had with a supervisee and shared that the conflicts they had led to growth for the supervisee.

Giving Feedback. Five of the supervisors said that another role of the supervisor is to aid in supervisee growth by giving feedback, and that feedback can often lead to conflicts in supervision. If a supervisee was unwilling to accept feedback, was overly

confident of their skills, or lacked self-awareness, many of the supervisors said that this led to a conflict and hindered supervisee growth as well. Diana stated:

As a supervisor, if I'm providing feedback and the supervisee has difficulty accepting that feedback and integrating that feedback into the next step that is being required and supervised or, you know, skills, then that creates a conflict because if, as a supervisee, you're not willing to receive the feedback from your supervisor and your supervisor is responsible to help you develop the skills you need to have then definitely that creates a conflict because your supervisees are still novice in the field. They haven't achieved it all. I don't think we've ever come to a point where we know it all. It doesn't matter how many years we've practiced, and there's always something that we need to learn. So, when supervisees take the stand of "I know it all. I don't need that. You're wrong." And I'm not saying one should be wrong or the other. It's just the integration of feedback and the ability to receive critical feedback and integrate that critical feedback into the next step of the process. So that definitely creates a conflict.

Michelle also talked about how her role as a supervisor is to give feedback and that conflicts come when supervisees have to receive "not-so-good feedback." Diana said her younger supervisees often struggle to receive feedback, while Paula said that she is very comfortable in giving feedback because her supervisees tend to respect her feedback.

Rhonda explained an experience with conflict in supervision where her supervisee was highly resistant to feedback, leading to Rhonda's decision to terminate the supervision relationship. Rhonda explained:

So, in that situation, I ended up terminating my relationship with the supervisee, not because of what she did. I terminated the relationship because I felt that it was no longer effective because when I was trying to give her feedback, she was not...she would justify what she was doing, and I had a problem with that.

Ensuring Ethical Practice. Similar to giving feedback, another important property of the role of the supervisor was ensuring ethical practice, including gatekeeping, duty to protect clients and the public, and licensure endorsement. Rhonda shared, “When you give feedback, as a supervisor, our role is to gatekeep, so we have to be honest with what we see.” Kevin also explained:

A key responsibility as supervisors is to assist in the growth, in the preparation of our supervisees, whether they are in their graduate education, or whether they already had their associate license and working towards full licensure. It's a significant responsibility to protect the clients and to preserve the integrity of the profession as well. And so, it's one that, you know, I've learned to take very seriously because of the potential for, you know, harm on either end. And so, both at the graduate level and both at the associate license level, if cases have come up...they've come up more on the graduate end because that's kind of like the first gate, and usually unless a supervisee who is pursuing their professional licensure does something quite drastic or is resistant to plans or resistant to the feedback from me as a supervisor, then usually, unless they are resistant, then naturally the process of supervision will continue its continued growth process. But when there is resistance, when there is push back, when there is disregard for ethical

standards, ethical practice, then that's when we have to take the measure that needs to be taken to protect the clients, as well as to protect the integrity of the profession.

Diana further spoke firsthand about supervision issues and the role of the supervisor to gatekeep and protect the public:

The supervision issues have been increasing more and more. And I take it very seriously, in terms of gatekeeping. When you want to attend one of the board meetings and you see all these situations that they are bringing conflicts, ethics...in all of those I'm thinking, "Okay, so where is the preventive side of that? Is that at an educational level? Is it at a supervisory level? Is that where that occurs?" And that's where, for me, supervision is so important because whether it's at an internship or even as a licensed professional, we have the same responsibility throughout. And I think if we become a little bit more high quality, of calling for a higher standard, even though it is sometimes resisted, we prevent some of the issues that we face in the board.

Rhonda, Beth, and Diana all spoke to the evaluative role of the supervisor in endorsing supervisees for licensure. Diana shared, "When I see resistance or lack of disposition to collaborate in the conflict is when I get more firm because in the end, my license is here. So, I am very conservative, but at the same time I'm very cautious."

Rhonda also shared about a conflict with a supervisee who was creating fraudulent notes for clients she was not meeting with. Rhonda said of the experience:

[The conflict] made me see supervising in a whole different light because when the directors of [the supervisee's workplace] were trying to give her feedback, she was being very resistant. She was being very argumentative, and it just made me think about, you know, at the end of the day, I'm the one who signing off on that person's licensure and endorsing them.

Beth spoke directly to the role of the supervisor and how evaluation can cause fear for both the supervisee and supervisor:

[Supervision is] a relationship where there needs to be a lot of mutual trust.

Supervisors fear a lot of things about supervision. They fear that their supervisee is going to do something wrong and they're going to be liable. You know, there's a lot of risk to both parties. So, supervisees are really aware... "I'm afraid of your evaluative role or you could hold me back. Or you could not recommend me or, you know, you can make it hard for me to progress in my career," but the supervisor often also has their own fears.

Workplace Setting. Another important property of the role of the supervisor included the workplace setting. Five of the supervisors addressed how their workplace setting related to conflicts and impacted their role as a supervisor in approaching conflicts. Beth spoke to this property directly when she shared about the professional identity of the supervisor. She explained the difference between supervisors in private practice, who choose to supervise and see supervision as a main role and identity in their career, versus supervisors who are told to supervise by their institution or workplace. She argued that more conflicts exist when supervisors are told to supervise versus choosing to

supervise. Beth, Diana, and Rhonda shared that they are very selective in who they supervise and therefore, they experience less conflicts. Beth, Diana, and Rhonda all supervise in private practice. However, the supervisors who worked in community-based settings or agencies were unable to select their supervisees and shared more experiences of conflicts with their supervisees. Another factor relating to workplace and role of the supervisor was the systemic and workplace conflicts shared by Michelle and Paula. When asked about their experiences with conflicts, Michelle and Paula shared about the chaotic workplace systems in which they work, which resulted in conflicts between management and supervisors, supervisors and other supervisors, and even supervisees and management. The three supervisors who work in university settings as counselor educators did not share about any workplace conflicts.

Personal Style and Values. Lastly, personal style and values was an important property to the role of the supervisor. Most of the participants shared that they are laid back in their approaches as a supervisor and with conflicts. Others shared that they are more assertive or direct. Personal style appeared to influence the approaches the supervisors took toward conflicts. Both Kevin and Diana shared that their approaches to conflicts developed as they have become more comfortable with conflicts in their personal life. Michelle and Diana both shared that they do not like conflict and have had to grow and become more assertive as supervisors. Paula was the most direct with her approach to conflicts. She shared, "I'm very assertive. I'm not aggressive, I'm assertive and I think that has helped me move up the [leadership] ladder." Oppositely, both Beth and Rhonda shared that they have become more laid back over time. Beth shared, "I can

be very opinionated. I try to not push those opinions on my supervisees. I want them to form their own identities.” Throughout the interviews, the supervisors also shared different values that they hold that impacted their role as a supervisor. Values ranged from respect, to autonomy, curiosity, and humility.

This theme of role of the supervisor was addressed throughout the interviews as all eight participants highlighted their role and responsibilities as supervisors that often led to conflicts in supervision or impacted their approaches to conflicts. All eight participants highlighted the importance of the supervisor’s role in aiding in supervisee growth and development, while most of the supervisors addressed their role in giving feedback. Ensuring ethical practice, workplace setting differences, and personal style and values were also important in discussing the role of the supervisor.

Supervisor Development

The second theme, supervisor development, speaks to the growth process of the supervisors over time in their careers and in experiencing and approaching conflicts. Properties of this theme include a) experience over time, b) externalizing versus internalizing conflicts, and c) increased competence via training, consultation, and supervision. All the participants regularly shared that their development as a supervisor over time in their career played a significant role in their growth process and approaches to conflicts in supervision. For example, Beth spoke at length about the importance of supervisors’ growth process in order to not stay stuck in one way of thinking. She said, “I think as a supervisor, as you develop, you don't feel as worried about being an imposter. You're not worried about, you know, proving to anyone that you're capable. So, just like

in therapy, as that fear falls away, you're able to be more effective because you're not worried about proving something to someone.”

Experience Over Time. All of the participants identified that they have grown or developed over time as supervisors in their experiences and approaches with conflicts. Most attributed this to gaining more experiences with conflicts and supervision. Michelle shared, “My approach to [conflicts] has changed because I have definitely more experience with it. Prior to being a supervisor and now, being a supervisor for some time and having different experiences. So yes, I definitely feel like my approach to it has changed because I've grown and gained additional skills to address conflict.” Paula shared that she has become more “savvy” in noticing conflicts with experience, while Connie agreed that she has become more attune to noticing subtleties that lead to conflicts. Only two supervisors shared that they have not changed overtime in regard to their definition of conflicts. Steve shared that he had excellent training in supervision from early on and gained skills to approach conflicts well early on. Paula shared that she has grown, but said two times during her interview, “I’ve always been the way I am.”

Externalizing Versus Internalizing Conflicts. Another property of supervisor development included externalizing versus internalizing conflicts. Five supervisors spoke about the transition from internalizing conflicts to externalizing them over time. For example, Steve stated, “I was saying, yes, [my experiences with conflicts] have changed. And the way that they've changed is the way that I internalized them...as a novice supervisor.” He continued, “Two permeating thoughts that came to my mind would always often be, ‘I can't believe this person is doing this. What's wrong with him, him or

her,' or the other thought was, 'All this is about me. You trying to come at me.' And I had to learn as a supervisor that it's, number one, it's not personal. And number two, everyone develops at a different pace." Connie also reflected on her experience as a group supervisor:

[Earlier on in my career,] I'm not sure I would have been able to recognize some of the smaller, more subtle conflicts, like the case that I said with my student. I was able to recognize that it was not about me. It was about something that she has going on, what was going on in her life. And I think earlier, I probably would have made it about me. More importantly about me going, 'Gosh, what am I doing wrong? What... what's...' you know, but I was able to easily step back and say, 'This is something that is clearly not necessarily about me, but something that's going on with her,' and therefore, I could handle [the conflict] in a different way.

Michelle also expressed having felt like she was an "imposter" earlier on in her career as a supervisor. She explained, "I would say, yes, [my experience with conflicts] has [changed] because being a new supervisor, I dealt with, you know, the imposter syndrome of, like, do you really know? Do you really know how to supervise? Like, I consider myself a really great therapist, but supervision is something different. It's this weight of responsibility of, you know, being that gatekeeper and also helping students flourish in the field." Rhonda also reflected that over time in her career she has been more able to reflect on her role as a supervisor during conflicts and not personalize conflict. "Technically I'm not supposed to [personalize conflict]," she shared.

When sharing about how her approach to conflicts has changed and developed, Beth explained, “I think the main thing is I take it less personal. Probably when I was a newer supervisor, I personalized my supervisees’ actions or inactions more. I have a much better understanding now that what you're doing is everything about you and really not much to do about who I am.” She also continued:

People are responsible for themselves. I think there's an illusion that we can, whether we're acting as therapist or supervisor, that we can make certain things happen and we can't. We can only facilitate, support, and guide, and it's the people that we're serving taking responsibility for themselves that leaves the changes or the development. So, I think it's probably a philosophical shift that lends itself to a interactive shift, like, you know, really respecting that even though I'm supervisor, you're a grown adult and you're responsible for yourself. And I have a responsibility to you as the service I'm providing to you, but you also have a responsibility to yourself.

Increased Competence Via Training, Consultation, and Supervision. Lastly, an important property of supervisor development and approaching conflicts included additional training, peer consultation, or supervision of supervision and the increased competence and confidence that followed. Six participants spoke about the importance of receiving additional training in conflict management or supervision practices including gaining peer support, consultation, or supervision, which resulted in a perceived increased competence when approaching conflicts in supervision. For instance, Beth shared:

It's really important not to supervise in isolation. You need to have conversations with other people about what's happening, what you're doing, and what's happening so that you don't get stuck in a mindset where you have to know everything, or that you think you do know everything. You know, it's a weird thing. It's like, I'm in this role as supervisor, I guess I'm supposed to know? But what if I don't know? So, for both the approaching conflict, but in general, effective practice, I think it's important to not supervise in a vacuum and to have other people who you trust, who you can be honest with about this is what's happening.

Rhonda shared about the importance of continuing education, training, and peer consultation for her development as a supervisor. She shared, “You have to grow and develop as a supervisor.” She continued, “What's helped me is becoming a CPCS, getting certified as a clinical supervisor, taking [continuing education courses] only geared towards clinical supervision, and honestly my doctoral degree in Counselor Education and Supervision that helped me see things from a whole different perspective as a supervisor from verses 14 or 15 years ago.” Rhonda is also in a peer supervision group where she relies on other supervisors to aid in her growth and “bounce ideas.” She continued, “I don't have all the answers, so I have supervision of supervision as well...I will bounce ideas off of my colleagues. I used to be in a peer supervision group.”

Michelle and Kevin each spoke to the importance of participating in training or continuing education for conflict resolution. Michelle shared that at a previous workplace, the supervisors would have training and supervision every Friday. Speaking

to the experience she shared, “We carved out that time to have our group supervision. And to me, that allowed us to come together and voice any concerns or any conflicts so that we could deal with them appropriately and also going back to deal with them individually. So, we did a two-pronged approach with everything. So, there was this individual dynamic to the [supervision] relationship, but also seeking feedback from other colleagues.” Kevin also reflected, “Pursing proper training to improve my skill set as a supervisor has been, you know, has been part of the process.” Steve, who is a university professor and supervisor and who has worked over 20 years in the profession, also expressed the need for supervisors to seek supervision regardless of their experience. He explained:

Reach out for supervision for yourself. You’re a supervisor but reach out for supervision or reach out to consultation with someone, someone who knows you, who is a professional, but also knows you well. Because you need someone. I think you need someone, and I find this even as a counselor educator, I need someone who is not going to tell me how awesome I am, how fantastic I am, but a person who's going to call me out and say, “Hey, you're responding this way, [Steve], and that's not like you. What's going on?” You know? So having that person in your corner, I think, is a critical part of supervision.

This theme of supervisor development was emphasized by all the participants. Five of the participants shared the importance of peer consultation, continuing education, training, and supervision of supervision in their development process. The participants

also spoke about the importance of gaining experience over time and shifting from internalizing conflicts to externalizing conflicts over time in their careers.

Personal Views of Conflict

The third theme that emerged from the data was personal views of conflict. All eight participants talked about how their personal views of conflicts impacted conflicts or helped them in mitigating and approaching conflicts. In other words, the participants, regardless of their personal views of conflicts, believed their views impacted the supervision experience and the approaches they took to conflicts. Properties of this theme include a) positive and negative views and b) comfort and discomfort.

Positive and Negative Views. Two different views of conflicts emerged from the data. The first view was that conflicts were natural, beneficial, and positive. For example, Steve defined conflicts in supervision as “natural moments in the process.” He continued, “I’ve seen conflicts as a necessary part of supervisee growth and development. So, for me, I’ve always embraced the conflict. I’ve always considered it to be a critical part of development...because for me, it’s natural... and that makes the conflict both beneficial for both the supervisor, myself, and the supervisee.”

Connie also shared, “Conflict is not necessarily a negative thing, you know, oftentimes conflict leads to growth and development. It can also lead to a stronger supervisory alliance. It could lead to greater trust.” Earlier on in her career as a supervisor, Connie viewed conflicts “like a layperson,” defining conflicts as “a fight between two people.” She described that with more experience as a supervisor and more

self-awareness, over time she has viewed conflicts differently. Beth agreed that “conflict is common, predictable, expected, and actually a part of the growth process.”

The opposing view was that conflicts were negative, criticism, and confrontation, even hurtful. Michelle shared that her experience with conflicts in supervision took place when a director of her program began to criticize students. She also described her own supervision experience when she was a supervisee as a “sink or swim experience.” Paula defined conflicts as being “differences” and “disagreements” between the supervisee and supervisor. She spoke often to giving “constructive criticism” to supervisees and having to write up supervisors and supervisees who she manages for late documentation, unethical behavior, and productivity issues. Diana also viewed conflicts as disagreements “arising from differences of opinions.” She continues, “[conflict occurs] when a supervisee takes a different negative approach to what the supervisor is providing, so anytime the disagreement takes a turn to lack of resolution, definitely that creates a conflict.”

Comfort and Discomfort. Some of the supervisors were personally comfortable with conflicts, while others were uncomfortable with conflicts. Kevin, Diana, and Michelle expressed how they do not like conflicts professionally nor personally but have grown as supervisors to approach conflicts with more comfort and more directly. Steve and Paula shared that they are assertive and will approach conflicts very directly. Both stated that they have always been this way. Steve shared, “My colleagues are often surprised by how comfortable I am with addressing all different aspects of [conflicts],

whether it be gender or culture, style, whatever the case, competence, whatever the case may be. I'm very comfortable with it."

Beth and Rhonda, who are in a peer supervision group together, were the most developmentally focused in their views of conflicts. Six of the supervisors viewed conflicts as leading to supervisee growth and development. Kevin shared of his personal view of conflicts:

My definition and understanding of conflict has grown personally to not view conflict as something negative really, but really as an opportunity for growth. It's almost like in the same way with marriage. Differences between a couple that are naturally going to bring challenges and conflict in relationship, but if it's handled properly, it brings greater understanding on each part in it, then it's an opportunity for growth. And so, in supervision, the same applies.

Beth reflected, "I actually see sometimes when there is conflict as that representing the supervisee going to a different stage of development." She continued:

Initially when supervisory relationships start, usually, you know, of course, supervisees who are psychologically healthy, usually they respect the supervisor and they're reluctant to confront the supervisor, but as the supervisee develops more of their own professional identity and they feel more comfortable, they are more likely to experience conflict with the supervisor when who they are and who the supervisee and who the supervisor are starting to diverge more in ways that they can no longer comfortably tolerate. So, supervisors giving advice, giving perhaps direction, and the supervisee is starting to go, "You know that's not really

me. That's not really what I would do.” And so, you're going to naturally have conflict when that occurs. And to me, it's a sign of that supervisee is starting to really come more into their own.

Beth stated that her view of conflicts in supervision allowed her to shift her approach from more authoritarian earlier in her career to more of a guide. She reported an increase in respect for her supervisees.

Steve also shared that now in his career as a wise supervisor he views conflict as a “developmental issue” versus earlier on in his career when he would internalize the conflict and take it personally. Rhonda shared that a supervisees’ difficulty in approaching conflicts can “stifle the [supervisees’] growth process.” Diana reflected, “[The supervisee] definitely should be growing from a novice to a more experienced or maybe a consultant process with the supervisor. So, there is a growth process, and so if the supervisee is not receptive to the growth process then it just creates even more conflicts.”

The other two supervisors, who did not view conflicts as leading to supervisee growth or development, were the two supervisors in community counseling centers and larger institutions in which the workplace settings were more conflictual overall. There may be a connection between workplace setting and supervisor’s view of conflicts leading to supervisee growth.

Conflict Skills

The fourth theme extracted from the data was conflict skills. This theme related to the more practical skills that all eight supervisors discussed in regard to approaching

conflicts. Three properties within this theme included a) supervisory relationship, b) cultural competency, and c) structure.

Supervisory Relationship. Seven of the supervisors spoke about the importance of having a strong supervision relationship in approaching conflicts. Beth reported, “It’s not so much about right and wrong. It’s about how we are relating.” She described an experience earlier on in her supervision career of a conflict with a supervisee and shared how the supervisory relationship was not strong enough and therefore led to conflict:

At its core, she didn't really get me and my view of the world, and I probably didn't get her and her view in the world. And I felt that there were some things that I should be, you know, teaching and she did not respect my authority. And perhaps she was not wrong only in the sense of, we had not built the kind of relationship where she could trust me. So, you know, as a supervisor, I take responsibility for that. The onus is on me to develop the relationship, and I think our relationship was underdeveloped. So, when I needed to give her feedback that was critical feedback, she couldn't receive that feedback from me, because the relationship wasn't there. So, I feel like I have grown a lot since that event. I mean, when I reflect back on it now, I see it a lot differently than I did then you know back then.

Regarding developing a supportive supervision relationship, Michelle reflected:

Am I addressing the conflict and understanding it in context of the relationship that I have with the supervisee also? That was important. Have I even developed a relationship with them? And so I found that throughout the time, I develop

healthy relationships with appropriate boundaries with my supervisees in a professional setting, but also getting to know them and who they are and their approach and so that allows for us to deal with the conflict in a different way, as opposed to me not, you know, having a relationship with them.

Connie and Rhonda both addressed the importance of building a strong supervisory relationship from the beginning as a way to approach and mitigate conflicts. Connie's advice included:

Spend the beginning part of supervision really getting to know your supervisees. Having a discussion about. "Who are you, as the cultural being? What identities do you bring to supervision? What are your biases about supervision? What are your biases about counseling?" So, having that all on the front end so that when a conflict does occur, you already had that relationship established. You have that trust established.

Rhonda included, "First of all when starting off with a supervisee, I always want to know what their goals and objectives are, what do they want to learn from this experience, what are they hoping to gain from the experience."

Cultural Competency. Five participants talked about cultural competency as a conflict skill. These supervisors also shared experiences of cultural conflicts in supervision. The supervisors who discussed culture often shared that race or cultural differences often led to conflicts in supervision. Steve shared an experience of conflict in supervision with a supervisee of a different race and gender than himself who was "using alarming language" and "verbally attacking" Steve when he challenged her on cultural

competency with a client. He said that through the conflict, “We were able to identify a bias that she had with a specific population. We were able to develop more resources to help her work through that bias.” Diana also shared an example of a conflict with a supervisee who was from a different cultural and ethnic background. She said of the conflict:

This particular case was a supervisee from a different culture and ethnicity who she came into the counseling field with a ministerial approach. I think there was several factors collaborating together [that led to conflicts]. One was a cultural factor, two was an over-spiritualization factor of what counseling was, and three total lack of self-awareness and other awareness in addition to lack of disposition to receive feedback. So that was like the perfect storm.

Diana recommended working through personal issues in regard to conflict and cultural competency in order to approach conflicts effectively. Furthermore, Kevin said, “Even the supervisor supervisee relationship is also a cross cultural exchange” that can lead to conflicts. Beth shared this same opinion while reflecting about a conflict with a past supervisee. She called it a “intercultural conflict,” as she was a Black woman of African American descent and the supervisee was a Black woman of Caribbean descent. Beth shared that this “nuanced multicultural difference,” that others in the supervision group may not have noticed, led to conflicts throughout the supervision relationship, including conflicts regarding multicultural competency. Beth reflected:

I have grown a lot since that event. I mean, when I reflect back on it now, I see it a lot differently than I did then back then. I was just outraged that, you know, here

this other black woman was not respecting me. My focus was in the wrong place. I wasn't focused on the fact that... I had some awareness that she was more vulnerable in the situation than me. Like I was aware that she was the student and I was the instructor and that that made her more vulnerable, but I think I was more like, ego wise, I was probably more caught up in how messed up it was that she probably wouldn't have treated another instructor that way.

Connie addressed throughout her interview how she approaches cultural competency in supervision as a way to mitigate and approach conflicts. She shared:

So within the first week or two, if I'm doing [supervision] group, we have a whole discussion about "Who are you?" You describe yourself as a cultural being. Sometimes I will use worksheets, sometimes I use a collage, sometimes I use clay. It just depends on the semester on what I feel like doing that semester. Sometimes I have them do like a cultural quilt, where they tie in their different cultural beings, and then we talked about what does it mean? What values comes out of this? What behaviors comes out of this? How does that influence how you're going to show up as a counselor? And so I spend at least a good portion of a whole group supervision talking about who they are and then every time we talk about clients...we talk about how does culture show up in that relationship. And so, it's really about having that proactive discussion early on in the supervision relationship.

Structure. Concerning conflict skills and structure, all eight participants talked about practical skills they use to approach conflicts and establish structure in the

supervisory relationship, as well as how these skills have developed over time in their career. Structures and skills most often talked about were utilizing a supervision model or decision-making model to approach conflicts, remediation plans and evaluation tools, and the skills of immediacy and boundary setting. Diana was the most direct about how she uses her supervision model to approach conflicts. She said about a conflict with a supervisee:

I remember using all of the skills and even going to basic counseling skills to break that resistance and it worked. And that's why I love the Discrimination Model, it took for me to transition from a supervisory role to a mild counseling role within the supervision process to reach to her, the person, and then reach to her, the counselor in training. And so I think that was a breakthrough that helped her realize that I was there to help her, not to criticize.

Rhonda also shared the importance of using a supervision model to approach conflicts:

I really didn't focus more on having a supervision model until I was working on my doctorate, and really understanding the importance of that and why there's a lot of supervisors that do have models and they do use them without a doctorate. But for me, over time, I acquired [my supervision model], and I really wish I had that in place in the beginning.

Connie shared, "I think the biggest thing in how to deal with conflict in supervision is to be proactive in the front end. And so, I'm very clear in the very beginning, 'This is my supervisory informed consent. This is how I do business. This is how we handle situations.'" Four of the supervisors also talked about using the skill of

immediacy and approaching conflicts directly and quickly. Steve said about his structure, “I take an ‘in the moment’ approach...and process the conflict after it happens.” Connie also stated that she addressed conflicts, “right away.” Paula shared that she will “confront the conflict directly.” Four supervisors considered boundary setting to be a conflict skill that is necessary for structure and supervision. Connie, Kevin, Diana, and Rhonda shared about setting boundaries up front with their supervisee about what to expect, including how conflicts are handled. One of the supervisors, Michelle, spoke to workplace structure and expressed that having boundaries and structure in place at the worksite mitigated conflicts overall.

Finally, five of the supervisors addressed having regular evaluations of the supervisee and supervisory relationship, including the need for remediation at times. Kevin, Beth and Diana shared experiences of conflict in which they had to put a remediation plan into place and eventually the supervision relationship terminated.

Summary

As a result of the data analysis, four themes were identified: role of the supervisor, supervisor development, personal view of conflict, and conflict skills. Study participants related their experiences of conflicts in supervision as a wise supervisor in regard to their role as a supervisor to give feedback and guide supervisees in their growth, as well as to gatekeep and uphold the ethics of the profession, including the duty to protect clients and endorse supervisees for licensure. Their role was also determined by their work setting and personal values. The participants also touched on supervisor development as a large part in their approach to conflicts, including how their approaches

and experiences have changed throughout their career as they have gained experience. All participants spoke to their personal views of conflicts, but a few of the participants described themselves as directive and assertive while others said they did not like conflicts. Most of the participants spoke to the nature of conflicts in supervision as aiding in the growth of the supervisee. Discussing the participants' conflict skills was related to the research question regarding the approach to conflicts and how the approach has changed. Participants shared about using a supervision model, building the supervisory relationship and knowing their supervisee well, cultural competency, and boundaries. Based on these results, the following chapter consists of discussion, limitations, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the research project including the limitations of the study, a discussion of the research findings, and recommendations for future research in counseling supervision. The purpose of the study was to explore wise, minority supervisor's perceptions about their approaches to conflicts in the supervisory relationship and how their approaches have developed throughout their career. This phenomenological study allowed the researcher to better understand the lived experiences of the supervisors.

Overview of the Research Process

Research participants were recruited purposefully through a nomination from another peer or supervisor in the field. Nominating supervisors were emailed and asked to nominate a wise supervisor for the study based on the selection criteria. Eight supervisors were selected based on the criteria. The supervisors all identified as a member of a racial minority group. They all held licenses as professional counselors in their state as well as counseling supervisor credentials. Their experience as supervisors ranged from 1.5 years to 23 years. The average years of experience was 12.3 years.

Data were collected through a nominator survey, participant demographic survey, participant interviews, and the researcher's reflection journal. Interviews with each participant occurred in March and April 2020. Each interview took place over Zoom

video conferencing and lasted between 30 minutes to an hour in length. Interviews were transcribed electronically by Zoom and checked by the researcher, then analyzed thematically. An external auditor was utilized to review the process and data analysis.

Themes

Data analysis resulted in four themes: role of the supervisor, supervisor development, personal views of conflict, and conflict skills. The following presents a brief overview of each theme.

Role of the Supervisor

In the study, all of the participants described their role as a supervisor and how their role impacted their experience of or approach to conflicts. Role of the supervisor speaks to the supervisors' perceptions of themselves, their responsibilities, and roles as a supervisor in approaching conflicts. The supervisors had varying responses about conflicts and their approaches to conflicts, but all eight supervisors spoke to their role as a supervisor, as well as their role in approaching conflicts. Five properties emerged from the data for the theme of role of the supervisor. The properties included a) guiding supervisee growth, b) giving feedback, c) ensuring ethical practice, d) workplace setting, and e) personal style and values. All eight supervisors said that the role of the supervisor is to guide the supervisees' growth process. Five supervisors spoke often about the role of the supervisor to give feedback and how giving and receiving feedback can often lead to conflicts in supervision. The supervisors also spoke to ethics and the supervisor's role to ensure ethical practice, including gatekeeping, duty to protect the public and clients, and licensure endorsement. Five supervisors addressed workplace setting and their role as a

supervisor in the context of a system or organization. Workplace was seen as a property that was connected with conflicts dependent on the supervisor's ability to choose his or her supervisees versus being assigned supervisees in their work setting. Finally, the supervisors shared about their own personal values and style in approaching conflicts. The responses were split, with some professors sharing they are more assertive, direct, and comfortable with conflicts and others sharing that they are more laid back, less direct, and less comfortable with conflicts personally and professionally. All of the supervisors shared that their role as a supervisor is to approach conflicts to aid in supervisee growth.

Supervisor Development

The second theme, supervisor development, speaks to the growth process of the supervisors over time in their careers in experiencing and approaching conflicts. Properties of this theme included a) experience over time, b) externalizing versus internalizing conflicts, and c) increased competence via training, consultation, and supervision of supervision. All eight participants regularly shared that their development and growth process as a supervisor over time in their career played a role in their approaches to conflicts in supervision. All the supervisors identified that their development resulted from having more experiences with conflicts in supervision over time. Five supervisors spoke about developing over time in their view of conflicts, from internalizing conflicts to externalizing them. The supervisors shared that earlier on as novice supervisors they would have made conflicts about their own deficits or character, but with experience over time, they have shifted to view conflicts as more about the supervisee and less about themselves. This shift allowed them to approach conflicts with

more humility and more directly and confidently. Lastly, six of the supervisors spoke about the importance of gaining additional training, peer consultation, or supervision of supervision in approaching conflicts. The supervisors shared that additional training and outside opinions helped them increase their confidence and grow in their ability to approach conflicts.

Personal Views of Conflict

In this study, the theme of personal views of conflict describes how the supervisors described their personal and inner experience conflicts, including their values and personality. Two primary views of conflicts emerged from the data. The first was from the supervisors who described conflicts as natural, beneficial, and positive. The second view was that conflicts were negative, criticism, and confrontation, even hurtful. Another property of this theme was supervisors' own comfort or discomfort with conflicts. Three of the supervisors shared that they dislike conflicts and have grown over time to approach conflicts in supervision with more comfort and more directly. Two of the supervisors shared that they were very comfortable with conflicts. Three of the supervisors shared that they do not necessarily like conflict, but that they have grown in noticing them and see them as growth opportunities for supervisees. Beth reflected, "I actually see sometimes when there is conflict as that representing the supervisee going to a different stage of development."

Conflict Skills

All of the supervisors shared conflict skills that they have developed and used to approach conflicts. Three properties within this theme included a) supervisory

relationship, b) cultural competency, and c) structure. Seven of the supervisors spoke about the importance of developing a strong supervision relationship in order to approach conflicts well. The participants were aware that when they have experienced conflicts in supervision, oftentimes the supervisory relationship was weak, or they failed to address the relationship. The supervisors included skills that help build the supervisory relationship, including activities to get to know their supervisee and trust building.

Five participants talked about cultural competency and the cultural nature of conflicts in supervision. Four of the supervisors shared an experience of conflict in supervision due to cultural differences in the supervisory relationship. Diana recommended working through personal issues in regard to cultural competency in order to approach conflicts effectively as a supervisor. Furthermore, Kevin said, “Even the supervisor supervisee relationship is also a cross cultural exchange” that can lead to conflicts. He emphasized the importance of building a strong supervisory relationship.

Concerning conflict skills and structure, all eight participants talked about practical skills they use to approach conflicts and establish structure in the supervisory relationship, as well as how these skills and their structure of supervision have developed over time in their career. Structures and skills most often talked about by the participants were utilizing a supervision model or decision-making model to approach conflicts, the skills of immediacy and boundary setting to approach conflicts in the moment, and remediation plans and evaluation tools to create structure after a conflict has occurred.

Discussion of Findings

Findings emerged from the analysis of the data collected through participant interviews and the researcher's reflection journal. Data were coded thematically and interpreted. A discussion of findings for the study's research question follows.

The study's research question focused on wise, minority supervisors' perceptions of their growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision. This question was addressed through the interview questions aimed to gauge the supervisors' growth process with experiencing conflicts and approaching conflicts. The interview questions were, "Has your experience with conflicts changed over the course of your career? If so, how?" and "Has your approach to conflicts changed over the course of your career? If so, how?" Results reflected that all of participants felt their experiences and approaches to conflicts in supervision had changed over the course of their career. The participants shared that as they have gained experience as supervisors, and as they have gained experience approaching conflicts, they feel more comfortable and confident in approaching conflicts, despite their personal views of conflicts. With regard to supervisor development, five of the supervisors shared that their approach has grown over time from internalizing conflicts to externalizing conflicts. They shared that with experience over time, they feel less like an "imposter" and less like conflicts are about them as the supervisor and that conflicts are more about others and not to be taken personally. Six participants also shared that receiving additional training, peer consultation, or supervision of supervision has helped them develop and grow over time in approaching conflicts.

The participants also shared how their role as a supervisor and their personal views of conflicts have changed and grown over time. Although the participants shared different roles and personal views, all of the participants shared that they have grown in their comfort with approaching conflicts throughout their career as supervisors. Conflict skills were also addressed by the supervisors. They shared about having a supervision contract, building a strong supervisory relationship, and cultural competency. Ethics were also discussed in light of conflicts in supervision, including the supervisor's role as a gatekeeper. All of the supervisors shared that their conflict skills have developed over time in their career as they have learned from experience.

Connection to the Literature

While a gap exists in the literature regarding wise supervisors' perspectives of their growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision, the current study gathered research connected to the surrounding areas of the study, including supervisor development, minority supervisor perspectives, conflicts in supervision, and supervisors' growth process in approaching conflicts.

According to Ronnestad & Skovholt (1993), supervisor development and addressing conflicts is important to the field of counseling supervision because if the supervisor is "stagnated" and not developing, he or she is likely to facilitate a stagnated process for the supervisee. The supervisors interviewed all shared about the importance in supervisor development and growth over time in approaching conflicts in supervision. They shared that growth came with experience. Supervisor development was a theme to emerge from the data. Despite their experiences or definitions of conflicts, all the

participants shared that their approaches to conflicts have developed over time in their careers.

Watkins (1993) identified four stages in the clinical supervisor's development: role shock, role recovery and transition, role consolidation, and role mastery. The model's first stage, known as role shock, is determined by new supervisors entering the role of supervisor and being overwhelmed by it, thus they retreat into structure. The second stage, role recovery and transition, is determined by supervisors beginning to recover, collect themselves, and recognize their skills as a supervisor. In this stage, supervisors begin to take steps toward developing a supervisor identity. The third stage, role consolidation, begins as supervisors become more consolidated in their identity and reach higher levels of openness, competence and skill in supervision. Lastly, the fourth stage, role mastery, is defined by the supervisor reaching the highest level of functioning, where a sense of "master supervisor" has been achieved in identity and skill (Watkins, 1993, p. 59). Despite their experience, supervisors in this study shared their experiences of retreating into structure and using skills during conflicts. Even the supervisors who described themselves as open and accepting approached conflicts with structure and boundaries when necessary. Participants spoke to having a supervisor identity, or their role as a supervisor, that aided them in approaching conflicts and connected with their personal views of conflicts. They shared about being open to conflicts and gaining skills over time to approach conflicts. Most of the supervisors interviewed fell into the third and fourth stages of Watkins (1993) model of supervisor development.

Few articles in the literature explore and describe ways for supervisors to approach and address conflicts once they have occurred rather than simply minimizing conflicts. The current study addressed this gap directly by interviewing supervisors about their approaches to conflicts. Bordin (1983) explains that ruptures are very common in the supervisory relationship, and this was confirmed by the supervisors, who each shared stories of personal experiences with conflicts in supervision. Conflicts described by the supervisors ranged from smaller disagreements to “blow ups” in the supervisory relationship. Many of the supervisors shared experiences of conflicts related to worldview differences or cultural differences, which was one of the primary types of conflicts described in the literature (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001).

Korinek and Kimball (2003) described conflicts as “problematic” experiences in the supervisory relationship; however, in the current study, most of the participants viewed conflicts as growing opportunities for supervisees and themselves as supervisors. A majority of the participants viewed conflicts as positive. In regard to the supervisory relationship, Quarto (2002) found that supervisors perceived conflicts in supervision to impede the supervisory working alliance. Inversely, the working alliance can be a by-product of how conflicts are navigated throughout the supervision relationship (Quarto, 2002). The supervisors in the current study agreed that both building a strong supervisory relationship and addressing the relationship are conflict skills they use to approach conflicts. This connected with the theme of conflict skills. Korinek and Kimball (2003) argue that the supervision contract be the supervisor’s main tool in reducing conflicts

upfront. The supervisors in the study spoke to using tools such as a supervision contract and supervision model to approach conflicts.

Much of the existing literature cited describes research that was conducted with supervisees or supervisors who identify as Caucasian (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Korniek & Kimball, 2003; Nelson et al., 2008). In contrast, the current study explored the perspectives of minority supervisors on their growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision. In order to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives, eight minority supervisors were interviewed.

The *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) indicates, “Counseling supervisors are aware of and address the role of multiculturalism/diversity in the supervisory relationship” (p. 13). The *ACA Code of Ethics* also states that counselors are to communicate and practice with cultural appropriateness and must consider cultural implications in encounters with clients and supervisees. According to Johnson (2013), culturally competent supervisors convey acceptance of cultural differences in supervision while helping supervisees examine the impacts of their cultural background on clients. Five participants in the study addressed cultural competency as a skill they use in approaching conflicts in supervision.

A gap in the literature exists in exploring cultural conflicts in supervision, especially from the perspective of minority supervisors. In relation to the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014), the literature explores many facets of cultural competence in counseling supervision including types of multicultural competence, methods and suggestions for developing cultural competence in supervisees, and ethical decision making when facing a potential conflict of cultural competency in the supervisory relationship (Cook, 1994).

Although the current study did not focus on cultural conflicts, most of the participants addressed multiculturalism, cultural competency, and conflicts. Cook (1994) argues that it is up to the supervisor, as the one holding “the highest power in the supervisory relationship” to acknowledge power differences, promote an open supervisory relationship, and model multicultural competency and advancement (p. 132). Many of the supervisors in the current study addressed cultural conflicts, as well as cultural competency skills to approach conflicts and build the supervisory relationship. Interview questions related to multiculturalism were not included in the current study; however, cultural competency emerged in the data and was included in the results as a property of the theme of conflict skills.

Limitations

While this study helps address a gap in the current supervision literature, a few limitations exist. One limitation is that the data for this study was obtained through the self-report measures of video interviews. Self-reporting can influence bias, especially when addressing a sensitive subject such as conflicts (Tracy, 2020). Phenomenological methodology, however, is based on self-report and perceptions of the participants; therefore, self-report was the primary means of data collection (Moustakas, 1994). A second limitation could also involve social response bias by the participants. For example, those who consented to participate in a study about conflicts in supervision may have done so because they have been impacted by conflicts in supervision and have learned from their experiences. A third possible limitation is social desirability. Because one role of the supervisors is to help aid supervisees in their growth, participants may

have felt the need to discuss growth and development and minimize their own possible stagnation as supervisors. Since this was a qualitative study, no quantitative measures were used to assess for social desirability. A fourth limitation could be the racial identity differences between the researcher and the participants. This difference may have impacted participant disclosure during the interviews. One of the participants shared about a conflict he experienced with a Caucasian female supervisee who had a bias against her African American client. During and after the interview, the researcher reflected through reflexive journaling on how the racial difference between the participant and researcher may have impacted the sharing of this experience.

Another possible limitation is the sampling method and the nominations from peers of the wise counseling supervisors. Because the study defined “wise” by both specific selection criteria and participant nomination, there was no way to determine the validity of the nominators or the nomination. For future studies, a more systematic definition of wise could be evaluated or generated.

Participants were interviewed from a wide geographical area, which was made possible by the Zoom interviews. A limitation could be that all of the participants were licensed in southern and southeastern states in the United States. A limitation to video interviews was that this prevented the researcher from being able to sit with the participants in person. The computer video interface has the potential to impact the interview process and the researcher’s and participant’s presence during the interviews. One of the participants had technical difficulties with her Zoom video, and the interview had to take place by audio only. Other supervisors were interviewed via Zoom from their

homes and distractions occurred, such as dogs barking, noise from a lawn mower outside, and children playing in the next room. The Zoom interviews took place in March and April 2020, during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it was helpful that the interviews could take place via Zoom due to social distancing regulations, but the pandemic could have influenced the participant's views on conflicts, supervision, their own growth process, and more. It may be a number of months or years before research describes the impacts of the global pandemic, including potential heightened stress or conflicts that could have influenced participant responses. Almost all the participants addressed the pandemic during the interviews, either at the beginning of the interview or at the end. One of the supervisors shared that she had a conflict with a supervisee who was trying to see clients in person during the pandemic due to financial burden. Considering a global pandemic such as COVID-19 has implications that are yet to be determined, the pandemic could have caused stress for the supervisors who were interviewed. The current researcher was minimally impacted by the pandemic but noticed heightened personal stress due to the heightened stress of many clients and friends whose lives were drastically altered due to the pandemic. Two of the supervisors said they were willing to be interviewed for the study because of the additional time in their schedules due to the pandemic and global crisis. Without the pandemic, they may not have participated because of their busy schedules. It is difficult to know how this uncertainty may have impacted the study's results.

Recommendations

Based on the study's results, recommendations are presented for future counseling supervision research and practice regarding conflicts in supervision, cultural competency, and approaching conflicts.

Supervisory conflicts have been defined in the literature in multiple ways. Most definitions include a focus on the conflict experience's impact on the supervisee such as, "any experience that was hindering, unhelpful, or harmful in relation to the trainee's growth as a therapist" (Gray et al., 2001, p. 371). Quarto (2002) examined conflicts in the supervisory relationship as they relate to the working alliance. He defined conflict behaviorally as, "One's perceived refusal to behave in accordance with how another wants one to behave with regard to the process of supervision" (Quarto, 2002, p. 25). Other studies tend to focus on one type of conflict that can be more operationally defined and measured, such as role conflicts or unmet expectations (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). The first recommendation is that researchers create a more unified definition of conflicts in supervision as well as how supervisors perceive conflict. The current study used one interview question to ask the participants to define conflicts in supervision for themselves. By developing an overarching definition of conflicts or conflict situations in supervision, supervisors could be trained to more easily recognize conflicts and mitigate or approach them.

The second recommendation is to create a psychometric survey that measures or evaluates conflicts in supervision while incorporating some of these results. By creating an instrument for these factors, supervisors could easily assess conflicts in the

supervisory relationship in order to approach them and implement conflict skills. The third recommendation is to recreate this study using a more concrete operational definition for “wise” or to interview supervisors who consider themselves wise. The fourth recommendation is to both interview a wise supervisor and one of their supervisees to ask the supervisory pair about the approach to conflicts in supervision. It would be interesting to examine whether the supervisee and supervisor view the approaches as similar or different. What would the wise supervisors’ supervisees have to share about how their supervisor approached conflicted?

The current research also has several implications for counseling supervision practice. Because conflicts occur frequently in counseling supervision (Quarto, 2002; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001), counseling and supervision training programs should provide additional coursework and support concerning conflicts in counseling supervision, especially as conflicts relate to work setting, supervisor development, and personal views of conflict. This could mean infusing counseling supervision curriculum and training with information about conflict resolution, personal values of the supervisor, and the supervisor development process. The current researcher believes that all supervision trainings, continuing education courses, and academic courses should include information about approaching conflicts with supervisees and conflicts skills. Another implication or recommendation for supervision practice is that supervision training consider mandating peer supervision and supervision of supervision, similar to the current mandates for continuing education in supervision. According to the study participants, many supervisors lack the support necessary to approach conflicts,

especially those in work settings where they may feel isolated as a supervisor. Not only would this be beneficial for supervisors, but this would be beneficial for the supervisees. Most of the study's participants suggested peer consultation and supervision of supervision to approach conflicts and increase the skills and support needed to approach conflicts in supervision.

Another recommendation for supervision research and practice relates to minority supervisors specifically. Research has shown that when a supervisor and supervisee are of different races, many of the conflicts in larger society related to race may impact the relationship and learning process (Page, 2003). Cook (1994) states that if the supervisor is unwilling to discuss race in supervision, there exist negative impacts for supervisees not only in the supervision relationship, but also in working with clients of diverse backgrounds. With appropriate consideration and discussion, however, race differences have the potential to create a space for cultural identity growth in both the supervisor and supervisee (Page, 2003). Most of the participants in the current study addressed the need to discuss cultural differences in the supervision relationship, to "get to know" their supervisees as cultural beings, and to approach conflicts with cultural competency. Future research will need to address the gap in the literature surrounding minority supervisor development as well as power dynamics and conflicts in supervision related to race differences. The current study did not focus on cultural conflicts; however, a recommendation would be for future studies to focus on minority supervisor perspectives and multiculturalism in supervision relationships.

A final recommendation would be for community agency leaders and counselor educators such as supervisors, clinical directors, program directors, as well as counselors who serve in community, clinical, organizational, and hospital settings to be educated on conflicts, conflict management, and cultural competency in supervision. Providing supervisors and directors in leadership positions with information about conflicts in supervision, especially that conflicts can lead to supervisee and supervisor growth and development, could be helpful on a wide scale for the profession. Providing peer consultation and supervision of supervision could offer supervisors support to process conflicts and develop conflict skills.

Conclusion

Chapter five overviewed the research process, discussed the results of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research. Regarding this study's findings, four themes emerged from the qualitative data and included role of the supervisor, supervisor development, personal views of conflict, and conflict skills. These themes resulted from the perceptions of wise supervisors about their growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision. Additionally, within the theme of role of the supervisor, properties of this theme were guiding supervisee growth, giving feedback, ensuring ethical practice, workplace setting, and personal style and values. Furthermore, the theme of supervisor development produced additional properties of experience over time, externalizing versus internalizing conflicts, and increased competence via training, consultation and supervision of supervision. The fourth theme, conflict skills, included the three properties of supervisory relationship, cultural competency, and structure.

Significant gaps in the literature exist regarding the exploration of wise, minority supervisors' perceptions of conflicts and approaching conflicts in supervision, and multiple authors have recommended additional research in this area (Quarto, 2002; Nelson et al., 2008; Korinek & Kimball, 2003). This study and its findings help contribute to the counseling supervision literature by fulfilling an examination of minority supervisors' perceptions related to conflicts and approaching conflicts in supervision, in addition to supervisor development and conflicts. This is helpful because most of the literature concerning these factors are focused on supervisee development and the perspectives of Caucasian supervisors (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Chen & Bernstein, 2000; Moskowitz & Rupert, 1983; Quarto, 2002).

Limitations of this study included self-reporting by participants, potential social response bias and social desirability, as well as racial identity differences between the participants and researcher. A limitation is listed related to the sampling method and definition of wise supervisor. A final limitation relates to the video-based interviews which took place during the global COVID-19 pandemic in March and April 2020. Recommendations for future research included developing a unified definition of conflicts in supervision as well as a psychometric survey that measures conflicts in supervision, recreating the current study using a different operational definition of wise, or having supervisors self-select as wise, and interviewing supervisee and supervisor pairs on their approaches to conflicts. Recommendations for counseling supervision and education, particularly for minority supervisors, were also discussed.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Supervisor Email
2. Gender
3. What category below includes your age?
 - a. 21-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50-59
 - e. 60-69
 - f. 70+
4. Are you Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Cuban-American, or some other Hispanic or Latino group?
 - a. I am not Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino
 - b. Mexican
 - c. Mexican American
 - d. Chicano
 - e. Puerto Rican
 - f. Cuban
 - g. Cuban American
 - h. Some other Hispanic or Latino group
 - i. From multiple Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino groups

5. Are you White, Black or African American, American Indian, or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or some other race?
 - a. White
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - d. Asian
 - e. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - f. From multiple races
6. What is the highest counseling-related degree you have received?
 - a. Master's degree
 - b. Doctoral degree
7. What was your degree and/or program focus?
8. What professional license(s) do you currently hold?
 - a. Licensed Professional Counselor
 - b. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
 - c. Clinical Psychologist
 - d. Other
9. In what state(s) are you professionally licensed?
10. What supervision/supervisor credentialing do you hold, if any?
11. How many years of experience do you have as a clinical supervisor? Please include the number of years.

APPENDIX B
NOMINATION SURVEY

APPENDIX B
NOMINATION SURVEY

Thank you for nominating a wise counseling supervisor for the study.

Criteria information:

A wise supervisor can be defined as someone who is relied on by his or her peers and community to provide excellent clinical supervision, who exemplifies the ethics of the profession, is engaged in the field and working actively with supervisees, and who is often sought out for mentorship and supervision.

Additionally, a wise supervisor in this study has attained a minimum of a graduate level training, education, and supervision in counseling and has the credentials necessary for a counselor supervisor as well as licensure as a professional counselor.

Finally, the supervisor identifies as a member of a racial minority group.

1. Wise Counseling Supervisor Full Name
2. Wise Counseling Supervisor's Email
3. Why did you nominate this person as a wise supervisor?
4. Why do you consider this person a wise supervisor?
5. Your email address

APPENDIX C
IRB APPROVAL FORM

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL FORM



*Institutional Review Board
For Research Involving Human Subjects*

Monday, March 16, 2020

Lindsay Nicole Ayers
3001 Mercer University Drive
Other
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: Approaching conflicts over time in counseling supervision: perspectives of wise minority supervisors (H2003086)

Dear Ayers:

On behalf of Mercer University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 02-Mar-2020 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with the 2018 Federal Regulations [21 CFR 56.110\(b\)](#) and [45 CFR 46.110\(b\)](#) (for expedited review) and was approved under category(ies) [_6, _7](#) per 63 FR 60364.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 16-Mar-2020. The protocol expires on 15-Mar-2021. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and perspectives of wise, minority supervisor's approaches to conflicts in the supervisory relationship. Using the following research question as a guide "What are the lived experiences of wise, minority supervisor's growth process in approaching conflicts in supervision?" the goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of how wise minority supervisors approach conflicts and how their approach has grown or developed across their career.

NOTE: You **MUST** report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and **ALL** accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our [Satisfaction Survey](#) and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ava Chambliss-Richardson".

Ava Chambliss-Richardson, Ph.D., CIP, CIM.
Director of Research Compliance
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization's (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

Mercer University IRB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone: 478-301-4101 | Email: ORC_Mercer@Mercer.Edu | Fax: 478-301-2329
1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, Georgia 31207-0001

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT



College of Professional Advancement

Approaching conflicts over time in counseling supervision: Perspectives of wise minority supervisors

Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators

Lindsay Nicole Ayers, MA College of Professional Advancement of Mercer University, Department of Counseling
3001 Mercer University Drive, Atlanta, GA 30341, 678-356-1357

Purpose of the Research

This research study is designed to explore the perceptions of wise minority supervisors on their approaches to conflicts in counseling supervision and how their approach has developed overtime in their careers.

The data from this research will be used to capture the essence of supervisors' perceptions on approaching conflicts in supervision.

The results will be used for the researcher's dissertation and to address the gap in the research.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Your participation will take approximately one hour.

Potential Risks or Discomforts

There may be some foreseeable emotional discomfort.

You have the right to stop or discontinue participating in the study at any time during the interview.

Potential Benefits of the Research

Participation in this study may allow you to feel that your story is being heard and allow you to share your experience in supervision confidentially.

There are potential benefits to the field of mental health, counselor education and supervision.

Confidentiality and Data Storage

All recordings will be stored in an encrypted device and pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity.

Video recordings will be used via Zoom to transcribe the interview and analyze codes and themes.

Video recordings will only be accessed by the primary investigator and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study.

Mercer IRB
Approval Date 03/16/2020
Protocol 03/15/2021
Expiration Date _____

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a participant, you may refuse to participate at any time. To withdraw from the study please contact L. Nicole Ayers at Lindsay.nicole.ayers@live.mercer.edu.

Questions about the Research

If you have any questions about the research, please speak with [L. Nicole Ayers at Lindsay.nicole.ayers@live.mercer.edu](mailto:Lindsay.nicole.ayers@live.mercer.edu) or [Morgan Kiper-Riechel at riechel_me@mercercer.edu](mailto:Morgan.Kiper-Riechel@mercercer.edu).

In Case of Injury

It is unlikely that participation in this project will result in harm to subjects. If an injury to a subject does occur, he or she may be seen at a local or regional medical facility. All expenses associated with care will be the responsibility of the participant and his/her insurance.

Audio or Video Taping

The interview will be video-taped through Zoom and the names in the transcription of the interview will be pseudonyms.

Reasons for Exclusion from this Study

You will be excluded from the study if you are under the age of 18, are not licensed as a professional counselor, do not have supervision credentials as a counseling supervisor, and do not identify as a member of a racial minority.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University's IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your satisfaction. Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study.

_____	_____
Research Participant Name (Print)	Name of Person Obtaining Consent (Print)
_____	_____
Research Participant Signature	Person Obtaining Consent Signature
_____	_____
Date	Date