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BUILDING BRIDGES: SUPERVISORS' MANAGEMENT OF COMPETENCY QUESTIONING

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BUILDING BRIDGES: SUPERVISORS' MANAGEMENT OF COMPETENCY

QUESTIONING

By

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Abstract

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Abstract

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Clinical supervision is an opportunity for supervisors to influence and shape the education of counselors-in-training. Exchanging feedback between supervisees and supervisors can be a challenging aspect of supervision and can have profound impact on the efficacy of supervision, the safety of clients, and the supervision relationship. Understanding the experience and process that supervisors go through when their competence is questioned could be critical to understanding the supervision relationship. Successful management of competency questioning contributes to the efficacy of the supervision relationship, better protection of clients, and positive development of supervisees. Using grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014), this qualitative study addresses the experience and process supervisors have when their competence is questioned by a supervisee. Ten supervisors shared about how they manage competency questioning in supervision, and the outcomes that occur after their competence is questioned. Two rounds of interviews were conducted, with six participants participating in the first round of interviews, three participants participating in the second round of interviews, and one participant participating in both rounds. Results indicate that supervisors perceive questioning and then continue managing four essential components to return to the tasks of supervision: grounding in psychological safety, bracketing, attuning to supervisee needs, and attending to power. If the process of managing the essential components is interrupted, outcomes include: programmatic mistrust, leaving the field, and persistent rupture. This theory provides a framework for how supervisors can manage the rupture of competency questioning in the supervision relationship, as well as systemic factors critical for supervision to flourish.

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Supervision is an integral part of the counseling profession and serves many purposes in the training of counselors (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Competence in supervision is acquired through modeling, experience, education, and practice in the field. Given that supervision is an essential experience for counselor development and vital to ensuring client safety, knowing more about the situations and conditions that alter its effectiveness is valuable. The experience and process of challenging a supervisor's competence is deserving of a closer look. Though there is general agreement in the literature about the importance of competent practice in supervision, there is little research about having one's competence questioned as a clinical supervisor.

CHAPTER 1: Conceptual Framework

One of the most important pedagogical strategies that Counselor Educators have is supervision. Clinical supervision is an opportunity for supervisors to influence and shape the education of counselors-in-training and focus on the individual needs of the supervisee. As such, the supervision relationship serves many purposes for the supervisee, the supervisor, and the client. Central to the tasks of supervision are factors of evaluation and feedback. Exchanging feedback between supervisees and supervisors can be a challenging aspect of supervision and can have profound influence on the efficacy of supervision, the safety of clients, and the supervision relationship (Nelson et al., 2008).

As one of the essential components of supervision, I am fascinated by the supervision relationship. I have become curious about tensions to the supervision alliance, and how supervision dyads manage stressors. One such strain is when a supervisee questions the competence of their supervisor. This research study provides some insight into that process, adding to our understanding of the supervision alliance and how it might change once questioning happens. To add to the body of knowledge about supervision, this study strives to construct a description of the experience and process that supervisors encounter when their competence is questioned by supervisees.

Supervision

There are several definitions of supervision in the literature that include its multiple roles and purposes. These definitions highlight the tasks of protecting the public, monitoring the quality of professional services offered, and gatekeeping (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Falender and Shafranske (2004) broadly define clinical supervision as:

a distinct professional activity in which education and training aimed at developing science-informed practice are facilitated through a collaborative interpersonal process. It involves observation, evaluation, feedback, facilitation of supervisee self-assessment, and acquisition of knowledge and skills by instruction, modeling, and mutual problem-solving. Building on the recognition of the strengths and talents of the supervisee, supervision encourages self-efficacy. Supervision ensures that (counseling) is conducted in a competent manner in which ethical standards, legal prescriptions, and professional practices are used to promote and protect welfare of the client, the profession, and society at large (Falender & Shafranske, 2004, p. 3).

This definition of supervision begins to illustrate the many functions that supervision can have in counselor education and training and how vital it is to counselor development and client protection. With their supervisors holding such significant responsibilities, supervisees want to know that their supervisors are competent and will help them get what they need to be great clinicians (Mehr et al., 2010).

While the above definition broadly illustrates supervision, there are several other components to explore to understand supervision and its importance more fully in counselor training and development. Supervisors can teach new counselors by instructing them in basic psychotherapy and assessment skills, increasing their clinical skills and expertise through facilitation of clinical experiences, assisting with challenging clients, teaching new skills and techniques, and demonstrating multicultural sensitivity to facilitate working with new populations (Barnett et al., 2007). A supervisor needs to be competent in each of these areas in order to effectively supervise counselors in training. If a supervisee doesn't believe that their

supervisor is competent in any one of these areas, supervision may be ineffective and the supervisee or client may be at risk of harm (Barnett et al., 2007).

The Role of Supervision in Counselor Education

Currently, supervision is used as a primary form of pedagogy in continuing education for new counselors. It is required of pre-licensure counselors, and many clinicians recommend seeking supervision even after it is no longer mandated by governing boards or education programs. Supervision is a vital part of the development of new counselors in the process of attaining clinical competence and establishing a counselor's professional identity (Barnett et al., 2007).

Dual Supervisor Roles

Supervision plays many roles in counselor education, and supervisors often function in diverse ways in the development of counselors in training (Gottleib et al., 2007). It is common that faculty members (and other instructors) who are teaching counselors-in-training in classroom settings, are also supervising their clinical experiences (Gottleib et al., 2007). These dual roles can sometimes lead to challenging situations that could threaten the supervision alliance and the effectiveness of supervision (Gottleib et al., 2007). Unfortunately, multiple roles in supervision have not been adequately researched in Counselor Education, so it is unclear what the true influences of these dual roles are (Gottleib et al., 2007). Gottleib et al. (2007) suggest that the multiple relationships commonly shared by counselor education faculty who are also operating as supervisors generally share an evaluative component, so the boundaries commonly found in supervision are less likely to be crossed than other types of dual roles. Regardless, supervisors should attend to the power differential between supervisors and supervisees and remain mindful of the impact that multiple relationships can have on the supervision relationship

(Gottleib et al., 2007). There is no research about the potential effect that multiple faculty/supervisor relationships can have on the supervisee's perception of supervisor competence.

Evaluation and Gatekeeping

Evaluation and gatekeeping are particularly important responsibilities of the supervisor and can sometimes come into direct conflict with the supervision alliance. If a supervisor finds evidence that a supervisee is or might be harming clients, the supervisor has the responsibility to address the problem in a way that is helpful to the supervisee, but ultimately protects the client and the public (Barnett et al., 2007). Barnett et al. (2007) argue that interventions should include addressing the issue in supervision, providing recommendations for remediation and intervention, allowing for reasonable change to occur, and responding to the situation with the best interest of the client as the top priority if positive, sustainable change should not occur. New counselors may experience extreme discomfort when their counseling competence is questioned and could result in harm to the supervision alliance, potentially leading to supervisee non-disclosure or other harmful behaviors (Barnett et al., 2007).

The various roles of the supervisor can sometimes be at odds with each other, especially when considering the professional mandate of gatekeeping balanced with a primary goal of supervisee development and trust (Falender & Shafranske, 2017). This balance between encouraging growth and honesty in the supervisee and keeping the public safe from harmful clinicians, can pose a significant challenge for supervisors and supervisees alike. For the supervisor, attending to the relationship between supervisor and supervisee, creating a culture of feedback and honesty, and displaying genuine and congruent concern for supervisee learning and wellbeing will help when navigating the many roles of a supervisor (Bernard & Goodyear,

2014). Supervisees want to know that their supervisors are competent, especially when considering the evaluative and gatekeeping roles that supervisors play (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature about what happens when a supervisor's competence is questioned, and how this type of challenge influences supervision.

There are several other aspects about competency questioning that we don't know about as well. These topics include the process that supervisors go through when their competence is questioned by supervisees as well as what their experience is when their competence is questioned. This study strives to illustrate and generate a theory about the experience and process that supervisors go through when their competence is questioned in clinical supervision as well as the potential influence that this process might have on the supervision alliance and the efficacy of supervision.

Supervision Training. Supervision may be the strongest line of defense in protecting the public from inadequate or unethical counseling practice and it is clear that being an excellent clinician doesn't always translate to adequate supervision (Ellis et al., 2014). Supervisors, even those with excellent clinical skills, need training in supervision because being a good clinician doesn't guarantee that one is also a good supervisor. Being a great clinician isn't enough to be a great supervisor; "one must add experience and skill in supervision itself" (Barnett et al., 2007 p. 270). As such, it is in the public's best interest to educate supervisors in the art and practice of supervision, not just in clinical skills.

Though supervision is such an integral component of counselor education, many researchers agree that there are inadequate requirements for supervision training for supervisors. Falender and Shafranske (2004) argue that supervision training should be a required component for all counseling graduate programs due to the fact that most clinicians will, at some point in

their careers, be asked to supervise new counselors. Further research into the possibility that additional education on supervision might enhance supervisees' experience as supervisees would be valuable. More understanding of how supervisors navigate challenges of supervision, including questioning of their own competence, will add to the body of knowledge about supervision and provide valuable insights for supervision preparation.

Supervision Relationship

The supervision relationship is heralded as vital to supervisee development. (Barnett et al., 2007; Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Ellis et al., 2006). The quality of the supervision alliance influences both helpful and unhelpful changes in supervisees and can impact the level and vulnerability of supervisee disclosure (Mehr et al., 2015). Just as supervisees use counseling skills with their clients, supervisors also use bracketed counseling skills in supervision to influence and grow the alliance. This alliance lays the foundation for supervisee growth and intervention (Ladany et al., 2013). The supervision alliance, as an essential component of supervision, is created through collaboration between the supervisor and supervisee, as well as feedback and assessment about the supervisee's level of clinical competence (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Competent supervisors know to attend to the supervision alliance and are intentional and skilled in that focus (Ladany et al., 2013).

One of the most challenging aspects of the supervision dyad is the management of the power differential between supervisor and supervisee. This power differential can, at times, mimic that of the counselor/client power dynamic, though with a few significant differences. This power hierarchy can complicate the transparency and vulnerability required for effective supervision (Falender & Shafranske, 2017). This difficulty can be mitigated by the establishment of clear expectations and communication from both parties, especially from the supervisor

(Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Clarity of expectations and evaluation criteria can serve to build trust in the supervision dyad and open the door for real and vulnerable disclosures from the supervisee (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). This clarity can create a normative culture of feedback that may allow for the supervisee to also give feedback to the supervisor. This feedback cycle is likely a valuable tool in the development of competence in supervision for the supervisor, as well as an opportunity for the supervisee to express concerns about trust in the supervision relationship.

Due to the importance of the supervision relationship in supervisee development and client protection, it is vital that ruptures and strains on the supervision alliance be identified and managed (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Supervisees can feel unsafe or afraid to disclose their mistakes if there are significant ruptures that a supervisor is unaware of or has ignored (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Both seen and unseen ruptures can lead to ineffective and even harmful supervision and can result in an incompetent clinician putting clients at risk without the supervisor's knowledge (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Questioning a supervisor's competence could lead to a strain or rupture in the supervision relationship and could put counselors in training or their clients at risk. A supervisor's ability to generate feedback on their supervision and elicit disclosure from supervisees is critical to the supervision process. Understanding more about how supervisors manage ruptures and learn about supervisee questioning will add greater detail and context to the nuances of navigating an effective supervision relationship.

Gatekeeping

While the development of clinical competence is at the heart of supervision, the supervisor is also responsible for many other roles including gatekeeping. Gatekeeping in counselor education is defined as "the responsibility of all counselors, including student

counselors, to intervene with professional colleagues and supervisors who engage in behavior that could threaten the welfare of those receiving their services" (Foster & McAdams, 2009 p. 271). Gatekeeping in counselor education can happen due to concerns with counselor disposition, professionalism, and clinical work (Foster & McAdams, 2009). The primary function of gatekeeping in counselor education is to shield the general population from harmful counseling. Gatekeeping can cause significant strain on the supervision relationship due to its evaluative nature and high stakes consequences.

When supervisees are scared that they will not be viewed favorably by their supervisor, and might be ejected from the whole profession, their likelihood of disclosing negative behavior or ruptures in the supervision alliance is reduced (Mehr et al., 2010). This lack of disclosure and fear of the supervisor's power may be reasons for supervisees choosing to avoid directly challenging a supervisor's competence. Instead, supervisees could opt to indirectly challenge their supervisor or avoid honestly engaging in supervision at all. Similarly, supervisors may view challenges to their competence as attempts at a means of protection for the supervisee. Along the same vein, it is possible that some supervisees might believe that if they can discredit a supervisor's competence who is engaging in gatekeeping the student, then the consequences of gatekeeping may not materialize.

Gatekeeping also occurs in relation to counselor disposition. When interventions are required due to problems with counselor disposition, supervisors and instructors can be challenged on how to intervene in the best way (Mehr et al., 2010). Issues of counselor disposition can be closely tied to multicultural, family of origin, personality, and other factors. Teasing apart dispositional behaviors that pose a clinical or professional problem from those that are not problematic and originate from healthy differences between supervisee and supervisor,

require skilled and reflective supervisors. Competency in the art of broaching dispositional concerns is required in order to facilitate discussions, interventions, and ethical gatekeeping.

Protecting the client, teaching the counselor in training, and broaching dispositional concerns may be factors in a supervisor's experience and process when their competence is questioned and illustrate the need to study what this process might be like for some supervisors. Additional insight into supervisors' processes when their competence is questioned in clinical supervision helps supervisors navigate the challenging role that the task of gatekeeping requires of supervisors.

Power, Identity and Social Hierarchy

Paramount in the discussion of the supervision alliance is the incorporation of multicultural considerations into each relationship that supervisors and supervisees foster (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Singh & Chun, 2010). Developing competence with regards to diversity in supervision is vital in creating a sense of relative emotional safety for supervisees and supervisors alike (Singh & Chun, 2010). Attending to diverse identities that both supervisees and supervisors hold is critical in effective supervision, especially because of the inherent power differential (Singh & Chun, 2010). When a supervisee feels that their identities are seen and respected and won't be a barrier (as they may be outside the supervision relationship), they are much more likely to engage in the process of giving and receiving productive feedback—a process that is necessary for supervision to be effective (Nelson et al., 2008).

When examining experiences of competency questioning in supervision, it is critical to attend to as many of the identities at play in the situation as is possible. Supervisors often experience transference of the supervisee's relationship with authority figures or experiences of oppression and should respond accordingly (Nelson et al., 2008). Attending to diversity within

the supervisor/supervisee relationship, within the client/counselor relationship, and the analysis of all people and society relevant to the situation is paramount to effective supervision (Singh & Chun, 2010). No supervisor will ever accomplish truly being culturally competent because of the systems of oppression that are in place in every society, and the complexity of diverse multicultural perspectives. Intentionally seeking out dialogue about diversity within the supervision alliance often serves to improve the relationship (Nelson et al., 2008). A supervision alliance that can respectively and productively handle the broaching of challenging subjects and the respectful exchange of feedback associated with diverse supervision is key to effective supervision (Nelson et al., 2008).

> Falender and Shafranske (2004) define supervision diversity competence as:
> incorporation of self-awareness by both supervisor and supervisee…an interactive
> encompassing process of the client or family, supervisee/psychotherapist, and supervisor,
> using all of their (multiple) diversity factors. It entails awareness, knowledge, and
> appreciation of the interaction among the client's, supervisee/psychotherapist's, and
> supervisor's assumptions values, biases, expectations, and worldviews; integration and
> practice of appropriate, relevant and sensitive assessment and intervention strategies and
> skills; and consideration of the larger milieu of history, society, and socio-political
> variables (p. 125).

One of the ways that the supervision relationship can benefit both the supervisee and supervisor is by intentionally fostering awareness of multicultural considerations in both the therapeutic alliance and the supervision alliance. By modeling curiosity, respect, and broaching, the supervisor can significantly influence the knowledge, awareness and skills that a supervisee brings to their diverse therapeutic relationships (Nelson et al., 2008). Supervisors impact the

development of multicultural competence for supervisees (Ladany et al., 1997). The development of multiculturally competent strategies and curiosity in supervisees are significantly influenced by supervision (Ladany et al., 1997), and supervisors must attend to multicultural factors in the supervision relationship in order to assist the development of multicultural as well as clinical competence among supervisees (Ladany et al., 1997).

Supervisor neglect of multicultural considerations in the supervision relationship may cause supervisees to question the competency of their supervisor in other areas as well (Ellis et al., 2014). A supervisor silencing or ignoring oppression and how power and diverse identities influence clinical supervision can set the stage for supervisees to reduce their faith in supervision, feel that they or their client might be marginalized in the supervision relationship, or cause harm to the supervisee (Ellis et al., 2014). Multicultural humility is a requirement for effective and competent supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014) and may be a factor in the process of managing supervisee challenges to supervisor competence.

Supervision in Other Fields

While supervision is vital to the development of new counselors, there are several other fields that also employ supervision in the training of their new entrants to the field. These include nursing and teaching, as well as others. Through examining supervisory relationships and roles in other fields, it seems likely that exploring supervision could be valuable in both nursing and teaching as well.

Much of the research available on clinical supervision in nursing focuses on the supervision relationship and clinical outcomes for the nursing students, though there is a gap in the literature around the process of nursing students challenging the competence of their supervisors. Examining the process that counseling supervisors go through when their

competence is questioned might shed some light for the field of nursing about what happens when nursing supervisor competence in supervision is questioned.

Similar to nursing and counselor education, supervision is an element in teacher education. Though there is a lot of research on the efficacy of teaching supervision, there is very little research on how teaching supervisors respond to supervisee reactions, including challenges to their competence (Bjørndal, 2020). Exploring the responses to supervisee challenges of competence in supervision in counselor education might illustrate the process in other fields as well.

Competence in Supervision

Like the various definitions of supervision, there are also several different conceptualizations of what a competent or effective supervisor is and does. Falender and Shafranske (2014) define effective supervision as: "practice that encourages supervisee development and autonomy, facilitates the supervisory relationship, protects the client, and enhances both client and supervisee outcomes" (p. 1031).

There are several interventions and practices that can positively impact supervisor competence. These include an effective supervision alliance, clarity around gatekeeping, excellence in the supervisor's own clinical work, and making explicit what the point of supervision is for the field of counseling and the counselor-in-training. Attending to multicultural considerations in the supervision relationship transcends each of these practices in supervision. Falender and Shafranske (2014) outline several theoretical ways that these goals align to achieve an effective supervision relationship including assessment strategies, demonstration of respect, intentional collaboration, engagement, and observation of a client's clinical skills (see Appendix

A). Transparency and intentionality in each of these aspects of clinical supervision can communicate supervision competence to supervisees (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

Ladany et al. (2013) argued that the most effective supervisor/supervisee dyads included an alliance with a strong emotional bond and general agreement on the concepts, tasks, and agenda of supervision. Additionally, one of the most discussed factors in effective supervision is the supervisor's empowerment of the supervisee to act autonomously while balancing the need for consistent, clear feedback (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). Supervisor exploration of the supervisee's own involvement and influence in the experience and process of both counseling and supervision is a necessary aspect of a healthy supervision relationship (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

One of the inherent tensions in the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is the supervisor's gatekeeping responsibility. If a supervisee is constantly concerned about being evaluated, unsure of the expectations around evaluation, or unclear of the evaluation process, they may be less likely to disclose mistakes, leaving the supervisor with an inaccurate representation of their clinical skills (Barnett et al., 2007). At best, this tendency toward nondisclosure can protect the supervisee in the event of a harmful supervisor and inhibit the growth of the supervisee; at worst, supervisees could hide harmful ideas, attitudes and practices that could negatively impact clients and the public (Barnett et al., 2007). Transparency about the process and frequency of evaluation can serve to strengthen the supervisory relationship (Barnett et al., 2007). If evaluation hasn't been addressed in supervision, it is likely already a strain on the supervision alliance, even if the supervisor is not aware of it (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

One of the main skills supervisees state that they value is the knowledge that their supervisor is an excellent clinician (Ladany et al., 2013). Supervisees want to know that their

supervisors can do and have done what they are asking their supervisees to do (Ladany et al., 2013). A supervisor's ability to navigate clinical topics within the supervision relationship, in ways that illustrate their clinical abilities, demonstrates competence to supervisees (Ladany et al., 2013).

A competent supervisor can develop a strong supervision relationship by first clarifying roles, tasks and expectations in a thorough informed consent process (Ladany et al., 2013). The supervisor should build rapport and attend to the supervision alliance using basic counseling skills, bracketed to ensure that the supervisee knows their disclosures and vulnerability are all part of a normative evaluation and growth process (Ladany et al., 2013). Supervision can be focused on supervisee disclosure, balanced with administrative and personal support. The effective supervisor only uses self-disclosure in the best interest of the supervisee, always keeping in mind the safety of the public and the client (Ladany et al., 2013). These supervisor behaviors illustrate what a competent supervisor might do to strengthen a supervisees faith in their supervisor's competence, but what happens when supervisor competency is questioned? There is no research that has explored the navigation of the supervision relationship when supervisor competence is questioned.

Developmental Considerations

Bernard and Goodyear (2014) describe several different developmental theories and stages that incorporate supervisee resistance or challenging behavior. One such approach, titled the Integrated Developmental Model (IDM), describes the supervisee encountering diverse experiences around their autonomy as they journey through their development as a clinician (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). Initially, supervisees have very little autonomy and rely heavily on their supervisors for direction, intervention, and encouragement through the supervisor's roles

as counselor and teacher (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). As they progress, practice, and learn, they experience a tension between autonomy and independence in their role as a clinician and tension may arise when supervisors take a more directive role (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Next, supervisees begin to master their skills and view supervision through a more collegial lens, and tension reduces with the supervisor who leans heavily on the consultation role (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). As is described in IDM, the developmental level of supervisees can influence the frequency and volume of questioning the supervisor (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). While it could appear that tension in the supervision relationship may point to supervisees questioning the competence of their supervisor, it also could be that the supervisees who are challenging the supervision process are questioning their need for supervision and oversight, rather than the supervisor themselves.

Interestingly, the research on competence in supervision has indicated that supervisee developmental stage doesn't impact their experience with effective and ineffective supervision (Ladany et al., 2013). Instead, it reflects the supervisees immediate attitude about the need for supervision itself. Ladany et al., (2013) call into question the theories that require different supervisor behaviors based off supervisee developmental needs, due to a lack of empirical support. In contrast, many supervisors experience some resistance at different points in a supervisee's development (Nelson et al., 2008), so the question of whether development matters might be more about the way supervision is questioned rather than whether it happens or not. When asked, supervisors identified the need to attend to developmental needs of supervisees (Nelson, et al., 2008), so it appears that more research is needed on what developmental considerations matter the most. Teasing out the different processes that supervisors go through

between general challenges in supervision and when supervisees are directly challenging their competence is valuable so that we can better understand effective supervisor responses.

Multicultural Competence in Supervision

One component that is especially important as the field of counselors and clients becomes more and more diverse is multicultural competence. Supervisors need to recognize power dynamics associated with a supervisee's (as well as their own) multiple social and personal identities and remain curious about how these dynamics influence the supervisee and supervision. Additionally, supervisors need to "recognize the political nature of supervision, acknowledge experiences of privilege and oppression, affirm all forms of diversity, and celebrate supervisor resilience" (Singh & Chun, 2010, p. 45). An important addition is that supervisors should also honor supervisee resilience (Ellis et al., 2014). Each of these tasks come together to communicate that the supervisee and client identities and experiences of oppression are understood, valued, and not negative deciding factors in the evaluation process. Supervisees who experience multicultural incompetence in supervision such as microaggressions and silencing from their supervisor experience harm to their emotions, sense of self, and their development as a counselor (Singh & Chun, 2010; Ellis et al., 2014).

When a supervisor neglects to acknowledge multicultural considerations in supervision, the efficacy of supervision as a whole could be compromised (Singh & Chun, 2010). Attention to the multicultural aspects of supervision is essential to a healthy supervision alliance, the protection of clients, and to counselor-in-training development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Further description of the supervisor process when their competence in this aspect of supervision is questioned provides us with additional insight into supervision.

Supervisee Perspectives

While there is an abundance of research about supervision as a whole, (definition, role, effectiveness) there is very little research available on what happens for the supervisor when their competence in supervision is questioned by their supervisee. This paucity of research impedes the ability of the field of counselor education of understanding this multifaceted process. While there is no research on that process, some researchers have explored potential outcomes of poor supervision from the supervisee perspective.

Supervisee Perspectives on Poor, Bad, and Inadequate Supervision

One area in the realm of supervision that has received a significant amount of attention in the literature is when supervisees receive poor supervision. Ellis et al. (2014)

> defined harmful supervision as supervisory practices that result in psychological, emotional, and/or physical harm or trauma to the supervisee (e.g., the supervisor's sexual intimacy, sexual harassment, or sexual improprieties with a supervisee; aggressive and abusive behavior; violation of the supervisee's boundaries; microaggressions) (p. 435).

While harmful supervision definitely exists in many supervision relationships, there is also a category of supervision that is known as bad supervision. Bad supervision is defined by Ellis et al. (2014) as

> ineffective supervision that does not traumatize or harm the supervisee, and that is characterized by one or more of the following: the supervisor's disinterest and lack of investment in supervision, the supervisor's failure to provide timely feedback or evaluation of the supervisee's skills, the supervisor's inattention to the supervisee's concerns or struggles, the supervisor not consistently working toward the supervisee's

professional growth or training needs, or the supervisor not listening or closed to the supervisee's opinions or feedback (p.436).

A significant population of supervisees state that they have received inadequate supervision (Ellis et al., 2014). This may be due to inadequate supervisor education among myriad other factors. One study stated that 36% of supervisees in their sample were currently receiving harmful supervision and that over 80% of supervisees have received bad or ineffective supervision at some point in their training (Ellis et al., 2014). Harmful or bad supervision can influence supervisee non-disclosure and can significantly hinder the supervision alliance and process (Ellis et al., 2014). Harming the supervision relationship can be problematic for supervisees (Ladany et al., 2013) as they often view the outcome of supervision as dependent on the supervision alliance (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

Supervisees generally like to know that their work is being seen and evaluated, and if they perceive that their supervisor has missed something that they believe should be corrected, trust in the supervision alliance can be eroded (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). One study noted that the best way for supervisees to know that their clinical skills are being evaluated is for supervisors to watch sessions, either in person or via video (Ellis et al., 2014). Unfortunately, this same study stated that 60% of supervisees in their sample were not watched, and their supervision was based solely on self-report of clinical skills and case conceptualization (Ellis et al., 2014). Similarly, if supervisors are not offering corrective feedback, or are too optimistic in the evaluation of a supervisee, supervisees might believe that their supervisor is not watching closely or that they do not know how to evaluate or broach the supervisees counseling skills (Ladany et al., 2013). Supervisors should identify weaknesses and challenges that supervisees

face and offer support and empowerment so that the supervisee can overcome these challenges, not ignore their presence (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

Supervisees generally agree on what is undesirable in supervision (Barnett et al., 2007). Martino (2001) reported that the lack of interest in the supervisee's training and professional development, lack of availability, inflexibility, lack of openness to new ideas and approaches, limited clinical knowledge, unreliability, unhelpful and inconsistent feedback, overt criticism, being punitive, lacking empathy, not having structure, and being unethical, were cited by graduate students as undesirable characteristics in their supervisors. Additionally, supervisors who depreciate or devalue supervision are also undesirable (Ladany et al., 2013).

Having an understanding of what supervisees deem as harmful, ineffective, or bad supervision could reduce instances of bad supervision (Ellis et al., 2014). If supervisors have an idea about what not to do, they might be more effective, or at least begin conversations with their supervisees to elicit feedback on the supervisory alliance. As we continue to understand what good and bad supervision is, our training programs and educational expectations can reflect these factors (Ellis et al., 2014). Ineffective supervision as a result of supervisor incompetence cheats supervisees out of learning and growth opportunities (Barnett et al., 2007). Training in supervision for supervisors is vital to the health of the profession, as well as training supervisees on what to do if they identify or encounter harmful or bad supervision (Ellis et al., 2014).

While there is research illustrating the perspectives of supervisees on bad supervision, from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, there is a gap in this research about the process of supervision when supervisor competence is questioned. The following study begins filling this gap.

Supervisee Behaviors When Challenging Supervisors

How do supervisors know when their competence is being questioned? Personal experience and consultation with other supervisors suggest that there are many indicators. Undoubtably, there are also times when supervisees question supervision and supervisors are unaware. One of the clearest indicators of discord in the supervision relationship is when a supervisee reduces the amount of disclosure or relies exclusively on disclosures that paint the supervisee in a positive light.

While a reluctance to disclose could indicate that the supervisee is questioning the supervisor, there are many other reasons that a supervisee could change their disclosure pattern (Nelson et al., 2008). The limiting of disclosure by the supervisee can be a form of supervisee resistance. Supervisee resistance is defined as a general perception by the supervisee that supervision isn't needed (Nelson et al., 2008), though there is no clarity in the research about the difference between supervisee resistance due to the perception of incompetence and resistance for other reasons. The way resistance is framed in the literature suggests that supervisee challenges of supervision are problem with the supervisee. The literature also groups challenges and resistance in supervision together and doesn't examine different types of challenges in supervision. Could supervisee resistance also be an indicator of a supervisor's incompetence? How can supervisors best respond to instances of supervisee challenges to supervisor competence?

There are many behaviors in the realm of resistance to supervisors that suggest competence questioning. Conceivably the most obvious indication is when supervisees honestly tell their supervisors that they are questioning the supervision they are receiving. Arguably, this method provides the most straightforward opportunity to manage this rupture in relationship and

move forward in a more positive way. Unfortunately, supervisors who are ineffective often neglect the supervision relationship and discourage feedback from their supervisees.

One assessment that supervisors can use when attempting to discern how the supervision alliance is progressing is the LEEDS Supervision in Alliance Scale (Wainwright, 2010). This scale is a brief assessment that can be done by the supervisee during every supervision session (Wainwright, 2010). It asks supervisees to scale the approach, relationship, and if supervision is meeting their needs on three different spectrums (Wainwright, 2010). This assessment provides supervisors the opportunity to assess and track supervisee reports of satisfaction with supervision and, if used collaboratively, provides opportunities for conversation and supervisor feedback. This assessment, because it is based off the self-report of the supervisee and is done in the context of the supervision relationship, may not always provide supervisors with accurate feedback (Wainwright, 2010). Due to gatekeeping, the power differential, and other "high stakes" evaluative roles that supervisors have, supervisees may not be honest in their appraisal of their supervisors using the LEEDS scale. While this scale can be a useful tool in encouraging supervisee feedback, attending to the supervision alliance and observing supervisee behaviors are also important ways to discern if there are ruptures in the supervision alliance. Further, supervisee resistance is not always an indicator of something wrong in the supervision relationship. In some instances, supervisee challenging behavior is a healthy part of the development of the counselor-in-training. While this assessment can provide some insight into the supervision relationship, it does little to shed light on what happens when a supervisor's competence is questioned.

Supervisor Perspectives on Conflict in Supervision

One possibility is that questioning a supervisor's competence could involve conflict in the supervision relationship. Nelson, Barnes, Evans and Triggiano (2008) did a qualitative study examining "wise" supervisor responses to general conflict in supervision. They interviewed several supervisors their colleagues nominated as "wise supervisors" and asked them open ended questions about their experiences with conflict in supervision (Nelson et al., 2008). They found that wise supervisors indicated that attention on the supervision alliance, early discussion of evaluation, openness to conflict, and timely feedback were all strategies to manage conflict in supervision (Nelson et al., 2008). Additional studies have also explored the experience of "wise supervisors" who experience difficulties in supervision (Grant et al, 2012). The supervisors in the Grant (2012) study, identified similar experiences with conflict in supervision, managing conflict, and thinking about conflict in similar ways (Grant et al, 2012; Nelson et al., 2008).

Supervisor Emotions When Challenged in Supervision

Supervisors' responses to conflict in supervision may vary as widely as differences in supervisors do. While there is no research outlining supervisor responses when their competence is challenged, Nelson et al. (2008) described how supervisors respond to conflict in the supervision relationship. Many supervisors experience empathy when questioned by their supervisees (Nelson et al., 2008). Others report feelings of anger, disappointment and frustration at supervisees who were critical, while at the same time experiencing self-doubt (Nelson et al., 2008). Still others experienced disrespect, impatience and disapproval for supervisee behaviors and attributed the challenging or questioning behavior as lack of self-awareness and reflection for the supervisee (Nelson et al., 2008). Supervisors also described feeling immense pressure for positive supervisee and client outcomes (Nelson et al., 2008).

Some supervisors cited exasperation about all the extra time, energy, and work required when attempting to repair a rupture, or to utilize power for supervisee compliance (Nelson et al., 2008). When confronted with particularly volatile situations, some supervisors reported that they felt helpless and hopeless for the impending failure of a supervisee (Nelson et al., 2008). Some reported feelings of regret, guilt or worry over conflict management and how their supervisees would fare in the future (Nelson et al., 2008). Although there are some supervisors who are willing to express confidence in conflict management and could see the utility in it, most report disliking conflict and feeling a great deal of discomfort with the conflict management process (Nelson et al., 2008). Challenges to supervisor competence may ignite conflict in the supervision relationship and understanding how supervisors respond to conflict may shed some light on how they respond when their competence is questioned.

Managing Conflict in Supervision

The supervision relationship is one of the most important factors in the outcomes of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Ellis et al, 2014; Ladany et al, 2013). When anything strains or ruptures that relationship, supervisors need to attend to the issue to ensure that supervision is effective and ethical. The following are some supervisor responses to conflict with supervisees reported by Nelson et al. (2008). These interventions are due to relationship strain due to any conflict, not simply conflict caused by a supervisee questioning the competence of their supervisor. Though some supervisors chose to make changes to their supervision style such as using humor, becoming more active, providing early feedback, calling attention to supervisee strengths, and recommending therapy, most of the findings indicate supervisor responses to conflict are more theoretical and overarching such as informed consent, reflection, and consultation (Nelson et al., 2008). Additionally, much of the research about conflict in

supervision focuses on behaviors of both the supervisee and supervisor, and the outcome of supervision. There is a significant hole in the literature describing the supervisor's process when encountering a challenge of their competence, and the situations in which these challenges happen.

Nelson et al. (2008) made several recommendations for supervisors who are managing conflict in supervision. These recommendations could be helpful when examining the overall management of conflict in supervision, but don't focus directly on the experience and process of having your competency questioned in supervision. The following recommendation could offer some insight on how supervisors may respond when their competence is questioned.

Self-Coaching. One tool that supervisors can use to help them respond to difficult conflict in the supervision alliance is self-coaching (Nelson et al., 2008). Self-coaching is the process of the supervisor talking themselves through the conflict to ensure that they are looking at the situation from as many perspectives as possible to move towards an unbiased response. This process also allows for supervisors to be attentive to supervision phenomena such as parallel process or isomorphs that may be at play in the conflict (Nelson et al., 2008).

The self-coaching process usually entails some identification and acceptance of supervisor limitations and biases plus critically looking at the situation through the eyes of the supervisee as much as is possible (Nelson et al., 2008). The acceptance that no one is perfect, and that there is no perfect supervision alliance, can be helpful as well (Nelson et al., 2008). Other supervisors stated that reminding themselves not to take the conflict personally is important, too (Nelson et al., 2008). Others noted that conflict is a normative experience in most relationships and should be viewed as an opportunity for relational growth, instead of being viewed as a

negative anomaly (Nelson et al., 2008). Self-reflection could be a response that supervisors use when their competence is questioned.

Consultation. As is true in many aspects of the field of counseling, consultation plays an important role when supervisors find themselves in conflict within a supervision relationship (Nelson et al., (2008). Research says that when in conflict with a supervisee, supervisors should seek out support and guidance from other supervisors (Nelson et al., 2008). At times, it may be helpful to invite another person into the dyad (as appropriate) to help manage conflict or to directly observe a supervisee (Nelson et al., 2008). Nelson et al. (2008) found that supervisors deemed collegial support as critical to supervisors "ability to process, understand, and strategize about how to approach conflicts with supervisees" (p. 180). Nelson et al. (2008) cited consultation as important when managing general conflict in supervision, and it's possible that consultation could emerge as part of the process that supervisors go through when their competence is questioned as well.

Reflection. Supervisors report that reflection, consultation, and adjusting are critical processes even when conflict is not present or imminent (Nelson et al., 2008). Spending intentional time creating a plan for conflict management in supervision is a worthwhile and healthy practice in which effective supervisors engage (Nelson et al., 2008). Post-conflict reflection can serve to reduce resentment and provide supervisors with opportunities to reflect on things they were proud of in the midst of conflict, and cognitive and behavioral changes they would like to make (Nelson et al., 2008). Some supervisors describe post conflict reflection as an opportunity for intense personal and professional growth (Nelson et al., 2008).

An additional part of this reflection encourages the supervisor to empathize with the external and internal forces at play with the supervisee (Nelson et al., 2008). This empathy

requires some knowledge about the supervisees, their identities, and their lives outside of the clinical setting, which likely must be acquired before the conflict takes place (Nelson, et al, 2008). Reflecting on these components of the supervisee's world may serve to help the supervisor respond from a place of empathy rather than an emotional reaction. The intentional practice of patience and flexibility can also be useful in conflicts (Nelson et al., 2008).

Taking a strengths-based approach with a supervisee who is experiencing difficulty may provide an outside perspective on a problem about which may feel desperate or hopeless (Nelson et al., 2008). Disengaging from power struggles and focusing on communication in a way that doesn't shame or embarrass supervisees is important in empowering supervisees for their own self-reflection process (Nelson et al., 2008). Some supervisors reported that focusing on the strengths of a supervisee and working to appreciate them was helpful (Nelson et al., 2008).

Finally, reflecting on the limited influence that people sometimes have on others can serve to help the supervisor decide how to proceed (Nelson et al., 2008). Ensuring that the supervision relationship is fulfilling the need for supervision of a new counselor, and not serving to fill other roles for the supervisor or supervisee, is critical to the health and efficacy of the supervision alliance (Nelson et al., 2008).

Though self-coaching, consultation, and reflection were explored by Nelson et al. (2008) in the context of general conflict in supervision, there has not yet been research on the process that supervisors go through in the specific context of having their competency questioned in clinical supervision. Also, the Nelson et al. (2008) article identified "wise supervisors" as their population to study and didn't get the perspectives of supervisors who weren't nominated by their peers as examples of "wise supervisors." There is room in the literature for other studies looking at more specific situations of conflict in the supervision relationship. The following

study explores the experience and the process that supervisors progress through when their competence is questioned in supervision.

Summary of the Conceptual Framework

Supervision is one of the most important aspects of counselor education. Counselor development is largely dependent on the strength and resilience of the supervision alliance (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). The supervision alliance is one of the primary ways that the field of counselor education protects clients (Falender & Shafranske, 2014). When supervisees challenge the competence of their supervisor, the supervision relationship may change. Understanding the experience and process that supervisors go through when challenged could be critical to understanding the supervision relationship, resulting in the better protection of clients and the positive development of supervisees in counselor education. Though there have been a few studies on the emergence of challenges in supervision, and how students and supervisors experience challenges in supervision, there is no research that describes both the experience of being challenged as a supervisor, and the process that supervisors encounter when their competence is being challenged.

Conclusion

Though many supervisees state they have been a part of negative, ineffective, or harmful supervision, there are gaps in the research about what happens when supervisor competence is challenged. Specifically, there is paucity of research on the experience and process that supervisors encounter when their competence is challenged. The following study utilizes a grounded theory methodology to co construct a theory about the experience and process of clinical supervisors having their competence questioned or challenged by a supervisee.

CHAPTER 2: Methodology

This study develops a grounded theory describing the process of challenging supervisor competence in clinical supervision, reducing the research gap about the supervision relationship, the supervisor's role and function, and one of the many processes present in clinical supervision. This theory is grounded in data from supervisors and situated in the conceptual framework of clinical supervision in counselor education. To achieve this goal, I utilized two methodologies: grounded theory according to Charmaz (2016) and situational analysis informed by Clarke (2018). Grounded theory, informed by Charmaz (2016), is a qualitative research method in which the researcher co constructs a theory about the process of an experience. The goal of situational analysis, according to Clarke, Friese and Washburn (2018) is "to construct processes, sensitizing concepts, situational analytics, and theorize, however provisionally" (p. 57). The following chapter illustrates how I developed a theory about the process that supervisors go through when their competence is questioned. This theory is grounded in data co-constructed with participants (Charmaz, 2014) and informed by situational analysis (Clarke et al., 2018).

Qualitative Philosophies

Qualitative research is first guided by philosophical assumptions that differentiate it from quantitative and mixed methods designs and informs variations of how qualitative methodologies are implemented. To answer my research question about the experience and process of being questioned in supervision, I used a qualitative methodology because the epistemology, ontology, and axiology of constructivist qualitative research most closely aligns with what I was aiming to explore.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know. Epistemology leads directly into methodology and undergirds each methodological decision I outline. Epistemologically, this study is grounded in qualitative research that is based on facts that can exist independently from other things. Qualitative research assumes that nothing that is valuable can exist outside of human interpretation. One way to understand this is through the concept of verstehen. Smith (1983) describes verstehen as necessary to recreate the experience of others in oneself. This means that qualitative researchers acknowledge that each person interprets the world around them in a specific way, and therefore ascribes meaning to the "facts" that they observe, discuss, feel, and intuit. With this as the basic philosophical assumption, then "facts" are no longer a measuring tape for how we view data that we intake, but instead view data as a means to illustrate a shared agreement on what is real, valuable and known. In this study, I illustrate data through the flexible and subjective lens of several supervisor participants.

In qualitative research, the goal is not to find causal effects—the assumption that something will happen every time something else happens. Rather, qualitative research uses inductive or abductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is the opposite of deductive reasoning in that the researcher takes very specific information and creates an argument that generalizes that information. It is the process of widening understandings, rather than narrowing. This research project will use an inductive process, where we co-construct data from participants, and then use inductive reasoning to create a theory evidenced by that data.

Abduction "consists of assembling or discovering, on the basis of an interpretation of collected data, such combinations of features for which there is no appropriate explanation or rule in the store of knowledge that already exists" (Reichertz, 2010, paragraph 16). Through

abductive reasoning, qualitative researchers can construct theories about how things occur in different societal, historical and political contexts. In this study, I did not attempt to predict or establish any type of causation--I sought to co construct a theory with participants about our shared reality using abductive reasoning.

Ontology

The ontology of this study centers upon what assumptions we make about what reality is. In qualitative research, reality is viewed through a flexible lens. Smith (1983) describes it as having "no reality independent of the shaping or creating efforts of the mind" (Smith, 1983, p.8). As humans, facts are only as important or valid as the meaning we ascribe to them. In the following study, my ontological assumption is that I as the researcher, the participants, and the situation determine the meaning that the data holds. We constructed the data together, through interviews, and I relied heavily on them as I analyzed for meaning. For this study, participants and the researcher together co constructed the data and through my analysis, I discovered the theory as it developed. In this way, the ontological assumptions of constructivist qualitative research fit this study.

Axiology

Axiology is the study of the value or worthiness that we place on knowledge. "In a qualitative study, researchers are interested not only in the physical events and behavior taking place, but also in how the participants make sense of these and how their understandings influence their behavior" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 221). For my study, knowledge is only valuable when there is meaning associated with it. Clarke et al, (2018) would argue that the influence and value that cultural context, history, and politics are also vital considerations when examining the value of specific pieces of data, so I consider each of the contexts presented by participants

through the lens of situational analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, "events or situations are theoretically open to as may constructions as there are persons engaged in them, or as many reconstructions by a single individual as imagination allows" (p.77). With this as the basic assumption of multiple realities underneath my grounded theory study, we will never be able to truly know or accurately understand anything without identifying the meaning that the participant, the researcher and the reader makes about the event or situation. My role in this study was to look through the lens of induction and abduction and construct some valuable agreements between participants, researcher, and reader about the experience or process of supervisors having their competence questioned in clinical supervision. This is the axiological underpinning of the following constructivist study using qualitative methodology.

Role of the Researcher

"Your relationships with the people in your study can be complex and changeable, and these relationships will necessarily affect you as the 'research instrument,' as well as have implications for other components of your research design" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 234). Smith (1983) states that our views of the subject and objects of research are inevitably based on the values, personality and interests of the researcher. From this argument, it is impossible to "get outside ourselves" and view the research from an unbiased perspective (Smith, 1983). As Charmaz (2014) states, "we are part of the world we study, the data we collect, and the analyses we produce" (p. 17). As the researcher for this study, I inherently influence and co-construct the data that I analyzed.

I am a 33-year-old cisgender female doctoral candidate at the University of Montana. I am Caucasian and grew up in a liberal part of the country. I am the oldest of three sisters, and every member of my family has participated in higher education. I grew up with every

educational opportunity I could ask for, among other privileges. My family is Greek and American and one of our primary family values is curiosity.

As a supervisor and counselor educator, I have many personal connections to supervision. I believe one of the most important pedagogical strategies that we have as Counselor Educators is supervision. I have supervised students at all levels of the University of Montana's Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredited master's training program. I view supervision as an opportunity to individually influence and shape the education of each counselor-in-training, and focus on the individual, dyadic, or group needs in the moment. Throughout my experiences in supervision, I have become curious about stresses to the supervision relationship, and how supervision dyads manage these stressors. My interest in the topic of competence in supervision arose after a supervisee of mine questioned my competence in my first year as a supervisor. My process when my competence as a supervisor was questioned included consultation, bracketing of my own emotions, identifying supervisee developmental and multicultural factors, collaborating with the supervisee's other supervisors, and meeting with the supervisee. After my experience was questioned by one of my supervisees, I began to wonder how other supervisors navigated the process when supervisees question their competence.

Qualitative researchers are inherently a part of their study and influence their data and analysis immensely. "Qualitative researchers acknowledge that the very nature of the data we gather and the analytic processes in which we engage are grounded in subjectivity" (Morrow, 2005, p.254). Thus, I did my best to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings, biases, etc. in order to accurately assess my impact on the data and analysis process. Charmaz (2017) describes the self-consciousness that is required as a grounded theory researcher due to my place in the

situation. She states that grounded theory researchers need to scrutinize their "positions, privileges, and priorities and assess how they affect [their] steps during the research process and [their] relationships with research participants" (Charmaz, 2016, p. 35). I used personal reflexivity to remain curious about my own situation and how my perspective fits into the overall picture that this study illuminated. As the researcher in this study, my role was to co construct a shared reality with the participants and create a theory with the data that we uncovered together.

Grounded Theory and Situational Analysis

This study was a grounded theory study through the constructivist lens of Charmaz (2014) and used situational analysis informed by Clarke (2017). Grounded theory methods provide researchers with the structure needed to construct a theory based on qualitative data collection methods (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory is a qualitative methodology developed by Glaser, Strauss and Corbin, and most recently updated by Charmaz and Clarke. Essentially, grounded theory allows researchers to describe the experience of a phenomenon through the many voices of participants and then co-construct a theory illustrating the process that participants go through when encountering that experience. "Using an established paradigm (such as grounded theory, critical realism, phenomenology, or narrative research) allows you to build on a coherent and well-developed approach to research, rather than having to construct all of this yourself" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 224). I used the established paradigm of grounded theory to conduct this research study.

Charmaz (2006) outlines a specific constructivist methodology, within the larger umbrella of grounded theory. "Unlike other versions of grounded theory, the constructivist version also locates the research process and product in historical, social, and situational conditions" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 34). The ontology behind constructivist grounded theory resides in the

meaning that researchers and participants make of the data (Charmaz, 2017). Situating it in social, historical and political contexts is vital to helping the consumer of the research empathize and understand (to the highest degree possible) the data and the theory (Charmaz, 2017).

Clarke (2017) challenged the accepted grounded theory methodology by stating that it needs to be situated in a specific context because participants cannot be separated from their politics, history and culture. In the situation of clinical supervision, there are several different dynamics at play. These situations include, but are not limited to the influence of power, social hierarchy, race, age, education, socioeconomic status, ability status, individuality, and many others that were constructed through situational analysis.

At the end of this study, I constructed a theory about the process that supervisors go through when their competence is questioned in clinical supervision. Abductive reasoning is the best fit when constructing a theory grounded in data (Clarke et al., 2018). Abduction "consists of assembling or discovering, on the basis of an interpretation of collected data, such combinations of features for which there is no appropriate explanation or rule in the store of knowledge that already exists" (Reichertz, 2010, paragraph 16). Situational analysis fits well with abductive research according to Clarke (2018). Similarly, inductive reasoning seeks to establish educated guesses about general rules that might apply in similar situations. In this study, induction finds itself working together with abduction to allow me to explore the data with the intention of creating a theory focused on the experience and process that counselor educators may encounter when having their competence questioned in clinical supervision. Through both abductive and inductive reasoning, this theory allows counselor educators and supervisors to examine their own experiences and processes when having their competence challenged by a supervisee. This

theory also sheds light on what has happened to and the process that other supervisors have encountered in similar situations.

Procedures for Participant Selection

For this study, I identified a homogenous population to study, and then selected a heterogenous sample from that population according to the method argued by Creswell and Poth (2007). The homogenous population that I chose from is supervisors who are supervising counseling interns.

To ensure that enough data is generated to develop a trustworthy theory addressing the breadth of the population, I used purposeful sampling of participants to achieve maximum variation. I reached out to Counselor Educators from programs across the nation and asked for them to pass on my invitation to supervisors who have had their competence questioned in supervision. I ensured that I heard from a variety of voices from different contexts, backgrounds and situations, so I purposefully chose participants from the population that responded to my inquiry.

Purposive sampling strives to ensure that my participants will be able to answer the research question (Chun Tie et al., 2019). As I created my sample, I deliberately selected participants to ensure that I had representation of many voices across genders, races, region of the United States, and experience in clinical supervision (more or less than 10 years of experience). I wanted to ensure that I captured heterogeneity in the population of supervisors that I studied in order to hear from many different perspectives (Maxwell, 2005). Unfortunately, no supervisors responded to my call for participants who identified as non-female for the first round of interviews. When I personally reached out to several male supervisors, they all stated that they would love to participate in the study, though they couldn't identify a time where they believed

that a supervisee was questioning their competence. Following first round analysis, I used

theoretical sampling to achieve maximum variation and to fill in the missing voices and

perspectives that emerged from round one.

Phillips et al (2017) state that there are many different identities salient to the profession

of counseling and supervision. These include gender, race, "age, ability status, international

student status, religiosity/spirituality, and gender beyond the traditional gender binary" as well as

social location (Phillips et al., 2017, p. 207). These identities helped inform me as I purposefully

selected my heterogenous sample from the homogenous population in order to support

transferability in this study. For this study, I ensured that I had supervisors who represented at

least one supervisor who has fewer than ten years of experience, at least one supervisor who has

more than ten years of experience, supervisors from at least two different regions, and at least

two different racial identities. As always, I remained aware that "issues of privilege often collude

to keep silent discussion related to minority identities" and remained curious about where and

how privilege influenced data collection (Phillips et al., 2017 p. 206).

Gender	Experience in Supervision	Regions	Race
Participants represented at least two gender identities.	Participants included at least one supervisor who has fewer than ten years of experience and at least one supervisor who has more than ten years of experience.	Participants represented supervisors from at least two different regions in the United States.	Participants represented at least two different racial identities.

In the informed consent process, I made sure that my participants were aware of the

nonlinear analysis process and realized that it is likely that I will need to interview them multiple

times, including member checking. I communicated this with them and assured their availability

so that I could go back and "identify and follow clues from the analysis, fill gaps, clarify

uncertainties, check hunches and test interpretations as the study progress[ed]" (Chun Tie et al., 2019 p. 3).

In my initial email to participants, I briefly explained the study and what approximate amount of time I was asking for from my participants. I described the process, risks, and benefits of the study. Then, as I established who my participants were, I reviewed the purpose of the study, risks, benefits, process, confidentiality, and answered any questions that they had. As important as the informed consent process is at the beginning of the study, I continued to check in with participants at each interview to ensure that they were aware of the next process and answered any other questions that they had.

Maxwell (2005) states that it is typical for qualitative studies to only have a relatively small number of participants in order to preserve the individuality and to understand how the context or situations impact the individual phenomenon in which they occur. There is little consensus in the literature about specifics about how many participants are required for data saturation to occur. In fact, saturation errors are common with novice grounded theory researchers (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018). To account for this, I selected seven participants to begin with, and then progressed from there—remaining open to the possibility that I needed to find more participants in order to achieve data saturation. In my case, three more participants were selected to participate in round two analysis, for a total of ten participants. In their study, Guest et al (2006) suggest that saturation is very likely to be achieved at around twelve interviews, though it can depend on the level of prolonged engagement with the participants and how rich and thick the data is. To account for this ambiguity, I intended to select eight participants to begin with in order to meet maximum variation and remained open to recruiting more if saturation didn't occur after the second round of interviews (16 total interviews). In fact,

I initially recruited seven participants for the first round of interviews and three for the second round of interviews. I interviewed one participant in round one as well as round two for a total of eleven interviews.

Methods for Gathering Data

To answer the research question, I gathered qualitative data in the form of rich and thick descriptions by interviewing Counselor Educators about their experience and process of having their competence questioned or challenged by a supervisee in the context of clinical supervision. To collect data, I conducted at least two rounds of interviews with participants purposefully selected from the heterogenous population of supervisors who were supervising master's student's internship experiences. The first round of interviews was focused on how these supervisors experienced challenges to their competence in the supervision relationship. After first round analysis, I returned to one participant for a second round of interviews focused on expanding and understanding the process they encounter when their competence is being challenged. I, along with my inquiry auditor, used theoretical sampling to fill the gaps in perspective that emerged after the first round of interviews by recruiting three more participants. Throughout these interviews, I co-constructed the data with my participants (being mindful of the philosophical assumption that multiple realities exist) and then (concurrently) analyzed the data so that the theory began to emerge. Throughout this whole process, I attended to the trustworthiness of the study by employing methods such as member checking, inquiry auditing, generating rich, thick descriptions, personal reflexivity, and prolonged engagement to establish the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in the study.

Charmaz (2006) states that grounded theorists "conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process" (p. 15). As I outlined my process for data collection and

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analysis, it looked more linear in word than it manifested in deed. For the data gathering process, I first ensured that I was complying by all ethical mandates and guidelines when researching using human participants by applying to and being approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Montana.

After my acceptance and approval of my IRB application, I then reached out to faculty that I know, explained my study, and I asked for them to forward my request for participation to supervisors who are currently providing supervision to counselors in training in several different contexts. As I received interest, I communicated with participants to gather demographic information, gave them some information about the research goals, risks, process, and facilitated informed consent. In an email found in Appendix B, I asked participants to disclose some demographic information in order to establish maximum variation. I asked about race, years of experience in supervision, and gender. I ensured that participants knew that participation in this study was completely voluntary, and that they could drop out of the study if they needed to, for any reason, without consequence. I then created my sample using a purposeful selection method (always keeping in mind the goal of constructing a theory) and scheduled interviews. I thought I might need to seek out additional participants after my interviews began in order to gather all the data needed for data saturation in the process of constructing a theory and ended up using theoretical sampling to add to my list of participants in Round Two.

Interviews were held via an online video software, Zoom. They were audio and video recorded so that I could have accurate transcriptions of the words of the participants. To be sure, the recordings were stored securely using encryption and password protection to ensure confidentiality of the participants. Additionally, during the data analysis process, I used pseudonyms like Participant 1, 2, 3 etc. to maintain confidentiality.

When developing questions, I focused more on "actions and processes rather than themes and structure" (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). This means that I asked open ended questions about thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and allowed the themes to manifest over the whole collection of data. This was essential to the abductive process, as I was essentially introducing an open-ended topic of conversation, and then allowing the participants to shape the data, rather than leading them to illustrate my specific point. Charmaz also advocates for beginning with only a few open-ended questions to get the interview started (Charmaz, 2014).

Round One Interview questions were as follows:

1. Tell me a bit about yourself as a supervisor.

2. Tell me about a time your competence was questioned or challenged as a supervisor.

   2.a. What did you think/feel/do when your competence was questioned?

   2.b. How did you respond when your competence was questioned?

3. What factors do you think contributed to the questioning/challenging?

4. How did the supervision relationship change (if at all) from the encounter?

Having a few questions available for the interview allowed flexible space for conversation, probing, and following up as needed. Since this topic may have been sensitive for some supervisors, I allowed for flexibility in the conversation and focused initially on building rapport and relationship. As I developed relationships, my ability to co construct data with the participants and find shared meaning in the data was significantly enhanced. Prolonged engagement with the data and with participants served to increase the trustworthiness of my study.

After I completed and transcribed the first round of interviews, I did some initial data analysis. The first interview largely focused on the experience of being questioned, and then the subsequent interview focused more on the process that supervisors encountered when their competence is challenged. As I interview, I transcribed and analyzed, looking for data saturation. I achieved data saturation when I noticed the that the participants were identifying similar patterns and experiences, and a theory intentionally began to emerge.

As the process of grounded theory data collection and analysis is concurrent, I needed to be attentive to the process the entire way through. I analyzed while I collected and collected data as I analyzed. Remaining curious and recording my thoughts, feelings and assessments fell directly into my role as the researcher as part of the process. In this way, I also did my part in co-constructing data. I developed the theory along with my participants, as I became part of the data due to my participation in the interview process and analysis. Methods for establishing trustworthiness and reflexivity will be described later in the chapter, in order to promote credibility in this study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in constructivist grounded theory studies doesn't necessarily follow a linear timeline. For example, one of the lenses through which I analyzed the data is my own, which happened throughout the entire research process. Maxwell (2005) described the role of the researcher as being an integral part of the research, and this continued throughout the entire study, not just in the data analysis process. Charmaz (2014) describes the researcher and the participants as co-constructers of meaning and experience (Chun Tie et al., 2019). As this is a constructivist approach, the data has the value that I as the researcher, you as the reader, as well as the participants ascribe to it. Strauss and Corbin (2008) note that "analysis for us refers to both

the concept and the thought processes that go behind assigning meaning to data" (p. 57). This means that I had to attend not only to the content of the interviews, but my process as I assigned meaning to the data.

As the researcher, I began with the area of study, and then allowed the theory to flow from the data (Chun Tie et al., 2019). I ensured that I co-constructed the theory with the words of the participants, allowing the theory not to be discovered, but meticulously, systematically, flexibly constructed. To do this I first listened to and read through the transcriptions to ensure accuracy as well as gather codes for big themes or categories. Then, I continuously compared the data, and processed it through nonlinear layers of analysis, returning to participants as needed to reach data saturation (Chun Tie et al., 2019).

Charmaz (2003) describes the coding process that I used in this study. A large portion of the data analysis process incorporated coding. Charmaz (2006) defines codes as "consist[ing] of short labels that we construct as we interact with the data" (p. 5). During this study, I was a researcher that "(a) studi[ed] the data before consulting the scholarly literature, (b) engage[d] in line-by-line coding, (c) use[d] active terms to define what [was] happening in the data, and (d) follow[ed] leads in the initial coding through further data gathering" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 684). I used two different coding methods: initial coding, and focused coding. Initial coding was where I began to make analytical decisions about the data and focused coding is where I used "the most frequently appearing initial codes to sort, synthesize, and conceptualize large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 684).

First, I did initial coding, where I generated as many different labels as possible derived directly from the data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe open (initial) coding as concept identification. I did this by going line by line, word by word according to Charmaz (2006). I

ensured that I was staying open to new ideas and looking for as many different words and descriptors as possible. Charmaz (2006) encourages keeping the codes as close as possible to the data. Charmaz (2006) poses several questions as a guide for the initial analysis process. These are: "What is going on? What are people doing? What is the person saying? What do these actions and statements take for granted? How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements?" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 38). While considering these questions, I established codes. These codes identified social and psychological processes by focusing on actions, meaning what participants did when confronted by each situation (Chun Tie et al., 2019). Using quotes or *in vivo* codes to illustrate big ideas is encouraged (Chun Tie et al., 2019). It was especially important to begin to identify whose voices are represented and underreported at this stage (Clarke et al., 2018). This is where my reactions and emotions as the researcher were especially important. This initial coding stage helped me to identify which directions to go as the research progressed (Chun Tie et al., 2019). These directions were based upon what voices are missing, situational mapping (Clarke et al., 2018) and the categories that were beginning to materialize.

The second stage of the coding processes is called focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). In this stage (which may be happening concurrently to data collection and other stages, as is typical in grounded theory methodology) I was sorting the initial codes into larger concepts and ideas (Charmaz, 2006). During this phase, I discovered whether there were any follow up questions or ideas that I needed to revisit with participants.

As I progressed into the realm of theoretical sampling, I identified areas where more information was needed to reach saturation and sought out additional information from

participants to fill those gaps. This process simultaneously allowed for flexibility and spontaneity while ensuring academic rigor and validity.

Clarke's (2015) style of mapping was immensely helpful during this process. I used situational maps, social worlds/arenas maps, and positional maps to understand the intricacies and different dimensions of the situation at hand. I did this for my participants and also myself, as an active part of the research. I strove to understand what was unsaid and the voices that were unheard, and I was very curious about why that might have been.

As the analysis process continued, I zoomed out and identified which categories might fit well with others, so that the theory began to emerge (Chun Tie et al., 2019). I identified dimensions and clarified the processes that the participants were describing using concept mapping and other tools. I was especially attentive to any variation that I discovered and constantly kept in mind the information that was missing. "Theoretical saturation ensues when new data analysis does not provide additional material to existing theoretical categories, and the categories are sufficiently explained" (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 6). Additionally, I searched for saturation in the process as well as in the description of the experience, so that I could begin to build a theory.

One thing that I was particularly attentive to was the idea of theoretical sensitivity (Clarke et al., 2018). Theoretical sensitivity is the process of deciding what is meaningful, and how significant it is when developing the theory (Chun Tie et al., 2019). I had to balance openness to new ideas, with the structure of the codes that had already been developed, all while continuously going back to my research question to ensure that I was on track with the research question. Creating conceptual maps significantly contributed to this stage of analysis.

As the data analysis progresses, I used the data analysis software NVivo to help organize and categorize the data. Throughout the whole process of data collection and analysis, I kept a research journal documenting my interactions, thoughts, feelings, and processes with the research in order to track and document the analysis process.

Though there are several definitions of saturation, and the literature isn't consistent in how it views saturation, saturation in this study will be defined according to Glaser and Strauss (1967). They define saturation as when no new data is uncovered, and the researcher is convinced that further interviews or participants wouldn't produce additional major aspects of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This definition is dependent on how rich and thick the data is, what the prolonged engagement has been, and how the analysis process goes. Due to these reasons, I could not predict exactly how many participants or interviews would be required for saturation to occur. Guest et al (2006) attempted to answer this question quantitatively and found that saturation was likely to occur around the twelfth interview. Given this ambiguity, I instead established a beginning point for the number of participants and evaluated throughout the concurrent data collection and analysis process. I began with seven participants in order to account for enough variety to achieve saturation in the participants according to my purposeful selection process. As round one finished, and I approached round two, I selected three more participants through theoretical sampling.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Establishing Trustworthiness is one of the most important parts of any research project, as it helps us understand the value and rigor of the research that is being done. Trustworthiness is defined by the accuracy and credibility of the study. How well was I able to construct a theory from the data gathered? How accurate was my interpretation of the interviews that supervisors

were offering me? In addition to the questions that I posed to myself throughout this process,

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also identified four areas to be curious about when establishing

trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Each are essential

to establishing trustworthiness in a naturalistic study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to

establish these in my research, I used several different strategies including inquiry auditing,

member checking, generating rich, thick descriptions, engaging in personal, consistent

reflexivity, and prolonged engagement with the data and participants.

I walked through this process with someone else, who has significant knowledge of the

methodology, but isn't as steeped in the experience as I was. This inquiry auditing (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985) occurred with my dissertation chair, Dr. Kirsten Murray. We touched base at every

step of the way, and she served as an auditor of both the research process, and my process

through writing this study as a dissertation. Upon completion, we will collaborate on presenting

this data in ways that are more accessible than the dissertation format (professional presentations,

articles, supervision workshops) in order to ensure that the constructed theory becomes useful to

the world, and so that I did not use my participants simply as a means to the ends of a

dissertation.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that another way to establish trustworthiness is to generate

rich, thick descriptions in both the process of data collection and data analysis. To achieve this, I

needed to ensure that details are abundant and explicit in my writing throughout each step of the

way. I audio and video recorded and transcribed each interview as well as recorded what I

observed and perceived during the whole process. I revisited the interviews over and over again

through the process, to ensure that I was adhering to both the language and the spirit in which it

was offered. I used direct quotations as evidence of my interpretations, and to invite the reader to join me in the process of interpretation.

To ensure that I was accurate in my interpretation and understanding of the material that my participants share with me, and to assist in the process of "co-construction" of the theory, I engaged in member checking. Lincoln and Guba (1985) cite member checking as the best way to ensure that your expression of the data is credible and accurate. I discussed the way that I collected data as well as the way I interpreted it to make sure that I didn't misinterpret or skew what my participants said. This came in the form of contact with each participant explaining the theory and my interpretations of the data that they offered. We reflected on the data collection process, and I asked about their impressions of the accuracy of the results and trustworthiness of the study. Again, my relationships with the participants were critical in this phase, due to the fact that I was asking them to give feedback to me, which might have been difficult for some.

Prolonged engagement with the participants and the data is a vital part of the process of establishing trustworthiness. I built relationships with my participants using skills like empathy, reflective listening, curiosity, appropriate self-disclosure, responsiveness, and transparency to establish trust and safety in the research relationship. I spent several hours with my participants over the course of the project in interviews as well as member checks in order to achieve prolonged engagement. Morrow (2005) states that credibility can be achieved through spending time in the field. Thus, the more time I spent interacting with and observing my participants, the less I found that I was guessing about their contributions to the data and the meaning that their data held.

Finally, constant reflexivity was essential to the process of establishing trustworthiness in this grounded theory study. I kept a reflexive journal about my role in the research process. I was

upfront and honest with myself and my inquiry auditor about the many identities that I brought to the interviews and remained curious about the impact that I had on the process itself. These reflections also were integrated into the inquiry auditing process as I worked to locate myself with the data and see my influence on it.

Summary

In summary, this study attempts to fill the gap in counselor education research by studying the supervisor's experience and process of having their competence questioned or challenged by a supervisee. In order to answer my research question, illuminated by the problem statement, I used a grounded theory methodology informed by Charmaz (2006) and situational analysis by Clarke (2018). Through interviews of a national purposeful sample of supervisors, I gathered data and then analyzed it, adhering to data analysis procedures outlined by Charmaz (2006) and Clarke (2018). Finally, I discussed a theory co-constructed with my participants and grounded in the data that they provided. Supervision is one of the most important aspects of counselor education, and the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is critical to the supervision process. This study has given researchers some insight into what the supervisors' experience is, and the process they undertake with their supervisees when the competence of the supervisor is questioned by their supervisees.

CHAPTER 3: First Round Analysis

Chapter Three outlines the participants' emerging experiences when their competence is questioned in supervision. This chapter illustrates the analysis after the first round of interviews, and changed significantly once the second round of interviews occurred and more data was co-constructed. In this chapter, I will describe the participants that I recruited for the first round of interviews, illustrate the analysis process, and then present the first round of findings.

Description of Participants

I interviewed seven clinical supervisors who are currently supervising mental health or school counseling master's students. I interviewed participants all via Zoom. The duration of each interview was between 40 and 70 minutes. Participant names were removed from the transcripts of their interviews and assigned numbers one to seven. All participants identified as women, despite significant recruitment efforts to include male identifying supervisors. Table 1 includes a description of participants.

Participant Number	Gender	Years of Supervision Experience	Region	Racial Identity
1	Female	5 Years	Southwest	White
2	Cis Female	18 Years	Northeast	White Puerto Rican
3	Cis Female	2 Years	South	Black
4	Female	2 Years	Midwest	White
5	Female	10 Years	South Central	White
6	Female	5 years	Northeast	Latina/White
7	Female	5 Years	Midwest-Also Overseas	Caucasian

Participant One is a white female who has been a faculty supervisor for counseling students in the Southwest region of the United States. Participant Two is a faculty supervisor, supervising counseling students in the Northeast. She identifies as a white, Puerto Rican, cis-female and has been supervising for 18 years. Participant Three is a black cis female faculty supervisor supervising for two years in the South. Participant Four has two years of supervision experience and is a doctoral student in the Midwest. She identifies as female and white and works across school counseling and mental health counseling specialties. Participant Five identifies as a white female and has been supervising students for ten years as a faculty in the south-central United States. Participant Six has been supervising for five years and supervises school counselors in the northeast. She identifies as a Latina/white female. Finally, Participant Seven has served as a supervisor in the military for five years. She identifies as Caucasian female and is the only supervisor who is not operating in the context of higher education. Though the call for participants went to a broad, diverse audience, no men responded to the call for participants, even when reached out to individually. When asked, several men responded that they would love to help, but couldn't identify a time when their competence had been questioned by a supervisee in the context of supervision.

Emerging Participant Experiences

As participants discussed experiences of having their competence questioned in clinical supervision, some themes and a general picture of their experience began to take shape in data analysis. Supervisors discussed four different parts of the experience of having their competence questioned in clinical supervision. These four **categories** are **Perceiving Questioning, Assessing Psychological Safety, Supervisor Responses,** and **Supervision Outcomes.** Each of these categories describes a different aspect of the experience, and hold ***subcategories***, *properties*, and

dimensions under them. These **categories**, *subcategories*, *properties*, and dimensions are

denoted in the depicted fonts and illustrated in Figure 1.
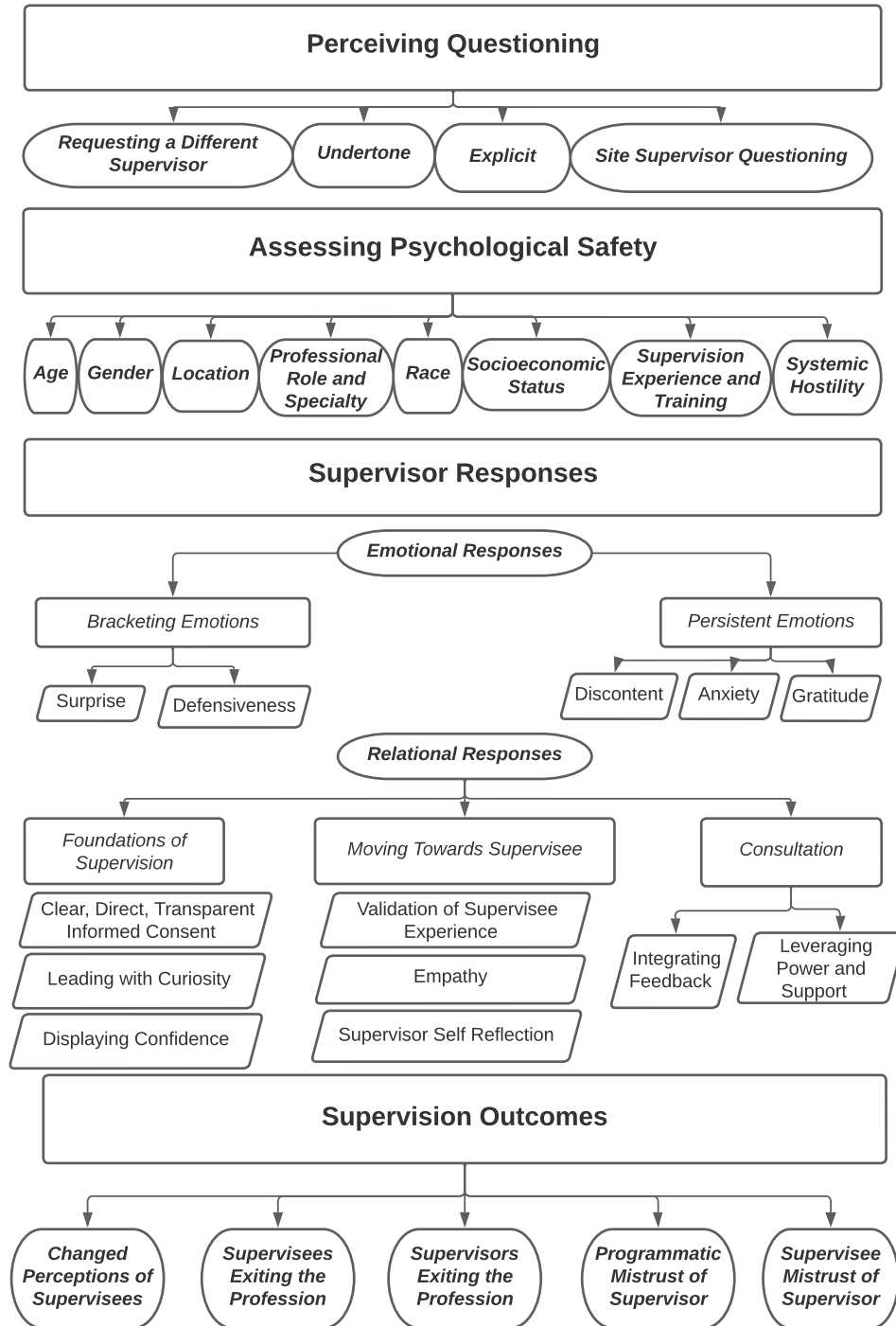
Figure 1 Conceptual Map of Round One Analysis

Perceiving Questioning

The first **category** that participants identified was perceiving their competence was questioned by supervisees. Supervisors identified competency questioning in supervision in four different ways: ***explicit questioning, requesting a different supervisor,*** experiencing an ***undertone*** of mistrust from supervisees, and ***site supervisor questioning***. The ***subcategory*** of ***supervisees requesting different supervisors*** was discussed by two participants.

Explicit Questioning

The first ***subcategory*** that emerged about how supervisors **perceive questioning** is *explicit questioning*. ***Explicit Questioning*** is when a supervisee questions their supervisor's competence in a direct, clear, explicit way. Participant Three experienced ***explicit questioning*** when her supervisee told her that she needed to be in the field of counseling longer in order to be a good supervisor.

> Participant 3: "I remember the student wanted to know what my credentials was [sic] since I had just graduated, and I was like yes, I have received my degree [recently] and I was like I had defended my dissertation [recently] from my university. She was like, 'Well how come you're just teaching no offense, but shouldn't they have somebody who's been in the field longer?'"

Additionally, Participant Six's experience with ***explicit questioning*** was when her supervisee said that she wasn't attuning to her experience as a counselor in training. In the case below, Participant Six described being told that she didn't understand the experience of her interns or the role a school counselor plays in a school:

> Participant 6: "So it was just kind of like, 'Okay, so you're saying that I don't understand what you're going through, or I don't know how busy a school counselor is, or I don't

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know how difficult the job is. So, implying that I don't have enough experience, or even if I did, I don't have any experience at all.'"

Each of these experiences described one way that supervisors **perceived questioning** from their supervisors in an *explicit* way.

Requesting a Different Supervisor

One *subcategory* that emerged was supervisees *requesting a different supervisor.* *Explicit questioning* of supervisors also came in the form of supervisees *requesting different supervisors*. Participant One navigated supervisees expressing surprise to see her in class at the beginning of the term as their supervisor rather than a different supervisor. The words she chose to use illustrated the intensity of the dislike she experienced from her supervisees. She used the word "devil" to describe herself through the eyes of her supervisees.

> Participant 1: "But I walked into my first internship class, and went over the syllabus, and there was, I mean there was like fifteen, twelve, there must not have been more than twelve. But it was a lot that they just looked at me and were like, where's Dr [Jane Doe]? I might as well have been the devil. That is how they all…, most of them don't believe in the devil, but if they did it would look like me. You know what I mean?"

Throughout her interview, she acknowledged the racial difference between she and her students (Participant One is white and her supervisees are largely Latinx). She also expressed that she believed that her supervisees were automatically on edge due to her demographics— specifically her age and her race.

Undertone

Several identified supervisees using an *undertone* that supervisors interpreted as questioning. Supervisors defined the *undertone* of questioning as a general feeling of their

competence being questioned that was indirectly communicated by their supervisees. These non-direct behaviors included passive aggressive comments, statements that the supervisor "didn't understand" and receiving personal verbal attacks from supervisees. The supervisors believed that when they detected an ***undertone*** of questioning, the supervisee was challenging the competence of the supervisor. Participant Six describes this experience as being "passive aggressive" rather than direct.

> Participant 6: "I would say that, that the, the questioning of the competence is very like, um, just more of like an undertone. It wasn't very like explicit. It was kind of more in a passive aggressive manner. Um, so I would say primarily last semester was when I felt like I was questioned, but it wasn't like, um, like a direct, it wasn't direct. It was very like, like an undertone."

Undertone also manifested by questioning personal choices that the supervisor made. Participant Six had her vacation choices questioned in the context of COVID-19 and felt judged by her supervisees. This judgement left the supervisor with a bad taste in her mouth as she thought about this group of supervisees, even long after they left her supervision.

> Participant 6: "'Oh, what is everybody doing over winter break? And is anyone seeing family?' And then they're like, 'What are you doing?' Like interested. And I was like, 'Well, I may go visit my mom back on the West coast.' And then one of my students was like, 'Is anybody else going to see their family right now?' And they're like, 'No'. And they're like, the whole vibe of my zoom room was just kind of like, 'Why are you going to see family during a pandemic? We're not.' That's how it felt. It was just like, 'Whoa, this is [a] nice way to end the class for this semester.' Like that was literally one of the last comments. Like I was just kinda like, 'Nah, you should not, as a counselor, you

shouldn't be judging people.' You know, or, you know, be a little bit more like, I don't

know. I don't know. Just be less judgy. It's like, just come on, 'be nice.'"

The ***undertone*** of questioning became apparent to Participant Seven when she perceived

a change in the way her supervisee used supervision. Instead of bringing vulnerability and

clinical questions to supervision, she conceptualized that the supervisee was trying to check a

box that she attended supervision for the week. Participant Seven felt a shift in supervision from

using it like a learning tool to a scheduled interruption. Participant Seven described little

indicators of the supervisee's dissatisfaction with supervision, such as changes in language and

revisiting concepts that they'd already covered. Eventually, Participant Seven regretted letting

the ***undertone*** linger without broaching it with the supervisee:

Participant 7: "So, like if something's changed and I've made the decision that that's not a

priority that we have a wait list of my clients and that's the priority she's like, 'So wait, let

me just go back to this after we're already like done with that conversation'... Or 'So just

to clarify…', like just the language she uses and the way she goes back to something

[suggests questioning]. Like I can see her getting stuck on things and getting annoyed…

So just like little things like that where it's not as, I don't know, it doesn't feel like there's

trust and the ability to be vulnerable and talk about a case or things you're struggling with

or things you're doing well on. It just seems to be more like 'I have to do this, let me

check the box, let me, you know, get [supervision.] [My supervisor] wants to meet with

me. So, I'll just check the box and get it over with'… I really wanted to either just to just

move forward and to see what [the supervision relationship now] looks like… Now we're

in March, [and] I knew it was still not the same, but just based on some little statements

here and there and meetings or, you know, conversation that there's still 'poking', like,

you know, questioning, and doubting, or not having like the trust to share with me certain things. So, I still feel like there's another conversation that needs to happen, that I'm trying to work on getting there. To talk about what else needs to happen. And if she's willing to have that conversation with me, if it's worth it."

Finally, Participant Five questioned her perception of the **undertone** because of its indirect style. She wondered if the problem would have been resolved if she had broached the issue. This *self-awareness* pops up in Participant Five again in her response to the questioning of her competence. This response is illustrated when she reflects on how she could have influenced the outcome of her relationship with her supervisee. She wonders if her perception of the **undertone** was even accurate. Her quote below foreshadows how she responds with *supervisor self-reflection* when her competence is questioned. This **supervisor response** is illustrated later in this chapter.

Participant 5: "I don't know [if the rupture was resolved], because we never really had a conversation about it. So maybe, I guess potentially it's possible that I was reading more into it than she was. Maybe it wasn't as big a deal for her as it was for me. And [the competency questioning] really wasn't a problem for her. I proceeded as that there was a problem, between the two of us. So, I hadn't thought about that before. Maybe I was the one who perceived it differently, to a more extreme than she did. Apparently, it took me too long to work out."

The **undertone** that has been illustrated above has several different facets, all describing an experience that supervisors perceive, but can't clearly identify as direct questioning.

Site Supervisor Questioning

Two participants discussed not only having their competence questioned by their supervisees, but also navigating questioning from site supervisors. Participants One and Three describe their experience of ***site supervisor questioning*** as being focused on questioning their authority and power as supervisors. This type of questioning is described by the participants as a refusal or avoidance of completing the required tasks of supervision with the assigned supervisor, such as signing paperwork. In each case, the site supervisor communicated that they didn't want to work with the participant; one through a refusal to meet or sign paperwork, and the other by stating that the participant was making things difficult for the site.

> Participant 1: "So, what I didn't understand was that a lot of these students worked at a site that the person [I replaced] worked. And when they went back and said '[Our professor] wants us to do this and this and this.' She just fed them full of all this stuff. No one at those facilities would sign paperwork, would meet with me for supervision, or anything like that."

Participant Three experienced similar pushback from site supervisors, though through direct, ***explicit*** language.

> Participant 3: "And I remembered that the next week, I had a meeting with [my supervisee's] site supervisor. And her site supervisor was like, 'Well, how much longer will she be working with you? Well, I'm glad she won't be working with you in the fall.' Because I was making things difficult. And what I found out later was with that particular site supervisor, it had been a pattern of those kinds of behaviors."

In each case, the site supervisor communicated to this study's participants that they didn't have enough faith that the supervisor's competence in supervision was enough to be helpful to the supervisee.

Requesting a different supervisor, questioning competence via an ***undertone,*** and ***site supervisor questioning*** are all ways supervisors experienced competence questioning from their supervisees. Once each supervisor perceived that their competence was being questioned, they considered their psychological safety.

Assessing Psychological Safety

As participants discussed having their competence questioned, they identified several factors contributing to their psychological safety during the interaction and the aftermath. Psychological safety is defined in this context as a supervisor's comfort level in being vulnerable in the tasks of supervision, and the factors that supervisors believe contribute to their increased vulnerability to competency questioning. Supervisors' experiences ranged from feeling quite safe, to feeling outright hostility in the systems that they were working in. As the supervisors contemplated the factors that contributed to their competence being questioned, properties of identity that influenced how safe they felt in these interactions became apparent: ***age, gender, geography, professional role and specialty, race, socioeconomic status, supervision experience and training.*** A final property that stands alone as generally outside the context of larger society is ***systemic hostility.***

Age

Several supervisors suspected that the way supervisees perceived their ***age*** contributed to whether or not their competence was questioned. Participants worried that their ***age*** (either being

too old or too young) influenced their supervisee's perception of their experience or competence in supervision and effected their own perception of their ability to do good supervision.

Participant Two illustrates how *age* shows up in her own questioning of the competence of other supervisors.

> Participant 2: "That's been a challenge sometimes for other, younger supervisors that I have encountered. I would also say I've been challenged by from sometimes more seasoned supervisors and particularly the ones that are from the same minority group that I'm from, which [says] I should have respect for elders. So, if somebody says something to me, I should not be challenging them. And I should not be challenging them because they're older than me and they're a better supervisor. And I'm like, 'Dude, you're doing supervision like it's 1986. And if you're doing supervision, that was supervision when I was in school, that means it's old and you should abandon ship and probably learn something new.' So that's another type of challenge I think that we face as supervisors. So that's not only racial, but that is also in terms of age as well."

This quote illustrates how *age* as a factor could influence supervisee's perception of their supervisors.

Participant One discussed being older, and worried about the thoughts supervisees were having about her due to her *age*. She stated that she was aware of how people may view her *age*, even during her undergraduate degree program. Her worry about her *age* influenced her ability to ground herself in psychological safety in the supervision relationship.

> Participant 1: "Umm I think there's just an expectation that I don't know what I'm doing, it's like an expectation… especially around technology which is interesting because I was

worried about that when I decided to go into this field, and I made broadcasting my

minor."

On the other side, Participants Three and Six discussed being or appearing younger, and

how that may influence the supervision relationship, especially in different cultural and

professional contexts:

Participant 3: "Sometimes what will come up with me when I was a doc student was that

assumption when I was in my early thirties that I may not be as qualified as some of my

other peers because I was in my thirties."

Participant Three experienced questioning due to her ***age***, that really didn't have anything

to do with the actual tasks of supervision.

Participant 6: "I am younger. I look young. My students are the same age as me, like

within like five years, either direction. So, like, I think that probably plays a part in how

they view me as a supervisor…I mean, probably my own insecurity is probably my age

because they've always have been told, like, I look very young to be doing what I'm

doing and then knowing that like my students are my age and older than me. Like, I

wonder what their perception is of me as a supervisor?"

The above quote illustrates how Participant Six identifies how her ***age*** sets her up to feel

insecure about supervision, and therefore unable to feel **psychologically safe** in that moment.

Gender

Participants Three, Four, and Six identified ***gender*** as a possible factor in their

competence being questioned. Though they mostly discussed their own experiences, Participants

Three, Four, and Six observe their male colleagues and guess that the same type of questioning is

not happening to them.

Participant 3: "And my male colleague asked me; he was like, 'What is so different about you having all these problems? It's only you that has these issues.' I'm like, 'No, you notice, you're male, I'm female.' I was getting ready to go there because what else [could it be?] …So, then what else [could explain the competency questioning?] With the same particular student, she sent me an email like, 'No offense, but I don't think you are qualified to teach this class.'"

Participant Four wondered why students were comparing her supervision to a male counterpart's supervision. She was curious about why her supervisee would accept the same feedback from another supervisor over her.

Participant 4: "[My supervisee] never told me that [she accepted feedback easier from the other supervisor], but in my mind, it seemed like 'okay, he's the one who ultimately matters, and he's male.'"

Participant Six wonders if *gender* influences the ways that students question the competence of their supervisors. She illustrates a situation in which a male supervisor's competence is questioned indirectly with her.

Participant 6: "The majority of my students are women. I'm not sure how much that would play a role or if [supervision] would look different, if I was a male…Right? Yeah. I mean, I have a male colleague who supervises students and [supervision is] primarily his only role with internship and practicum, but he does clinical mental health and also group counseling practicum… And we have compared and contrasted our experiences. And I'm like, 'Oh yeah, these students say this in my class.' And he's like, 'Really? They didn't say anything to me.' It's interesting to see that because I do see [the differences in how students speak to us.] They see him as very rigid and intimidating. And these are

their words by the way. They to complain about [him] to me, but they will never say anything to him directly."

Additionally, it is important to add here that no males responded to the call for first round participants in this study. Several men reached out and expressed wishes to help but stated that they couldn't think of a time where their competence was questioned by a supervisee.

Geography

Two supervisors guessed that their **geography** may have influenced their supervisees' perception of them as supervisors. Participant Four identified that being a part of the same community may increase the amount of trust that supervisees feel towards their supervisors.

> Participant 4: "When people are in the same community there's this base of trust… When I'm supervising someone who's in [a different state], they're like, 'Well this is how my community is different.' So, I think there's sometimes some more chances for pushback because 'Well that's how it's done in [my state]; that's not how it would be in [your state].'… I'm thinking of 2 instances. I'm supervising online, and it's synchronous; so like we meet on Zoom for supervision... One student…was like, 'Well that's not how it's done here.' Or like, 'It's because you haven't been in this city.' And then we were able to kind of break down but let's look at the whole situation. Then, the student seemed to be more receptive."

Participant Six guessed that supervisees may see being from a different place as detrimental to the supervisor's ability to understand what is relevant to their internship sites.

> Participant 6: "I'm not from the [northeast] and my students are working in [northeastern] schools, so I don't have that experience. So that's probably another factor."

In each of these examples, the supervisor's ***geography*** influenced how supervisees perceived them as supervisors.

Professional Role and Specialty

Two supervisors noted that the ***professional role and specialty*** they supervise from can make a significant difference to their supervisees. Participant Three discussed her qualifications and outlined her experience but noted that her professional role as a graduate assistant appeared to a supervisee as though she hadn't had any clinical experience.

> Participant 3: "Yes! Yeah, and I was like I was fully licensed … I am a licensed professional counselor and a board approved clinical supervisor. In addition to that, I had my ancillary school certification, and I also was a provisional mental health counselor. And now my school certification unfortunately is expired, however, I'm still eligible for renewal if I was to choose to go work in a school system again. And I'm also a therapist and so I would get constantly questioned about like credentials and supervision when I first get started. And that was the first thing; [my supervisee] was like 'What am I doing with you?' and I said, 'What do you mean?' She is like 'Well you are a GA.' So, what is that supposed to mean? Like with me being a graduate assistant, her assumption was that because I was a graduate assistant, I probably didn't have any clinical experience. But I pointed out to her at that time, I was still fully licensed, and I had a lot of clinical experience and in actuality, the person who had been her fieldwork supervisor, had actually just graduated from her master's program, and was not even licensed."

Participant Four discussed switching professional roles quickly between student and supervisor throughout the day and the effects that quick switch had on her supervision relationships.

Participant 4: "My own identity last year was very different in that I was still taking a lot of classes, and unfortunately, one class I was taking ended like ten or fifteen minutes before I was teaching. So, it was this really hard shift to be like, okay student, and now I am in charge of things. I mean I get that [role switching] is a big piece of [being a supervisor], and maybe just kind of trying to figure out my own identity…I am in a different place [than her supervisees] and all that."

She then went on to describe what it is like for her to supervise clinical mental health counseling students as a school counselor.

Participant 4: "Last fall [2020] … I was supervising 2 students individually. They both were in community mental health or clinical mental health, I'm not sure what program but they were within that track. When I mentioned that most of my experience was in school counseling, I definitely got some pushback, which I was surprised about. Maybe because I had done some supervision of clinical mental health folks and hadn't had that. One was pretty forthcoming about want[ing] some help with diagnosis. [The supervisee asked,] 'Are you going to be able to help me with that?' [She] just kind of put it out there. And I was like, 'All right let's just talk about it then. Let's put it out there if that's your concern.' And so, with both students I said 'While it's school counseling, I get the idea that you don't know what that entails. I did many suicide risk assessments, I worked with many students who have been sexually assaulted, I've experienced abuse, I've experienced neglect, I was doing trauma work. It wasn't that I was just doing my schedules, which is sometimes what like school counselors do. I've worked with families even though I wasn't providing family counseling. I worked with adults as well… I did screeners for depression, and worked with anxiety, worked with eating disorders.' And

so, then they were like, 'Oh'. I said, 'Especially for practicum, the goal is to focus on

your clinical skills in working with clients, and so I believe with my experience and my

knowledge that I will be able to help you with that.'"

Participant Four used the opportunity to address her supervisee's concerns about her

professional role and specialty by clearly explaining her experience and using role induction to

describe what the goal of practicum is.

Race

Participants Six and Three discussed the influence that ***race*** might have on their

competence being questioned. Participant Six noted that she guessed that ***race*** influences the

supervision relationship but didn't elaborate on how. Participant Six identifies as "Latina/White"

and noted the homogeneity of the population that she works with.

Participant 6: "I'm sure race plays a role, but, um, or ethnicity plays a role as well, but

majority of my students are Caucasian students. Yeah. So, yeah."

Participant Three, a black woman, described a situation with a supervisee who made

some very racist comments toward her. She then described feeling silenced because she didn't

want to seem to be an "angry black woman."

Participant 3: "Yes so, I had a supervisee, this is a couple years ago, and I worked with

her for two or three semesters. She was a mental health student. She was about twenty-

three years old. She had mentioned she did not want to continue in clinical mental health.

She was only in the program to defer student loans and so she didn't want to be here, and

so her parents had told her she either had to do this or get out. So, she chose this. And so,

this was the one that made me sick to my stomach meeting with her on a weekly basis. I

remember, one day in supervision, because I used to smile a lot, and I remember one of

my professors used to ask me what was behind my smile. I remember earlier in supervision, I had a male professor, and he would bring a mirror and I remember he would ask us, 'What do we see in the mirror?' I tried to do something similar with her as far as, you know, like as a check in. Well, she told me when she looks at me and sees my smile, it reminds her of the lady on the pancake box. And then she goes on to tell me how I remind her of her… *caregiver* growing up… And I remember she told me that I would speak so eloquent, I would speak so smart, my mom should be so proud of me, and she was just like very patronizing… I was like 'What is in the water?' I didn't want to be perceived as an angry black woman, but I talked about it in… I did talk about it in the doc supervision, but I didn't talk about it with the professor.'"

Participant Three discussed another experience of racism with a different student. Participant Three illustrated how difficult it was to have boundaries with this supervisee and how **race** influenced their supervision relationship. He displayed similar behaviors with another supervisor of color, though she pushed back on his behaviors. For Participant Three, his description of her as "mammy" undermined the power that she had as his supervisor.

Participant 3: "[My supervisee] got away with murder. And there was some stuff that he did, and I remember I had to figure out like what is this about? And I remember he did get paired the next semester with another woman of color, she saw some of the same things I experienced, but the difference was she was willing to challenge [the racist behavior]. But the difference in dynamics was because she is very directive; he flipped the script on her. Whereas like with me he was like 'Mammy.' He treated me like mammy."

Participants Six and Three both had very different experiences of *race* being a part of their competency being questioned. For Participant Six, it felt more like a guess about *race* being related, while Participant Three experienced clear racism from her supervisees.

Finally, Participant One described how challenging it was for her to provide space for supervisees to discuss *race* in the context of supervision.

Participant 1: "With like, everything that was going on with the political and social unrest [*George Floyd's murder and Black Lives Matter*] and then, you know, like I'm being told to give students time to talk about what's happening you know as far as the events, and freedom to talk about it, and then I get in the student's evaluation you're giving me too much time to talk about these things, I don't want to talk about it, or you know, they're saying all lives matter, blue lives matter, you focusing too much on multicultural."

She received pushback from her supervisees in the form of course evaluations about her inclusion of current events surrounding *race* in supervision.

Socioeconomic Status

Participant Two noted that ***socioeconomic status*** may be important to the supervision relationship. She discussed needing to bracket a feeling of jealousy associated with the material goods that her supervisees have. She also noted that sometimes she needs to coach supervisees on their perception of their client's ***socioeconomic status***.

Participant 2: "I think SES is important. I was raised on food stamps, you know, government cheese and stuff like that. And sometimes I have trainees that are very, very wealthy. They're very well off. And I have to remember to not be jealous of their stuff. I have a whole house full of crap at this point. I have to remember that stuff is just stuff and it really is not a measure of what the person's skills are…I don't understand students

who are like, 'I don't understand why my client doesn't have any money, but yet they have a pack of smokes' and I'm like, 'Well, let's talk about the culture of poverty and number one, how long it takes for people to jump even one strata. From the lower middle-class to the working, middle-class. Let's talk about the sense of urgency and comfort. Yeah. They may not have any money, but look, you really want to take away their cigarettes on top of it. Cause now you have two kinds of a mess.'"

While Participant Two didn't ever explicitly link *socioeconomic status* and having her competence questioned, it seems that such profound perceived differences in *socioeconomic status* contributed to a barrier for the supervisor making it more difficult for her to supervise about classism because that aspect of her identity was being undervalued when her supervisees express thoughts and feelings about poverty.

Supervision Experience and Training

Some supervisors stated that the amount of training that they had influenced how much their supervisees questioned their competence. Participant Two noted that she was questioned much more often, early in her supervision career. She combated that by being transparent about what she believed she was not good at.

Participant 2: "New supervisors are very reactionary about stuff. So, there's that. Yeah. My big thing has always [been], 'Put it out there. What you're not good at.' My fear… when I first started doing that was that students would try to test me…That only happened in the first maybe one or two years as a supervisor."

Different from being questioned by her supervisees, but also in the vein of competency questioning, Participant Two also identified that she is questioned most often by site supervisors who are not trained in supervision. She then follows up by discussing how she takes feedback

from newer supervisors who are questioning her competence. She uses an analogy of dotted lines vs. solid lines to depict the strength of a connection between two things. Her perception of how valid she treats the feedback is influenced by her perception of the questioner's ***supervision training and experience.***

> Participant 2: "I find sometimes that it gets questioned by people that are not trained in supervision. You know, around here, lots of mental health agencies and people become supervisors by virtue of who's there the longest. So that's an example of where my competency has been questioned by actually a less competent supervisor. Who's like, 'Well, what's the problem?' Well, the problem is, 'If I don't know what I'm doing, how am I supposed to tell the trainee what they're supposed to do?' And I think experience is another factor… It's not out of a place of 'I'm so arrogant'. If you've been a supervisor for two years, do not try to talk to me about supervision. Take a minute and learn what it is that you are doing. Just like all the rest of us that are decent supervisors have had to learn. Being promoted into a supervisor position because you've been at a place for two years; I don't dig it. I don't have a lot of patience for that kind of feedback that comes from that kind of supervisor. Not that people cannot be adequate, but I think being a decent supervisor takes some time. It takes some of your own experience with clients and it takes a lot of going through and learning from trainees about what works and what doesn't. Again, I don't get it that often, but when I do, I have to take a second and think. [I ask myself,] 'All of these pieces, all of these connecting circles, is this line a solid line or is it a dotted line of how it's connected?' And if it's more dotted lines than solid lines, I'm likely to listen to the younger person or the newer person. And then I'm going to put you

right here and I'm going to continue to do what I'm doing. And again, it's not from a place of being arrogant, it's just evaluative. Right? And analytical."

Participant Four described a sense of longing to feel competent in each of her roles. She identified that she's relatively new in the field and wants to build her trust in herself and her colleagues trust in her.

Participant 4: "I think there was some… what emotion word could I put there? Let me think… uh I can't think of one, but it was kind of like, 'I get where you're coming from. I am experiencing the same identity… not crisis.' I've been this very competent, like I was a mentor for people, and now I'm jumping into this faculty role, and I'm a PhD student. So, I'm getting that same thing of yes, I've had this experience, yet it doesn't necessarily mean that I'm going to know all these answers, or that I'm going to make the same choices now that I would ten years from now. You just like want to be competent for once. You just want to have a day where you're like, 'Yes, I do know the answer.' Where you don't even have to look something up, or really consider it. [I'm] longing for, 'Okay I know what I'm doing', and other people trust that I know what I'm doing too."

Additionally, Participants Three, Six and Seven discussed the comparison that they perceive from supervisees. Essentially, they're saying that supervisees may not have questioned their competence if there wasn't someone close by who the supervisee guessed had more experience in supervision:

Participant 3: "Yeah, but she just assumed [that] because I was a graduate assistant, I did not have any clinical experience."

Participant 6: "I mean, there's probably a comparison between faculty members, right? Like other faculty members have more experience or different experience."

Participant Seven describes a situation where she entered a supervision role for a supervisee who has had some clinical experience in a different role. This supervisee was comparing her own clinical experience to the supervisor's, even though the clinical experience was in a different role:

> Participant 7: "I've supervised people that have more years of clinical experience than I do. Um, so I think we have about the same amount of total experience for her and me, but she's never supervised. She has no supervisor experience."

Systemic Hostility

Systemic hostility is defined by supervisors feeling persecuted by the system that they are in. One indication of ***systemic hostility*** is when supervisors described having their competence questioned when their supervisees questioned them repeatedly about the same issue. Participant One felt discouraged by the repeated hostility she felt from her supervisees. She felt that she would make progress in the relationship, and then by the next class period, they would be back to questioning her again. She believed that this hostility was coming from students' interactions with other faculty.

> Participant 1: "[My students] would come in, and we would have what seemed like a really good class, and then they would go out, and then they would come back the next week and they would be hostile. And then I'd try to work through that, and then they'd leave, and they come back in the next week, and they'd be more hostile. Not even the same, more hostile-until the hostility was just like dripping…I realized that something was going on in the background, from the faculty…I had overheard a conversation that I wasn't supposed to hear and yeah, that led me to tears. And I was like, if you have these issues with me just come up to my face and tell me. If you think I'm overly sensitive or if

you have problems with me not turning things in on time or if you think I have a dense skin, or if you have problems with my teaching pedagogy. If [there are things] you want me to be more consistent in, and I was glad when [other professors] finally did start telling me these things."

Participant Seven felt questioned when the clinic's administrative assistant wrote a letter to the clinic director describing some of the challenges with Participant Seven that had been discussed around the office. This letter illustrated to her the hostility that was present in the whole clinical system, not just in her relationship with her supervisee.

> Participant 7: "My assistant wrote a letter, like she's been talking to so-and-so and so-and-so. Basically, I walked into what it feels like a free for all, like people were just doing whatever they wanted type of thing and not having a supervisor... The assistant mentioned something in the letter about, like I was crushing their dreams type of thing. Like I was crushing your creativity type of stuff… When I told people, 'No, we can't do that because that's outside of our scope', [people took it as] 'We can't go outside and do an outreach table right now'. [I was doing] normal supervisory management things. And that's where I saw [the work environment] getting a little infected."

Systemic hostility created the sense in the supervisors that there was something that needed addressing within the supervision relationship that was heavily influenced by factors outside of the supervision relationship. These factors contributed to the learning environment in which the competency questioning happened, as well as influencing the **psychological safety** that supervisors experience in their roles as supervisors and counselor educators. All these factors together appear to influence how supervisors then responded once their competency was questioned.

Supervisor Responses

The supervisors that I interviewed had varying responses to their competence being questioned in supervision. These responses fell into two major ***subcategories***: ***emotional responses,*** and ***relational responses***.

Emotional Responses

Supervisors generally agree that having their competence questioned is an experience that elicits an ***emotional response***. Usually, their response included ***emotional responses*** that ranged from emotions that supervisors *bracketed* (processed through quickly to maintain focus on the supervision relationship) to emotions that *persisted*.

Bracketing Emotions. Each participant identified many different emotions that came up for them when they perceived their competence was being questioned. Though emotions were discussed and present throughout the experience of having their competence questioned, some common initial responses were discussed. Supervisors defined bracketing as the process of putting aside their own responses to be able to focus on a supervisee's needs in the moment.

Participants Five and Seven described feeling activated and needing to remain calm in the moment.

Participant 5: "I think I chose to mostly keep myself as calm as I could in the moment. I don't think I ever lost my composure about it all…I don't know why I just felt unprepared at that moment, which is unusual."

Participant 7: "I didn't say [it], but I wanted to [say] 'I'm professional, I'm an adult'. I had to compartmentalize how I emotionally feel about what just happened versus the fact [my student is] a great clinician.'"

Participants Five and Six described needing to compartmentalize or *bracket* their emotions when they were first questioned. They worried that their initial, authentic ***emotional responses*** would be detrimental to the supervision relationship.

Participant 6: "[Laugh] Honestly, when she said [the following], I couldn't say anything…I don't know what my face looked like in zoom, because I just had to take a breath for a second because I'm not from this area. [My state] is like 90% white. It's very, very white and there's not a lot of, there's really no diversity here. It was really frustrating for me to hear [the following] … I just didn't get it…This is a white woman who has a job who is in graduate school there so much privilege that she holds. And she's comparing the CACREP requirement of 40 hours to George Floyd being killed. I think I didn't get it. So, I was just like, 'I don't know.' I thought about confronting her on [it], I didn't say anything. And obviously I still get upset about that when I think about it. I was just frustrated, and I didn't know really how to handle that. I was just in shock that that [it] was even said."

Participant Six was shocked and horrified by the connection that her supervisee made between expectations in a master's program to the death of George Floyd but had to *bracket* her initial emotional response to **attune to supervisee needs**. Not only describing Participant Six's reaction to the student's reaction, but the above quote also illustrates how supervisees may see supervisors as the people who create and enforce the CACREP standards and hours requirements.

Participant Five describes what *bracketing* means to her. She defines *bracketing* as compartmentalizing her emotions to focus on what need the supervisee is trying to communicate in the moment.

Participant 5: "[I] try to… bracket [or] compartmentalize. Basically [bracket] what was going on for me internally. [I tried to] keep my teachers hat on and not knee-jerk react in any kind of way with the students, because I think if I had reacted in a way that appeared to be lashing out, they may have perceived that I thought that this really was something or that I was not the one that was in the position of power here."

The supervisor's need to *bracket* their ***emotional responses*** suggest that, though they are feeling escalated in one way or another, they are attending to the needs of the supervisee first. Next comes a discussion of some emotions that supervisors experience that they work to *bracket* when their competence is questioned.

Surprise. One of the emotions that participants identified that happened right away when their competence was questioned was feeling surprised that the questioning was happening. This is a feeling the participants *bracketed.* Participants Three and Seven experienced a feeling of surprise when their competence was questioned. They expressed believing that the questioning behavior was out of character for their supervisees and being blindsided by it. The surprise suggested that there was a negative connotation associated with the supervisee. It seemed that supervisors believed that their relationships with their supervisees was stronger than it was, or that the existence of competence questioning meant that the supervision relationship was in jeopardy. Participant Three described feeling surprised when her supervisee told her that she reminded her of "the lady on the pancake box."

Participant 3: "Like I had cold sweats so fast and was flabbergasted, dumbfounded because she would portray so well in other ways but it, I couldn't come out of character because I think she was expecting me to react a certain way."

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Participant Seven's experience feeling <u>surprised</u> came after her supervisee was extremely rude to her after she drew a boundary about her scope of practice as a supervisee. Participant Seven also suggested that she was surprised by her reaction to the whole encounter.

Participant 7: "I was floored because this is somebody who, it was just her and I for a long time, because we were so short-staffed, and we were always short-staffed. So, it was just her and I, and we were in the trenches and my supervisory position here is a little different than it would be normally stateside. I do, I see clients, I supervise, I run different programs, so I do a lot more. And there's not a lot of training for the positions, so it's kind of figure it out as you go. So, I was floored because we always seem[ed] to have the relationship that we're in it [together]. We're getting it done. What do you need? What do I need? You know, what are we doing? I was really shocked. I understand we're upset, but I was really shocked by that conversation…Yeah. Like I'm not usually that anxious about stuff, and I've done this before and so it just took me by surprise too. Like how much it bothered me."

Participants' experiences of <u>surprise</u> were often an initial reaction quickly followed by <u>defensiveness.</u>

<u>Defensiveness.</u> Participant Two discussed defensiveness as one of their initial emotional experiences when they first perceived that their competence was being questioned. Participant Two's defensiveness wanted to come out as an attack on her supervisee, and she had to *bracket* it to preserve her relationship with her supervisee.

Participant 2: "And my first response as a human being is, well, 'You might as well take a seat [be]cause you don't know anything.'"

This is another example of a supervisor *bracketing* their initial response to their competence being questioned. This was the only example of <u>defensiveness</u> that was present in the first round of interviews, and I remain curious if <u>defensiveness</u> is a more universal experience of being questioned.

Persistent Emotions

Other **emotional responses** were described as more long-lasting experiences that, began in the moment of questioning and persisted with the supervisor, even after the interaction had ended.

<u>Discontent- Anger, Irritation, Disappointment and Frustration. Discontent</u> is defined as a combination of <u>anger, irritation, disappointment</u> or <u>frustration</u>. Participants Three, Four, and Five expressed <u>anger, irritation, disappointment, and frustration</u> when their competence was questioned. This <u>anger</u> was directed at the supervisee, though they didn't express <u>anger</u> in the moment. For some, their <u>anger, irritation, frustration, or disappointment</u> influenced how they saw the supervisee even long after their interaction.

Participant Three felt angry throughout her whole experience of competency questioning.

Participant 3: "I was furious."

Participant Four's <u>discontent</u> with the supervisee's actions were centered around her perception that her supervisee was trying to self-sabotage and be asked to leave the program. Participant Four wondered if the supervisee had been trying to blame the supervisor on the lack of progress or performance in the program.

Participant 4: "I think I was a little frustrated too, or maybe disappointed. I put a lot of

work into [my supervisee's development], and it didn't work out. [The supervisee breach]

was something that was like, 'Why would you do that?' A part of me is like, 'Maybe you

just need a way out, and this is the way, to make this breach. Because you knew it was going to end [your enrollment in the program] versus like continuing [in the program], and [leaving the program] was because of this breach, right, rather than your lack of skill or progression.' I was disappointed for sure that we had put a lot of effort in, and it didn't work out."

Participant Four also described feeling resentful that the questioning behavior centered around what she thought was a 'fake façade' of concern. She suspected that the supervisee believed that school counseling doesn't prepare supervisors to supervise clinical mental health counselors. The way that the supervisee questioned her competence irritated Participant Four because it was disingenuous.

> Participant 4: "Secondly, maybe irritated or resentful. 'You don't think that school counselors do counseling', and that's just something I have experienced a lot of misunderstanding about what school counselors do, so there's that piece. [I wondered,] 'Are you trying to trick me? Like you're trying to make it seem like you're here to help me out when really, you're not sure if I can do the work. Why are you surprised that I knew what you were talking about?' [The way it was phrased] probably more annoyed me and irritated me. 'Don't put it behind this this fake façade that that you're worried about me, and don't want me to be too challenged, when it's really about you [being] worried about this experience for you.'"

Participant Five described her feelings of frustration when her supervisees questioned her competence in the context of the pandemic. They were asking about the possibility of reducing or changing the requirements for graduation and questioned their supervisor when it became apparent that the requirements weren't going to change:

Participant 5: "So, we were in the group setting when this was all going on. There were four other students in there with me. I recognized right away how important it was for me to keep my professional hat on. Internally at first, I could feel myself getting very frustrated and a sense of, 'She has no idea what she is talking about.' But I also knew that I couldn't express that to her, so I was feeling extreme frustration. So, I think I was empathetic, but at the same time, I will be honest, I was frustrated because I just felt like their frustrations were misdirected. I felt like I was getting the brunt of [the supervisee's frustration about the hour expectations to complete their internships] even though I had no control over the pandemic."

Participant Five functioned as her supervisees' outlet for their frustrations and was very <u>frustrated</u> that their feelings were misdirected at her.

<u>Anxiety.</u> Another feeling that participants identified that persisted even after the competence questioning interaction was the experience of <u>anxiety</u>. Participants Five, Six and Seven expressed feeling <u>anxious</u> throughout the process of being questioned. For Participant Five, this <u>anxiety</u> appeared to manifest itself through *self-reflection* ("what if I'm wrong") and persists even after the interaction with the supervisee.

Participant 5: "Oh, I was nervous. I was like, 'What if I had missed something?' That self-doubt starts kicking in a little bit…I still make mistakes and miss things and things like that, so I was kind of concerned… 'What if she's right [and we should have made a CFS report] and I'm wrong here?', this could become a legal issue then."

Participant Six's <u>anxiety</u> manifested through feeling nervous when having to interact with the whole class of students.

Participant 6: "I would say anxious. I was anxious. I was anxious going into class. I had no idea what to expect anymore. I didn't know like what they were going to come at me with that day. Like, what question are they going to come with? I think I was just anxious going into every class meeting, which is sad. Right. I should be excited to be supervising, like, no, this is an awful semester."

For Participant Seven, the <u>anxiety</u> and tension in the supervision relationship even caused lost sleep.

Participant 7: "For me? I was so anxious. Like I didn't sleep one night. I mean, that's been hit or miss just with a pandemic. That anxiety like, 'Oh my gosh', like, 'what am I having to deal with?' This year it's really challenged me and made me more anxious than I think I've ever been. I've dealt with some really tough staff members before in counseling—[previous staff members who] have been completely disrespectful, completely disregarded me. This one just feels different. [My supervisee] changed so quick, like night and day."

<u>Anxiety</u> also manifested itself in a feeling of inadequacy in the role of supervisor. Inadequacy was an experience that Participants Three and Four both felt. For Participant Three, the way her department communicated with her around her competency as a supervisor transcended into feeling dehumanized and belittled.

Participant 3: "I felt inadequate…I didn't feel umm worthy…I felt like a criminal, and that was the thing, like I felt profiled [by the department]. I felt dehumanized and … I just felt very belittled and that was one of those things, I didn't share. I just buried that and so I just didn't talk about it."

Participant Four wondered what she did to communicate to her supervisees that she was inadequate in the role of the supervisor.

Participant 4: "I mean at first it was like, 'What have I done to already make it seem like I'm not a credible, competent supervisor?' [My supervisee] legit has never seen a client, and they don't think that [I] will be helpful to them. So, part of it was like, 'How did I present in such a way that I already seemed to not be helpful?'"

Participant Four's anxiety manifested in incredulity in how quickly the competency questioning manifested, and then worry about what she had presented that triggered the competency questioning so early in supervision.

Gratitude. Several supervisors identified gratitude as one of the primary emotions that they experienced after their competence was questioned. Usually, it wasn't an immediate feeling but showed up a bit after the interaction happened. There were several parts of gratitude that popped up in the interviews. Participant Four described gratitude for her previous experience as well as gratitude that her supervisee could speak up when they believed they needed to. She also alluded to feeling appreciative of the challenge in supervision, as though the competency questioning would provide for a richer experience.

Participant 4: "Grateful that it wasn't my first supervision experience, because I [wondered] 'what would this be like?' I already had some confidence in my supervision skills, so I was like, 'What would this have been like if this is my first semester?' I don't know. Legit no idea. I'm actually reading a book on supervision as we were going, so I was grateful that that it wasn't my first-time supervising. [I] appreciate[ed] the challenge…[Supervisees] aren't just going to let me slide by and be like, 'Yes, whatever you say is good.' At least with the first student, I guess [it felt] good that she is going to

speak up when there are concerns…Maybe some of that piece of appreciating that I'm glad that they said something and asked rather than just completely wrote off my feedback without talking to me about it…It wasn't gratitude right away but, down the road I was [grateful]."

Participant Five described a sense of pride in her student's ability to advocate for what she thought was right for her client, even if it came out as opposing the opinion of the supervisor. The gratitude in this case served to shift the focus of the competence questioning from the supervisor to the situation in counseling.

> Participant 5: "I felt proud that she was willing to advocate for this family. At least that's the way she was perceiving it. And so, you know, I didn't feel like it was as much a personal attack on me as much as she felt like she was right and wanted to make sure that she was heard about that."

In summary, the ***emotional responses*** ranged from immediate reactions to lasting emotional experiences for supervisors.

Relational Responses

As supervisors respond emotionally to their competence being questioned, they also respond relationally. The ***relational responses*** that participants identified were split into several *properties*.

Foundations of Supervision. The first *property* articulates what supervisors do to effectively set the foundations of supervision and the supervision relationship. These foundational tasks of supervision include <u>clear, direct, transparent informed consent</u>; <u>leading with curiosity</u>; and <u>displaying confidence</u>.

<u>Clear, Direct, Transparent Informed Consent.</u> This <u>informed consent</u> process is defined as a perpetual procedure that supervisors lead supervisees in so that everyone knows what to expect in the supervision relationship, assessment, and evaluation. Participants Two and Four describe their experiences offering <u>informed consent</u> as a part of their supervision. Participant Four opened her supervision group with acknowledging vulnerability she identifies in her students. She was transparent about the process of internship and the supervision associated with that and normalized the developmental stage and process that her supervisees were entering.

Participant 4: "I've set up supervision a bit differently to hopefully allow for that, and [to] acknowledge: 'I get that you've been professionals, and I get that you have had a lot of experiences, and your gut isn't a counselor gut, right now, and that's what we're trying to develop.' And so, we hope you can bring that in, but that can't be the basis for everything now and so everyone is starting off at square one. We talk about vulnerability. I kind of stop to say it's very vulnerable because you can't hide behind, 'Oh I didn't read that chapter,' or 'I just rushed through that book.' It's a different kind of vulnerability when you're coming in and sharing things and getting feedback. It's probably…a case you're emotionally really, really invested in. And so, it could be harder."

Participant Two lets students know clear boundaries around her scope of practice and areas of competence. This allows for supervisees to know what to bring to her, and what may be more effective to use other resources to uncover. This level of transparency undergirds

Participant Two's informed consent process and may create trust with her supervisees. Participant Two views informed consent as an integral part of how she builds trust in her supervision relationships.

> Participant 2: "I don't usually have students that are questioning my competency because upfront I'm very clear about the things I'm not competent in. And I always preface if there is something I am not…So, if that situation comes up in supervision, number one, all of my trainees across the board already know I'm not the right person to ask…So, what I will do is A) I will consult with another supervisor or B) I'm going to refer you to somebody who knows about this stuff. So, when it comes to trainees asking about competency, I put my incompetency out there at the beginning before people even are in my group and I keep it out front. So, I don't hide it. I don't hide what it is that I'm not good at."

As a supervisor, Participant Two is also clear about what she knows and does not know. If she has a question, she will ask. She also appears not to feel inadequate or bad about something that she views as inquiries about things outside the scope of her job. Supervisees witness this confidence and recognize that a supervisor doesn't have to know everything about everything to be an effective, competent supervisor—they just need to be good at supervision.

Leading With Curiosity. Participant Five laid the foundation for her supervision relationships with an attitude of unworried curiosity. In the below situation she described using patience and curiosity to discover her supervisee's thoughts and feelings about a challenging client situation. She used any challenges to her competence as teachable moments and worked to avoid dysregulation and stress. She then leaned into the questioning and revisited it the following week with more information and with a structure to understand the supervisee's question. She brought in an ethical decision-making model to help facilitate understanding in a kind but firm way.

> Participant 5: "I wanted to use this [questioning] as a way of a collaborative discussion that we could have together about it, and to talk about how, difficult it is in making these decisions—that it's not a black and white issue... So, I feel like I just kind of went that route with it…I used it, I felt like as a teachable moment, 'Let's talk about this a little bit further, and see, you know, what would be the best way to handle this? Do we have enough information to really?'… She would say something along the lines of 'But we're not investigators. We're supposed to [report] if we're suspicious.' And I said, 'Are you suspicious just based on this drawing?'…So, we just kept, um, discussing it. I was just trying to help them understand that … just because we see something doesn't mean we automatically assume that [sexual abuse is] what's happening. We need to get more information before we start… something like that… The next week we revisited it as a group, again. And I was a little firmer about the reason about… why we don't do some of the things *(do interventions that haven't been okayed by the supervisor)* that happened last time. And I brought in some teaching material then, to talk about reporting and being able to not do a knee jerk reaction when we think we know something. These are the

kinds of situations that you really have to staff with colleagues and collaborate… before you make those kinds of decisions. Then use your ethical decision-making model and things like that. So, we stepped down and we used an ethical decision-making model the next week and [discussed that] we needed more information really in order for this to be reportable."

Participant Two described the strength that can be required to respond with *curiosity* rather than <u>defensiveness</u> when a supervisee questions her as a supervisor. She holds the responsibility in the supervision relationship to address what the supervisee believes went awry and adjust based on what the supervisee needs.

> Participant 2: "I think as supervisors, it's our responsibility to be strong enough to say, 'what happened here?' How did you not feel supported? And what do we need to do to make sure that we stay open, even though I'm offended that you told the other supervisor [that I'm struggling] and you're off because I didn't have answers for you. Like, 'What can we do? Let's put our heads together and think about it.' So, I think being honest is the best way to go about that. We're thinking, is this changing the supervision relationship?... [*Questioning*] doesn't feel as derogatory, and it feels more curious. Um, so I handled that completely different and I'm like, 'Tell me what your concern is.' And they give me the concern and then I'm like, 'So help me understand. Cause like I'm not picking up on this piece. Like I don't, I don't know what you need me to get from this.' And once they explain, I can agree or I can disagree, but I think I go about [reflective listening] a little bit differently than I do with peers who are giving feedback with students. I see it as a curious thing. And of course, with curiosity, it comes from all different places. Right.

Which I totally welcome. Totally. Welcome to curiosity. Now's the time to do it while you're under supervision."

Participants Two and Five discussed approaching supervisees with curiosity as one of their foundational strategies to manage conflict in supervision, specifically in how they manage when supervisees question their competence. The remaining five supervisors didn't explicitly discuss responding with curiosity.

Displaying Confidence. The theme of confidence was so clear in Participant Two's description of her experience navigating supervisees questioning her competence and it became clear that this confidence was an integral part of the foundation of her supervision relationships. Participant Two unapologetically discussed her process in supervision and confidently identified her supervision style. There was an undertone of unflappability to the way she spoke about supervision, and that having her competence questioned was just part of the supervision process, rather than something to be concerned about.

Participant 2: "That's one example of where it's been challenged. [My competence has] been challenged, not frequently, I would say infrequently because my personality is very abrupt and very straightforward. And some people prefer a little more… dancing around about how they're going about [giving feedback]. And times where that has blown up in my face, which has then had a challenge towards me is the supervisees that are kind of in my opinion, dainty. So that sometimes is where I've been challenged as well, but that really comes down to my own personality and way of communicating where sometimes younger folks either get it or don't get it. Do you know what I mean? You don't want three of me in a program. That doesn't help anybody because we're not all the same...

And I'm like, 'Man, you better get a tougher skin because clients will come for you. [laugh].'"

Similarly, Participant Two identifies common thoughts that previous supervisees have experienced and identifies those for each new group of supervisees. She describes being predictable and consistent with her strengths and weaknesses as well as with her responses to common struggles that supervisees have. The way she speaks about navigating supervisee situations—specifically using the word "fearless"—instills a sense that she can manage whatever her supervisees bring to her. She expects her supervisees to bring challenges to her and is confident and fearless in her abilities to handle the situation if it's within her scope; and if it's outside of that scope, she can use appropriate resources or help the supervisee find the support they need outside of her. Participant Two describes her process of modeling a growth-oriented perspective to her supervisees for their development as counselors in training, but also as she learns and grows as a supervisor. She depicts displaying confidence and strength while also leaving space for her to learn and grow as well.

> Participant 2: "I can put it on a tape recorder or like whatever people are using now to report things, I could put it on a tape recorder and students can play that 17 times a day. Like it's not your fault. And they're going to be like, 'No, it's still my fault,' which is reasonable. I find myself in the same situation sometimes. But it's a good learning moment for trainees to see [transparency in the supervision relationship]. Right. I am fearless. And if my supervisees need me and they come from their office to my office, like, 'Man, I got something going on in my room and I don't know what's happening.' I'm like, 'I will be right there.' So, your supervisees know that they can count on you to be strong, but also, they can count on your weaknesses to be weak."

Each of the above moments of confidence were times in supervision that the participants seemed proud of their actions laying the foundation for a more collaborative process when their competence was questioned. Participant Two was the only participant to clearly discuss underline displaying confidence in her experience of being questioned.

Moving Towards the Supervisee. In this category, several supervisors discussed behaviors that indicated moving toward the supervisee when conflict arises instead of falling directly into self-protective behaviors. This moving towards is defined as using strategies to develop connection with the supervisee and prioritize the supervision relationship. This was done in three ways: underline validation of the supervisee experience, underline using empathy, and underline supervisor self-reflection. Each of these strategies were used to move closer to the supervisee to enhance the supervisor's understanding of the problem and to communicate that the supervision relationship is important to the supervisors.

underline Validation of Supervisee Experiences. Participant Six illustrates this property by responding to the initial questioning of her competence by validating the supervisee's experiences.

Participant 6: "Even though we had spent three classes, really just talking, and talking and talking and like processing what was happening for them (*navigating internship during a pandemic)* and trying to work through solutions. And I was like, basically like a sounding board, like, 'Okay, you want to complain, complain' You know, like I gave them the space for them to share their experiences and also just relate to one another because they were all going through the same experience. Maybe [going through the experience of internship] a little bit differently at times because they were at different school sites. But I just continued that throughout the semester. I just made sure we had

time and space to process their frustrations and talk about their needs and how I can best

support them. And I was very transparent about everything that I was doing to try to

support them. [For example,] 'Hey guys, I'm going to have a faculty meeting this week

and I'm going to talk about this, and I'll let you know as soon as I hear something.' I was

very transparent about the whole process and what I was doing to try to support them just

so they knew that I'm on their side and I'm not against them. I'm not trying to like prevent

them from moving forward in the program. … So, um, yeah, I think that's pretty much

how I handled it (*their frustration that the CACREP standards weren't changed due to*

the pandemic)."

Participant Six used reflective listening, validation, and curiosity to allow space for

supervisees to share their thoughts and feelings. She moved towards her supervisee to understand

what need they were trying to express by questioning her competency.

Empathy. Using *empathy* was one of the strategies that supervisors used when moving

towards supervisees. In supervision, empathy looks like communicating to supervisees that

connect deeply to the various feelings that supervisees express in supervision alongside them.

Participants One, Six and Seven described their use of empathy in the following quotes.

Participant One empathized with students getting caught in the middle of faculty conflict. She

saw the students get caught in the middle between faculty in a departmental dispute that wasn't

about the students and *empathized* with their emotional experiences.

Participant 1: "I felt like [departmental conflict] would put the students in a sense of a tug

of war. They already were experiencing this horrible tug of war of their experience versus

what they were being told."

Participant Six communicated ***empathy*** when her students brought her stress about how the pandemic was influencing their courses of study. She felt the tension between needing hours to graduate and the need to be safe with COVID-19, and not knowing how or if these things were going to come together. She viewed her competence being questioned through the lens of students being afraid that they wouldn't get their hours, which allowed for her to attune to their need, not take the competency questioning personally.

> Participant 6: "Um, I was like empathetic, and I understood where they were coming
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> from. And like, I can get their frustration…Obviously nobody was expecting [the
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> pandemic], and nobody knew what it was going to look like. And I didn't know what it
>
> was going to look like…Um, but just trying to be like, 'All right, we're in a pandemic and
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> everybody's taking it a different way…' I don't know what is happening [as guidelines
>
> change and new information comes to light] and trying to be respectful [of students fear
>
> that they wouldn't finish their internships]."

Participant Seven described how challenging the dynamics in her setting is, as well as how the hierarchy of the clinic sometimes posed clinical challenges for both supervisors and supervisees. She views these challenging dynamics as setting the stage for her competence to be questioned.

> Participant 7: "Yeah. And I've been, I started as a contractor for a year, and I know it's
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> like, it's weird because depending on how involved your contract boss is, [some bosses]
>
> seem a little more involved. [My role as an employer is] very detached, [because] I don't
>
> technically …report [to her contract boss]. Like [my supervisee asks] me, 'Is it okay if I
>
> go on vacation?' I'm like, 'Yeah, that's fine.' But I don't technically approve it."

Participant Seven acknowledges how hard it is to manage with several different bosses who are responsible for different aspects of her supervisee's employment (i.e., Participant Seven is the clinical supervisor, but the supervisee also has a different boss for her role as an employee).

Supervisor Self-Reflection. Self-reflection is a response that several supervisors had when their competence was questioned. Participants discussed their self-reflective process as being helpful not only when processing the experience of having their competence questioned, but also in identifying when they made an error in supervision. Participant One used self-reflection to be curious about why she perceived her competence was questioned, and what she felt she has to offer students and supervisees. She finishes the quote by seeking security in her protection by the Americans with Disabilities act.

> Participant 1: "Also, I had like a hard topic myself. Because of the kind of pushback I received, I had to kind of look at myself and say like, ethically do I have something to offer these students that matters whether I'm in this position, or would they be better served by someone who has… is stronger in these other areas in which I'm getting feedback that's negative…I said well it's probably my pinchy face, because like people think I look mean if I'm not smiling. Or maybe the slight stroke I have on the left side that might look like contempt, I'm not sure... but I think I'm covered under the Americans with disabilities act."

Participant Five's self-reflection was specific to the situation that caused the supervisee to question her competence. She reflected on her clinical choice to ensure that she was making the best choice.

Participant 5: "Oh, so I was nervous. I mean, I was like, you know, what if I had missed something, I mean, you know, that self-doubts start kicking in a little bit. I mean, … I still make mistakes and miss things and things like that. I was kind of concerned that, you know, 'What if she's right and I'm wrong here?', and you know, this, this could become a legal issue then."

Through <u>self-reflection</u> after their actions were explicitly questioned by their supervisees, Participants One, Two and Seven agreed with supervisee perspectives about errors that they made in their relationships with their supervisees. In the following quote, Participant One discussed an error that she made, while also acknowledging how difficult it was to be "ripped to pieces" by her supervisee. This self-reflective action seemed quite uncomfortable for her:

Participant 1: "I used the wrong pronoun one day and my gosh... they almost ripped me into pieces, literally. They did rip me into pieces. And that was really hard for me because I didn't have a way to practice it [*pronoun use*], I'm not that great at pronouns anyway and trying to figure out how to put it in a sentence and then also realizing that it only came up when the person wasn't in front of me, except for one time when a trans student started talking about his uterus. And then I referred to him as she, and later I was like, 'Why did I do that?' Then realized, 'Well, he was just talking about his uterus, you know.'"

When thinking about <u>self-reflection,</u> Participant Two stated that a supervisee first identified that, as a supervisor, Participant Two wasn't engaged in the supervision process. Participant Two named that she likely came back to work too soon after a death in her family, and that it was a blind spot for her.

Participant 2: "A supervisee of mine told me (this is six years after the fact) she said, 'Do you know when you came back to school after your mom died', she said, 'the class didn't think that you should have been there.' And I said, 'Well, what do you mean?' And she was like, 'You weren't paying attention to anything.' And I said, 'So give me some examples.' And she's like, 'In the middle of class lecture, you would just stop lecturing and start filing your nails.'"

In another example, Participant Seven reflected and then apologized for the way that she handled an interaction between she and her supervisee. Participant Seven reacted to an outburst that her supervisee had and abruptly gave her an authoritative direction about whether she could see the client that the supervisee had the outburst about.

Participant 7: "Well, she really, she spoke to me completely inappropriately one day and I, I just sat there. I didn't, you know, I was really like taken aback, because there wasn't our normal flow of relationship, and I knew she would probably feel bad about it afterwards…I apologized for like the way I told her, like, 'No, you can't see the client.' Like I was rude…And the way I said it, wasn't probably the nicest way."

Self-reflection helped these supervisors better understand their supervisees and served to help them see some of their blind spots in supervision.

Consultation. Each supervisor discussed *consultation* as a response to their competence being questioned. *Consultation* in this context is defined as describing the challenging situation and asking for perspective, advice, or help with how to manage it. Colleagues consulted included Department Chairs and peers. Participant Four illustrated the need for consultation in the following quote.

Participant 4: "However, my job as your supervisor is to go and seek supervision myself and consultation if we are running into something that I can't help with."

There were two different ways that supervisors discussed the tasks of *consultation*: supervision focused *consultation* dedicated to integrating feedback, and consultation to leverage power and support. Participant Two discussed some situations when she used *consultation* to check her work with supervisees and integrate feedback.

Participant 2: "I will consult with other supervisors like this situation with the kid who got the DUI during the program. I consulted with other supervisors of like, how punitive do I be? Or I'll consult with other supervisors over it. I just consulted with a supervisor today that I have a student who is not, not self-aware at all. [The supervisee] doesn't know when to stop talking and doesn't realize her impact on other people. And I'm a little bit worried about what's going to happen if I unleash her into a practicum or internship setting. So, I called another supervisor, I explained the situation and I said, 'You know, I have one external supervisor in my bag of tricks, she doesn't put up with any shit at all.'"

The intent or purpose of consultation varied from situation to situation along a continuum. Some supervisors approached consultation to seek out constructive feedback, while others used it to seek out power and support with challenging situations with supervisees.

Integrating Feedback. Some supervisors approached *consultation* with the intent of doing supervision better and were open to feedback. Participant One approached *consultation* with her boss to better understand the situation that her supervisees were in and to get some guidance about the best way to proceed with site supervisors. She was told to relax her expectations of her supervisees when there was conflict with a specific site supervisor.

> Participant 1: "And I would be like, so I go back to my boss and say they are saying their site supervisor won't sign their paperwork. Is there something I don't understand? And she would be, she was vague, she would go, 'Do you think you could just give them a little bit of more time; do you think you could just not push that?'"

Participants Five and Seven used consultations with colleagues to check their work with their supervisees. They wanted to ensure that the choices they were making were the best choices for both the supervisees that questioned their competence, and the supervisee's (current or future) clients.

> Participant 5: "Yeah. Yeah. Every time. Yeah. In fact, I did then staff it with a colleague of mine, who we had worked together at the same place where I had worked in child sexual abuse and was just kind of running it by her … to make sure I hadn't missed anything. And she said, 'No'. My question to her was, 'So if I had brought this to you to report, would you have had me report this because she was my supervisor?' And she said, 'No, I would not have.' And I said, 'Okay.' So, I needed that validation from somebody that, you know, is to me, is an expert in the area."

> Participant 7: "We have a director who's my closest access to a supervisor per se. And she is, you know, she's an LCSW by training…I meet with her every other week. And so, if I need to meet with her sooner, be like, 'Yo, can I just talk to you about this

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challenging topic with so-and-so?' Um, so I seek supervision, you know, I seek that

sounding board, like, 'Am I crazy? Is this what, you know, what would you do? Or how

would you handle this?' [Even with consultation, my relationship with my supervisee

after my competence was questioned] just feels off still."

When reviewing student course evaluations, Participant Three used consultation with her

supervisor about the ratings, and then vented to her peers to help her manage her emotions and to

verbally process what had happened.

Participant 3: "So, this particular supervisee that had rated me a two and I was just like

'Oh okay.' And so, I [consulted about] that with the supervisor, and I didn't discuss what

happened with this particular young woman, but I talked about it with my peers, like I

vented."

Leveraging Power and Support. Supervisors also approached *consultation* with the intent

to ***leverage power and support***, bringing the problem up the power hierarchy. This allowed

supervisors to lean on others within the system to manage supervisee needs or to protect the

supervisor. The quality of these consultations feels more about managing a situation that feels

risky to the supervisors. Participant Five brought the competence questioning situations to their

chair to get some advice about what to do, but also to protect herself and ensure that the program

chair heard about the interaction from the perspective of the supervisor first.

Participant 5: "So yeah. So, um, I actually sensed that she was going to [go above my

head]. And so, I went to my program chair beforehand, hoping to intercept and just said,

'Tell her, this is what happened. I just want to give you the heads up if that occurs.' And

she said, 'Okay, no problem'… And [later] all my program chair said to me was, 'I just

want to let you know that the student did come in and talk to me.' And I said, 'Is there

something I need to do?' And she said, 'no, there isn't.' And I said, 'okay.' So, I just let it go. Yeah. That's very important… If I feel, if I think that we're going to have a problem with a student that I'm working with, I'm real quick to … give [the department chair] the heads up about that, just because that's what I would want if I was in their position. So that at least I wouldn't be caught off guard completely about what's going on. So, um, I think in some ways that that's helpful for our [the supervisor and the program chair] relationship too."

Participant Six brought their situation to her supervisor as a liaison for student requests [relaxing the internship requirements during the pandemic] as well as to give her a "heads up" about how stressed students were.

Participant 6: "I did like go to my chair and I talked to her about what was happening. I'm like, 'Hey, look, this is what's happening. This is what my students were saying [*they're worried that they won't be able to collect enough hours due to COVID-19*]. This is what they're frustrated about. I'm just giving you a heads up just in case you need to come in and like handle this on like a higher level.' … She was understanding and just like, 'Yeah, let me know if you need anything or whatever.' And you know, of course all of the faculty was accommodating when I did bring up you know, reducing the amount of time spent at different schools and reducing it just to one, like just having experience at one level versus all three and just to be flexible in that way."

In summary of this category, supervisors had emotional responses to their competence being questioned as well as relational responses.

Supervision Outcomes

There were several outcomes that supervisors identified once they perceived their competence to be questioned. These included having ***changed perceptions of their supervisees, supervisees exiting the profession, supervisors exiting the profession*, *programmatic mistrust of the supervisor*, and *supervisee mistrust of supervisor*.** The outcomes discussed by the participants all had negative effects on the supervision alliance. Though a stable supervision relationship wasn't explicitly named, there were a few participants who described things going back to normal, and they didn't perceive any negative influences on the supervision alliance. The connections between the previous categories and this one will be explored in round two interviews.

Changed Perceptions of Supervisees

The first property that supervisors identified was ***changed perceptions of supervisees.*** Participants Six, Five and Three experienced a significant change in how they viewed the supervisee or the group of supervisees after their experience being questioned by them. Sometimes, the sense of being uncomfortable lingered and didn't resolve itself with time. Participant Three discussed feeling uncomfortable around the supervisee who questioned her, even years after.

> Participant 3: "It became funky. I'm just going to be honest it was it was funky, and it was uncomfortable like the rest of that semester I kind of like dreading it and I wound up running into him one day a while back like in Whole Foods it might have that might have been like two years ago and we have like the weirdest exchange."

In another interview, Participant Five described being surprised that her supervisee would choose to be in her class again after the instance of competence questioning. She describes her

rationale behind not inviting a conversation about the experience with the supervisee after the rupture. In the following excerpt, Participant Five explains her reaction when she found out that the supervisee who questioned her was going to be in her class in other semesters after that interaction. She described being taken aback because of the unresolved rupture in the supervision alliance.

> Participant 5: "Well, I'll tell you, I forgot to tell you this piece of it, but so that next week when we went through again, talking about it, she sat with her arms crossed the whole time. Like she just wasn't, she wasn't supporting the decisions still… maybe, maybe that's something [that] would have been important for me to have done was [for] she and I do a one-on-one about it… Maybe I wasn't at a place yet to still do that with her. [I] chose not to talk to her about it simply because it in some ways it wasn't her client… I think that there was what we call a rupture that happened in the relationship there. And, I just wanted to keep the peace as long as there was not anything else, that needed to be addressed about it. So, I felt like I left the door open that if she wanted to come and talk to me about it, I would have been open to do that. I didn't offer that because I felt like it was just going on and on and on kind of thing… So, I'll never forget this. So, we came into class, and she was already in there sitting in the class and it was just her. Nobody else had gotten there yet. And I was like, are you kidding me? I cannot believe this. I mean, I didn't say that out loud. I was just thinking that I said, I can't believe it."

Participant Six described the feelings of dislike that she had for her group of supervisees after they questioned her competence as a supervisor, and her personal choices. Participant Six expected her supervisees to treat her in a nonjudgmental way, as she hoped they would treat their clients, but that expectation was not met.

Participant 6: "It's just such a weird experience I had went through with them. I just thought of another situation that what kind of like just turned me off from ever, which is probably bad for me to say that it will ever feel like differently about this group… Okay. Like, it was really weird. It was such a weird, it felt very judgmental, you know? Like, [judging the supervisor's choice to visit her parent] is just shooting you as a supervisor, but like as a person, right? Yeah… Like I'm like you would never do that to client or a student that you're working with. Why would you, why are you doing that to a faculty member?"

Each of the supervisors had expectations about their supervisees that weren't met in these instances. Participant Three expected that the feelings would resolve with time, Participant Five expected her supervisee to approach her about the rupture or avoid her as a supervisor for further semesters, and Participant Six expected that her supervisees would treat her nonjudgmentally about her choices in her personal life. When these expectations weren't fulfilled, each supervisor exited the relationship with a negatively changed perspective of the supervisee.

Supervisees Exiting the Profession

One outcome that was consistent for Participants Three, Four and Seven was that the supervisee either left or considered leaving the counseling profession. In each case, it is unclear whether or not the specific incidence of competence questioning was a factor in the supervisee's decision.

Participant 3: "*(on describing supervisee behavior to her peers)* I was like this is what happened like this is what was going on with her. And they were like 'Yeah we know about this.' And then she wound up having problems later and she wound up getting placed on a remediation plan later and she didn't finish the program."

Participant 7: "And then, and then she had made a comment. Like she might quit."

Participant Four wondered if she did enough to support her supervisee in her development. She questioned her role in the relationship and did some *self-reflection* to assess whether she should have changed her actions to prevent the supervisee from making the violation that eventually caused her dismissal from the program. Participant Four experienced guilt about the investment that the student made.

Participant 4: "Spoiler alert. She ended up not making it through practicum. I think her anxiety got too much in the way and she ended up making a violation that just like… so it's in the handbook like if you do this, you can't continue. So, I was sad and kind of [worried] if I would have been more or different or, you know 'something', would it have worked? And so, there was, there was definitely that feeling, maybe some guilt on me that they have paid tuition and now depending on how far they got, like they can't get money back... I wasn't worried about this student coming back in in any sort of grievance or anything like that just because there is that question 'What would that look like?'… It was my first student, my first supervisee … with whom I'd worked that didn't make it through practicum."

In summary, Participants Three, Seven and Four all had supervisees either exit, or consider exiting the field of counseling. Participants Three and Four seemed to feel validated in their responses to the competence questioning when their supervisees exited, though the emotional experience ranged from feeling validated, to feeling guilty or worried.

Supervisors Exiting the Profession

Two supervisors also considered leaving the profession. Participant One experienced so much stress, self-doubt and fear around supervision, and the academy in general, that she

considered leaving the profession and pursuing other career options. In her interview, she described a hostile work environment that contributed to her consideration of **leaving the profession**. She eventually elected to stay because she believed that she could positively influence her students and protect them from actions made by the department that she found unethical. After some *self-reflection*, she had he following thought:

Participant 1: "My normal experience with a class is, no matter what they really think of me when I walk in like, old, … they think I'm too flashy, that I am not academic looking, I need to wear more boring shoes, I don't know. Something, right? But what it was I think I was like in a really toxic element like I was around some individuals who really didn't like the setting and then I had a group of students who were giving me the blues. So, it wasn't helpful, and when I was trying to really tell the people I was around how miserable I was they were like well you just need to quit. But I'm like no…Once I start [supervision], they understand that I know what I'm talking about…And I came to peace with the fact that I just continue to work on my weaknesses, but that I had plenty to offer the students, and that ethically I should stay."

Participant Three also had an internal struggle about her future in academia. Her students' implications that she should find a different job caused her to really evaluate her other options. She eventually decided to stay in academia because of her invested education in becoming a counselor educator, not a full-time clinician.

Participant 3: "And so, for me, I was at a point this past July [2020], I had really thought about leaving the academy because of what I had endured, and it was just like to the point I was like, I was like 'This is enough.' … I'm telling you all [*programmatic hostility*] is really happening, and I was telling [my friends], they were like, 'Oh it can't be that bad.'

But I'm like, 'Don't. I'm telling y'all this is what happened.'…Yeah, and that's the thing. I don't want to be in private practice, never did. I did not want to be a private practitioner that was not for me I always wanted to teach. That's where it was for me. And then I remember at one point, I remember it was like subliminally implied like, oh you should get to like a private practice, or like do some supervision… no! I didn't go to I didn't go to school to be a counselor, educator, supervisor to have a full-time private practice."

Not only does this quote exemplify reconsidering her career path, but it also emphasizes the process that she goes through between programmatic hostility, reconsidering academia, and re-grounding in her career goals. When their competence was questioned by their supervisees, Participants One and Three considered leaving the profession of counselor education. Each of these supervisors also experienced some level of systemic hostility that contributed to the feeling that they should leave academia. The experience of considering leaving the profession helped to inform how these supervisors responded to the questioning behavior and eventually both decided to stay in their roles as counselor educators.

Programmatic Mistrust of the Supervisor

Additionally, supervisors experienced a level of ***programmatic mistrust*** when their competency was questioned. Participant One discussed her relationship with her boss throughout the interview and highlighted how she felt persecuted by her boss, as well as the other members of the faculty.

Participant 1: "The other thing that happened was that the faculty member that became my boss, things were always very tense between us, but I just kind of took the [perspective] that was like, love your enemies, like 'Do good to those that persecute you.' That kind of idea."

She experienced this feeling of persecution that permeated throughout the department and affected the students' perspective of her. From her vantage point, students' perspective shift contributed to the questioning behaviors she experienced from her students. She also discussed how she felt like she had to re-establish trust with her supervisees during each class she had with them.

> Participant 1: "And then I'd try to work through that, and then they'd leave, and they come back in the next week, and they'd be more hostile. Not even the same, more hostile, until the hostility was just like dripping, you know, just like... and I realized that something was going on in the background, from the faculty… kids were pulling aside students in the hall [and the students] would say 'Don't take her.' So, some of them trusted themselves enough to be like, 'Okay no.'... I mean it was hard for them. They had to really go inside and trust their own experience compared to whatever it was they were being fed. I know a few things now because students have come and said what teachers had said like, explicitly in class; you can't trust her, she doesn't know what she's talking about, blah blah and on and on and on and on… you can't trust her. 'She's not competent' became the message."

Illustrating a similar experience, Participant Three described a conversation she overheard in the hallway outside her office that demonstrated the problems in her department.

> Participant 3: "I had overheard a conversation that I wasn't supposed to hear and yeah, that led me to tears. And I was like, 'If you have these issues with me just come up to my face and tell me like if, you know, you think I'm overly sensitive or if you have problems with me not turning things in on time or if you think I have a dense skin, or if you have problems with my teaching pedagogy. If you want me to be more consistent in…,' and I

was glad when they finally did start telling me these things… I was glad when, you

know, when they started getting done, and so it was like it could have been done a lot

earlier."

To summarize this subcategory, Participants One and Three connected ***programmatic***

mistrust of their supervision with the questioning behavior that they received from students.

Their experience was influenced by being questioned by their whole system, not just the

students. They both experienced that any headway that was made with students was then undone

by the system.

Supervisee Mistrust of Supervisor

Finally, Participant Seven perceived mistrust from the supervisee after her competence

was questioned. This mistrust didn't appear to change as time passed; in fact, the supervision

relationship stagnated, and the focus of supervision shifted to more surface level tasks. The

relationship between Participant Seven and her supervisee changed, and the supervisee focused

much more on administrative and policy clarification tasks, rather than clinical content in the

supervision relationship.

> Participant 7: "The communication is a lot more, formal, like short and curt. Or if I have
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> supervision with her…she doesn't seem to seek, besides the administrative and like
>
> organizational systemic things, she doesn't really seek any clinical conversation with me
>
> anymore like she used to. Just for example, … she didn't have a lot of experience with
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> couples counseling and I have a background in couples. So, we did a lot of work around
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> that and talking about that and conversations about that. And that's just stopped. Like she
>
> doesn't talk to me about clinical stuff like that anymore… [Due to her particular role] I
>
> don't have to do it weekly or anything, but we have a group supervision session and then

I try and do biweekly individual, um, because that's why I like to do supervision. Um, and it's just very like in the group, um, you know, I'm trying it because of the COVID and everything trying to reward things. So, I'm moving away from doing any admin in group clinical supervision because it's getting too admin-y and it's like too much nitpicking on policy and procedure. So, but that's what she's focusing on... It's still something I'm trying to recover from in terms of the working relationship."

Each of these **subcategories** (*changed perceptions of their supervisees, supervisees exiting the profession, supervisors exiting the profession, programmatic mistrust of the supervisor, and supervisee mistrust of supervisor*) together illustrate a **category** of **supervision outcomes** once a supervisor's competence is questioned.

Summary of Findings from Round One

During round one of data collection, participants described several experiences of having their competence questioned. These experiences come together to create an image of what happens to different supervisors when they experience their competence being questioned by their supervisees.

The experiences of the supervisors that I interviewed fell into four broad categories: **perceiving questioning, assessing psychological safety, supervisor responses, and supervision outcomes.** First, a supervisor begins by **perceiving questioning** by their supervisee. Their experience of having their competence questioned is informed by their sense of **psychological safety**. This safety is influenced by several situational factors (i.e., age, race, system etc.). Supervisors then have several different **responses** that they might employ to manage the situation. These **responses** generally fall into two *subcategories* of response: *emotional responses*, and *relational responses*. Finally, supervisors discussed the **outcomes** of

their interactions with supervisees—identifying five different **outcomes** that seemed to be directly connected to their competence being questioned by said supervisees. These **categories** that these supervisors have described have illustrated what it is like to have their competence questioned by their supervisees.

Through analysis of the first round of interviews, more questions arose about the process that supervisors go through when their competence is questioned. The most profound omission is a *subcategory* of supervisor experiences of outcomes to questioning that include a return to the tasks of supervision. Round One illustrated how interruptions to the supervision relationship provide outcomes that impede the progress of supervision, and I was curious about supervisor experiences of supervision persisting through competency questioning, not just stopping.

Additional questions emerged as Round One analysis came to a close. First, what influence did a supervisor's emotional experience have on how they responded to their competence being questioned by their supervisees? Also, how did persistent emotions influence the actions that were taken by supervisors after their competence was questioned by their supervisees? There appeared to be a hole in the data describing how they moved among and between their responses to their competence being questioned. Round Two interviews will explore the connections between emotional responses and relational responses. I was especially curious to see what impact a supervisor's response had on the supervision outcomes for both the supervisor and the supervisee. Round Two will expand on what supervisors did once they realized that they made a mistake in supervision. Did taking responsibility and apologizing for missteps in the supervision relationship influence how effective the supervision alliance was? The next round of interviews will uncover the connections between the supervisor responses and the outcomes that supervisors observe for both themselves, and their supervisees.

Through these four **categories** of supervisor experiences, we get a clear picture of the experience of having your competence questioned as a supervisor, but we could not yet see how each of the experiences are connected—what process do supervisors go through when their competence is questioned? The following chapter will illustrate another round of interviews that strives to solve this question based on the experiences that these supervisors have described.

CHAPTER 4: Second Round Analysis

Chapter Four illustrates findings following analysis of round two interviews and builds upon the findings from round one analysis. This chapter illustrates the confirmations, clarifications, and reconceptualization of the **categories**, *subcategories*, *properties,* and <u>dimensions</u> from round one. Second round interviews also expand representations of participant experiences after conducting purposeful sampling, while also focusing on the processes between and among categories when competence is questioned in supervision. This chapter builds on the experiences illustrated in Chapter Three and clarifies the connections that exist between experiences, thoughts, feelings, processes, and actions.

Review of Procedures

To complete round two, I identified some specific perspectives that were absent from round one and reached out to some new participants using purposeful sampling. In the first-round analysis process, many of the supervisors discussed outcomes of questioning that didn't include returning to the tasks of supervision. In the second round, we needed participants who could speak to how they managed competency questioning and returned to the tasks of supervision. With assistance from my Inquiry Auditor, we identified a sample of expert supervisors who can speak to their internal emotional processes when questioned, and who could expand on round one outcomes. There also was only one gender represented in the first round of interviews, and we were hoping to hear from some non-women voices in the subsequent round. Using snowball sampling through email, I reached out and scheduled three new supervisors to interview via Zoom. When the call for participants included a call for "expert supervisors", one woman and two men were recruited. I also reached out to one supervisor from Round One, Participant Two, who my Inquiry Auditor and I thought could productively elaborate on her

perspectives from her Round One interview. I initially communicated several times with a fourth new supervisor, but we were unable to schedule an interview.

Like round one, I used a semi-structured interview process. After describing some of the findings that were present from round one, I asked the following questions of my participants:

1. In my first interviews when talking about being questioned, psychological safety of the supervisor is an important factor for how supervision proceeds. How do you know when your psychological safety is present as a supervisor?

    a. How do you know when it's been compromised?

    b. Some people talk about becoming defensive, does that happen for you in supervision?

2. What happens in the supervision relationship if you are psychologically safe vs not psychologically safe?

3. How do you hold responsibility in the supervision relationship dynamic as a supervisor?

4. How do you know when repair has occurred after questioning? How do you know when a rupture is persisting?

5. Have you ever perceived questioning from a supervisee and decided not to address it in the supervision relationship? What contributed to this decision?

6. Have you ever supervised in an environment that was hostile? How so? How did it manifest in the supervision relationship?

I used follow-up questions based on what my participants discussed. I also elaborated on or clarified the questions if participants needed it. After the interviews, I transcribed them and then reviewed them for accuracy so that they were ready for analysis.

Description of Participants

For this second round of interviews, I recruited and interviewed three new supervisors who supervise counselors in training and conducted a second interview with Participant Two. I interviewed participants all via Zoom. The duration of each interview was between 50 and 75 minutes. Participant names were removed from the transcripts of their interviews and assigned numbers. Table 2 includes a description of the round two participants.

Participant Number	Gender	Years of Experience Being a Supervisor	Region	Racial Identity
2	Cis-Female	18 years	Northeast	White Puerto Rican
8	Cis-Female	10 years	Rocky Mountain	Caucasian
9	Male	4 years	Northeast	White
10	Male	7 years	Southeast	White

Data Analysis

During the analysis process, I used initial and focused coding to update, confirm, and clarify the existing codes from the first round of analysis. When **categories**, *subcategories*, *properties,* and <u>dimensions</u> emerged, I compared them to what I found in the first round and constructed a new conceptual map illustrating the findings from round two, informed by round one. The six **categories** are illustrated and supported by ***subcategories,*** *properties,* and <u>dimensions</u>. Arrows denote processes among, between, and through the **categories.** The conceptual map is shown below, in Figure 2.
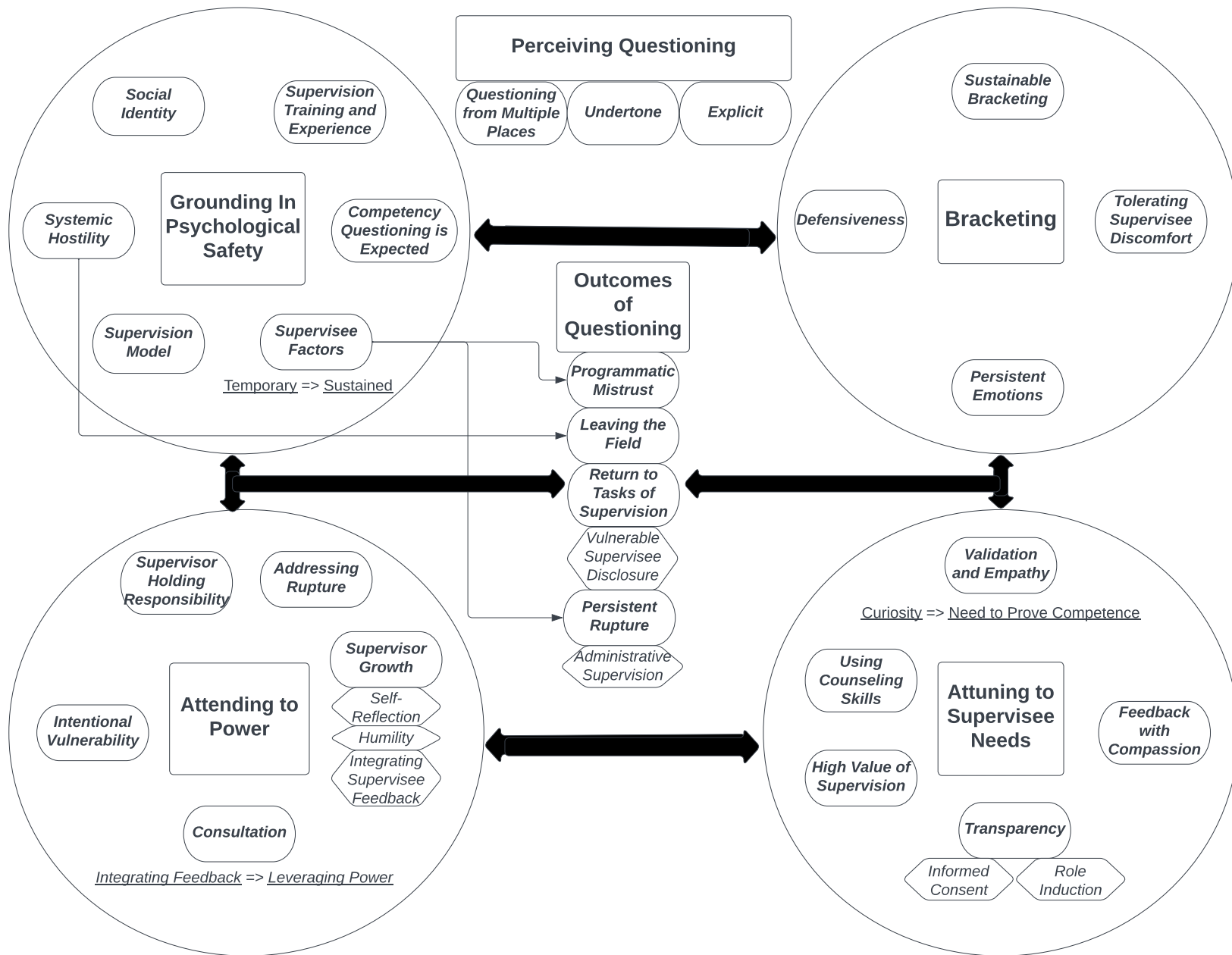
Figure 2 Conceptual Map of Round Two Analysis

Initial Findings from Round Two

During round two analysis, a new image illustrating the structure of the data emerged. Four **categories** from Round One turned into six: **perceiving questioning**, **grounding in psychological safety**, **bracketing**, **attuning to supervisee needs**, **attending to power**, and **outcomes of questioning**. The first **category** remained the same, but the *subcategories* shifted. Round One's **Assessing Psychological Safety** was renamed to **Grounding in Psychological Safety** to encompass the action of grounding (defined later in this chapter) into the **category**. The **category** of **Supervisor Responses** was too broad to accurately encompass Round Two data, so it was split into several different **categories**. The **categories** of **Bracketing**, **Attuning to Supervisee Needs**, and **Attending to Power** encompass all the *subcategories* and *properties* that originally resided in **Supervisor Responses** as well as a few new *subcategories* that emerged in Round Two analysis. The final **category**, **Outcomes of Questioning** encompass and clarify the Round One **category** of **Supervision Outcomes.**

Perceiving Questioning

The **category** of **perceiving questioning** remained quite consistent between Round One analysis and Round Two. The *subcategories* were restructured to improve clarity, but the content remained the same. *Questioning from Multiple Places* now encompasses first round *subcategories* of *requesting a different supervisor* and *site supervisor questioning*. The *undertone* and *explicit questioning subcategories* remained consistent between Round One analysis and Round Two.

Grounding in Psychological Safety

As round two analysis progressed, the **Psychological Safety category** from first round analysis was adjusted and added to in the second round of analysis. First, adding the word

"**grounding**" to the category title seemed to capture an essential component of the process of managing competency questioning. When asked about assessing **psychological safety** in herself as a supervisor, Participant Eight described her thoughts about using the term "**safety**." She proposed the use of the word "**grounding**" to acknowledge that we are asking students to take risks that may never feel completely safe due to the complex nature of supervision.

> AV**:** "In my first round of interviews this idea of psychological safety of the supervisor arose as an important factor in how supervision proceeds. Does that resonate with you at all? You need to have psychological safety you feel safe in your role as a supervisor in your environment, in yourself."

> Participant 8: "I'm pausing only because that sounds right, but I don't think I've ever thought about it in exactly those terms. I think I would say, it's psychological grounding more than safety. There's a lot of conversation starting around classroom management— is safety actually our goal? Are we trying to have safe conversations? Or are we trying to have courageous conversations? So that kind of feels similar to me. I don't know if I need safety, but I need to feel grounded."

This change in language describes one of the essential components of effective supervision and reflects the definition of **Grounding in Psychological Safety:** a supervisor's ability to stay grounded or quickly return to a grounded state when their competence is questioned in supervision.

Participant Two describes how rare it is for her to feel unsafe while walking into a supervision room.

> Participant 2: "Every once in a while, (I can think of two in the past twelve years), I walk in the room, and I'm [put together] but on the inside I'm just a hot mess. I have fear, or I

have anxiety, or I'm like 'Jesus, what are they going to do to me?' Yeah. That's how I feel when I guess I'm psychologically not safe walking into a room."

Participant Nine describes a threat to his psychological safety as one that threatens his pride. To protect his ability to stay **grounded in psychological safety**, his initial reaction is *defensiveness* and a need to prove his competence to his supervisee.

> Participant 9: "Psychological safety is a very technical term. But I'm thinking almost like needing to protect pride in a sense. In the sense of the first situation like, 'well, wait a second. I'm the expert here!' So, my psychological safety was, 'Well wait a second. I need to defend myself.' That's what comes up to my mind. I wanted to make sure that— I wanted this person who is my supervisee to know that I'm confident. So almost like this, I don't want to say power differential, but I'm the professional, and I'm above in a sense. But I know that's not true. At the point of where I was being questioned, I felt the need to put myself in a power position… I needed to assert, maybe some professional power, not in a way to like, you know take over the situation, or to like, 'I know more than you' like in that kind of way, but, like I guess I needed to assert myself. I felt the need to assert myself as the professional."

The above quote illustrates his initial reaction feeling that his **psychological safety** was being threatened when he was being questioned. As he continues to talk, he describes his process of **bracketing** his *defensiveness*—a **category** and *subcategory* described later in this chapter. The first *subcategory* that emerged when considering what influences a supervisor's ability to **ground in psychological safety** is the variability in power a supervisor wields given their *social identities.*

Social Identities

Several round one *subcategories* of **Assessing Psychological Safety** were enveloped into the Round Two *subcategory* of *Social Identities*. These include *age, gender,* geographical *location, professional role and specialty, race,* and *socioeconomic status.* Each of these *subcategories* continue to greatly influence a supervisor's ability or freedom to **ground** themselves **in psychological safety** when in the role of supervisor. The absence of power in the supervision room given a supervisor's social identities can interrupt a supervisor's sense of psychological safety. The presence of societal power in a supervisor's social identity can result in a less complex process when managing competency questioning in supervision.

Supervision Training and Experience

This *subcategory* remained consistent from Round One analysis. As analysis shifted to attend to the emerging processes, some *subcategories* found themselves influencing others. In the *subcategory* of *Supervisor Growth, supervision training and experience* was cited as being a factor in participants' openness to growth as supervisors.

Systemic Hostility

Staying consistent with round one findings, navigating *systemic hostility* is a critical component of **grounding in psychological safety.** This *subcategory* wasn't expanded upon in round two interviews but remains a prevalent factor from round one.

Supervisee Factors

One *subcategory* apparent in round two analysis of **Grounding in Psychological Safety** is *Supervisee Factors*. Supervisors identified several factors that contributed to how they felt in the supervision room with supervisees. Participant Two identified that sometimes *supervisee*

factors could be as innocuous as supervisees feeling cranky or tired. These time limited supervisee factors illustrate one <u>dimension</u> of ***supervisee factors***; <u>temporary</u>**.**

> Participant 2: "I think [supervisee factors] could span for a lot of different things. I think sometimes supervisees are cranky. They are tired, you know. Their clients are driving them nuts."

She then goes on to differentiate between supervisee factors that are <u>temporary</u> and supervisee factors that are <u>sustained</u>. <u>Temporary</u> ***supervisee factors*** can vary week to week, and don't describe a supervisor's consistent impression of the supervisee. Participant Two described a <u>sustained </u>supervisee factor that wasn't resolved quickly and eventually led to the supervisee ***leaving the field***. She describes feeling psychologically unsafe when in the presence of this particular supervisee.

> Participant 2: "So, I have one [supervisee] now. He's on his way out. Like the paperwork is in place, the lawyers are involved. He's not suitable to be a professional. He makes me feel very, very psychologically unsafe."

She elaborates by identifying the component of the supervisee disposition that feels unsafe to her.

> Participant 2: "Usually, when you have those—its personality disorders is what it is—you got your personality disorder people that are doing what personality disorder people do, which is alright, and supervisors [experience the effects]. I think that we are more susceptible to the personality disordered people [due to the power hierarchy in supervision]."

Participant Eight also described a supervisee with emerging symptoms suggesting a personality disorder as an example of a ***supervisee factor*** influencing competency questioning.

She begins by describing common times where supervisees question the competence of their supervisors and then transitioned to an example of a supervisee exhibiting signs of a personality disorder as a sustained supervisee factor:

> Participant 8: "So, I would say remediation is a place that [competency questioning] shows up, so it seems it feels common when we're questioning a student's readiness or student dispositions. That tends to be the time where, all of a sudden, our competence is being questioned. So, it feels oftentimes a kind of a [supervisee's] defensive reaction versus getting really explicit feedback of, 'This is what you did, and this is why I don't trust your competence.' … So, specific example. I had a student last year, who was exhibiting signs of a narcissistic personality disorder, who we ended up removing from the program at the end of the first fall semester. She had a lot of issues, but the one that sort of pushed it over the line where we had to act on it was, she was refusing to use feeling reflections in the skills class because [she believed] they were unethical and inappropriate and imposing. She would continue to come back to class and talk about it in her journals, about how our training methods were unethical... Yeah, just continued to question that we knew what we were doing— that we had the right to be asking her to do these things and that she knew better. So yeah, us being unethical was a big frame that she used a lot, and then, when we gave her the feedback and gave her the opportunity for remediation, she refused to take that opportunity and left the program. And then, proceeded to talk about how inappropriate and unprofessional we were, and how we let her go."

Participant Eight continued to describe what it was like to have the supervisee question her own experience of emotional regulation and being grounded as the supervisor and interpreted it as the supervisee's means to divert responsibility onto the supervisor:

Participant 8: "I had a meeting with that same student, but it was the very first meeting we had before we knew how bad it was going to be, and I had given her feedback… She sent to me a really rude email and I had given her feedback on that, and she was not accepting my feedback, and essentially at our meeting, she kept saying, 'I can't take responsibility for your feelings. If you decided to feel upset about my email, that's not my responsibility.' What I said to her was, 'The expression that you're using right now to me is a deflection of responsibility. My feelings are fine. I can tend to those on my own. I know how to do that. What I'm responding to is a dispositional issue. Your behavior is inappropriate and doesn't align with what I need to see in counseling students, particularly right off the bat. You're coming in real hot, real fast. And I need you to understand what the boundaries of our relationship are and what level of professionalism is expected in this program and interacting with me in that way is not appropriate.'"

Participant Eight described staying strong and clear in her statements and remaining psychologically grounded in the face of destabilizing accusations. She uses *role induction* and clear, **transparent** feedback to address the supervisee's concerns. The **supervisee factor** influencing the competency questioning was the student's dispositional readiness and ability to integrate the feedback that Participant Eight was giving her.

Participant Ten pointed to supervisees' developmental levels and quantity of experience as **temporary factors** that are influencing how his competence is questioned in supervision. He

describes a common time in which supervisees question his competence due to their inexperience in the field of vocational rehabilitation.

> Participant 10: "And a lot of times, it was just a matter of letting them get some of that experience, in order to see that you can try it the textbook way. But I feel like with the vocal veterans, they just wanted to be heard and acknowledged as experts. But with supervisees they needed to be, (I don't have a nice analogy) given enough rope to hang themselves. They had to experience the situation to know that it doesn't play out this way, at least in this setting. … Textbooks come from a standpoint that everyone is ethical and looking out for the best interests of everybody else. And I think for the most part, that's true. But people also have bad days, and don't want to do paperwork and learning. There's an art form to learning how to motivate people…And it's not just telling them that you're right, and they're wrong … You have to experience that [experience] as a counselor. And see that advocacy also involves building bridges and not just whistleblowing all the time in order to make things happen for clients."

He describes a process of allowing supervisees to develop experience organically in the clinic, before attuning to what his supervisees need (wanting to be heard vs. needing things done "the textbook way").

Supervision Model

Supervisors cited leaning on a ***supervision model*** as something that significantly influenced how grounded they felt in supervision.

> Participant 9: "I think definitely a supervision model helps. I think, the more experience that I get, the more I feel safe. So, I guess it's more perceived lack of safety than it is actual lack of safety."

Participant Two illustrates her use of a ***supervision model*** in the following quote. She highlights the need for intentionality in supervision, not just using interventions willy-nilly.

Participant 2: "You know, supervisors are also teacher, counselor, consultant, and you pull, (I have a grid, you know), and you pull from this and pull from here and take this from there, and that is what you start to become as a supervisor, but also supervisors need to understand a model of supervision. They need to have a model. You just can't be flying around being like, 'I'm going to be the supervisor.' You need to know they're gonna practice from [a] developmental [perspective]."

Similarly, Participant Eight leans heavily on her ***supervision model*** in the process of <u>role induction</u>. She identifies the role of the supervisor and supervisee and makes those roles explicit and ***transparent*** for her supervisees.

Participant 8: "I use the discrimination model, so being grounded in, 'Do I know what the roles and the tasks of my job in this relationship are? Am I clear on what my role and tasks are? Are you clear on what your role and tasks are?' That to me is really helpful."

She further elaborates the utility of a ***supervision model*** within her structure of supervision with a discussion of attending to all the roles and tasks of a supervisor without slipping too far into the counselor role.

Participant 8: "So, within the discrimination model, there is that counselor role that can come up, but then, just making sure that I'm not getting stuck. That personalization task is fine. But that it's not shifting from the personalization task into just full-blown counseling— that whatever we're talking about is in the service of helping them figure out how to work with their clients versus just me doing full-blown counseling for them.

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It's such a boring answer, but roles and tasks. That's how I do it... I think I've taken to understand what this should consist of."

Participant Nine also integrates his supervision model into every level of supervision. He describes how it felt to lean on the IDM model of supervision. He states that he felt more confident, competent, and comfortable once he became grounded in his supervision model. He finishes the quote describing how the supervision model allows him to attend to his supervisees while **bracketing** his own feelings and stay grounded in supervision.

Participant 9: "So, I also subscribe to the IDM model of supervision. A level one supervisee, they struggle, and I think if they're being authentic, they're talking about a lot of anxiety. So, if they're going to be vulnerable, it's okay for me to be vulnerable too, and that'll help us bond… I would say so. Something that I would like for supervisors that I wish I knew, is like definitely commit to a supervision model…So supervision models, I would say definitely for supervisors to commit to a supervision model, similar to a counseling theory. I thought initially when I had done supervision with licensees or supervisees. I hadn't gone through the supervision class and the doc program, and I think my supervision before was decent. I would do more counseling-ish things to reflectively listen and do that type of thing. But I think, finally committing to a supervision model changed [my supervision.] As I settled on the IDM model, it really helped me to frame things in a healthier way to then put myself in the teacher role, an educator role, and that helped normalize like some of the things that they go through like the stages of development of supervisees. And so, I was able to use counseling skills, but also then use the IDM model to combine both of them. I felt more confident, more confident, giving feedback, when I was a supervisor before taking that class. It was more like totally

collaborative. We would talk on the same level all the time, which is totally fine. But I think it felt like something was missing for me, because as a supervisor, supervisees come for knowledge. They come for something from you, like a client. They come for a service. So, supervisees want to know my professional knowledge to help them grow. And I think, committing to that model, once I learned it (and it kind of picked me, I guess) it changed everything because I think I was able to then put myself as an educator to then still be collaborative. But to educate more so than probably in the past. Maybe it's just how I felt. It helped me to feel more competent and comfortable, but I think I started to notice, like supervisions went, I felt, more smoothly… It's not to say that before I wasn't competent or safe. It's that. Now I feel it. It's with me, obviously being a gestalt therapist, my feelings are super, super valuable to me. So sometimes, when I feel something, I feel it really hard. I mean it can be a blessing and a curse, cause sometimes I can't identify with these feelings, because then it becomes like feelings loaded identity almost like emotional reasoning kind of like from CBT. Like. I can't tie my identity to these feelings, you know. But I think my feelings feel more relevant. I don't want to say more relevant, maybe, but they feel more validated, having a little bit of experience behind them, and I can. I can almost quiet them a little bit more like they don't become as intense or take over as much."

Next, participants identified that expecting competency questioning in supervision allowed them to stay more easily **grounded in psychological safety.**

Competency Questioning is Expected

Competency questioning is expected is the final ***subcategory*** of **Grounding in Psychological Safety** during competency questioning. This ***subcategory*** is defined as expecting

that one's supervision competency will be questioned at some point in the supervision

relationship. When questions about supervisor competence are expected and encouraged as a part

of vulnerable supervisee disclosure, supervisors can approach this questioning as an opportunity

for learning rather than maintaining defensiveness.

Participant Two describes supervisee resistance to her supervision as a speed bump or a

puddle rather than a rupture in the larger context of the supervision relationship, and one that she

addresses right away.

Participant 2: "Just sometimes I think people don't want to come to supervision, and they

come and they're kind of shitty, and that I can pick up on real fast. I could pick up real

fast on 'Who doesn't want to talk about their clients?' And that's exactly what I'm going

to pounce on is 'Why do you not want to talk about clients or clients, whatever it is?' So,

I wouldn't call it a rupture. It's not a disruption, and it's not a break. I think it's more like a

speed bump, or maybe a puddle. Yeah, like something expected. I think it's all part of it. I

expect that to happen in supervision, anyway. So, I think if people have that expectation,

you don't have as many ruptures. Does that make sense?"

The idea that questioning and testing are expected in excellent supervision and not to be

avoided allows for conflict in the supervision relationship without it needing to escalate to

rupture.

Participant Ten discusses welcoming questioning as part of the process of change. He

describes approaching the people who he thinks might be the most resistant to change and

collaborates with them to identify any problems and adjust as needed. This thread of welcoming

questioning carries into his approach to supervision.

Participant 10: "And I think that that's a critical [factor], and going through it, learning how to welcome the questioning. With the last supervision role, I had in a vocational rehabilitation field office, I would lead any changes through my most, who I would consider, the most vocal opponents of it, and I would go to them and say, 'This is what I'm thinking about, what do you think?' And I knew that it would be a negative reaction, but it really invited that discussion, and they were able to bring in a lot of key information that I think some people would feel, but not say. It really helped me tailor changes to the realities of the job, not just to the ideals of the outcome. And it got to where, I could really welcome that stuff and let it shape what we were doing. Several times I was able to take those people and have them lead the charge in enacting the change, and I learned to delegate and trust or trust and delegate with a lot of those types of things starting with the people who are the most vocal, because those are really the people who will question me on my ideas, or my whatever, or at least the ones that care enough to say something out loud. A lot of people will silently hate what's going on, and then either ignore it or sabotage it, or whatever. But the vocal people you can at least tell they care. They care systemically. And so, getting to a point where I could seek them out was, I think, a huge turning point… Yeah, I mean, they could preempt all the problems, and I'm pretty pessimistic, and I think I can preempt a lot of problems. But someone who doesn't want it to happen, they can foresee problems, coming from all kinds of angles. And then it turns into this collaborative thing of, 'Okay, I'll validate that these problems are real.' But our job isn't just to say, 'Okay problems, let's not move forward.' Our job is to create solutions. Now we're on the same side working together, trying to figure that stuff out

rather than I'm trying to convince you that I'm right. And you're trying to convince me that you're right, and we both call each other incompetent in the process."

Bracketing

Bracketing rose to its own **category** after being defined as a *property* in Round One analysis. Like the findings in Round One, **bracketing** is defined as supervisors suspending their own emotions, values, and reactions to whatever is happening for them and allowing themselves to focus as much as possible on the supervisee in supervision. Participant Ten describes his initial feelings of ***defensiveness*** followed by taking a break to regulate his emotions and allow for **bracketing** to happen. One of Participant Ten's internal cues that he needs to **bracket** his response to supervisees is when his face gets hot in supervision.

> Participant 10: "So, I think my initial feeling, (when particularly challenged in a way that makes me feel like I'm incompetent, whether they're calling me incompetent [or not]) my initial reaction is a very defensive one. Usually, I can feel if my face starts to get warm, that's an indicator that I need to stop and not say what I'm thinking out loud. So, I don't. My face will start to get warm. Usually that's like adrenaline or whatever. But I'll have to say, 'All right, let's pause and come back to this. I want you to tell me why this won't work. You told me why I can't come up with a good idea. But I want you to tell me why this won't work.' And I'm going to come back, and we'll talk more about why I think it does, and if we can come to a middle ground, we will."

He uses taking a break to emotionally regulate so he can return to supervision with an attitude of curiosity rather than one motivated by ***defensiveness***. He exerts his power by giving some up and approaches the supervisee with curiosity and understanding. He notes that it's harder when a supervisee questions his competence than when a client does.

Participant 10: "But really like that, I have to time it out when my face is hot. That's not

the time for me to be, Mr. Supervisor… they're not going to be in the interpersonal

developmental processes I'm looking for. So [I'm] like, 'Let's think about it. Come back

in a day, an hour, twenty minutes, whatever.' And usually, it just takes me a second to

reframe. Maybe give up some of the power and like move into more of like a curious spot

rather than like, 'This is just what we're going to do. What sore spot has been touched on

me?' Uh, and for some reason it's harder. If a client questions my competence, I can sit

there with that, and I don't need the break. We can just kinda roll with it. When a staff

member— a co-worker, does it, there's a much stronger internal response. Fortunately,

they're not doing a paid session, so we can take a break and come back to it. I don't know

why there's that that difference in response. But yeah, so I have to take that step back, and

then re-engage from a different mindset. Which I remember that I'm shaping someone

who none of this stuff makes any sense to quite yet. And that can be a learning moment in

a supervisor relationship, but I'd much prefer teaching by having it go smoothly."

When discussing **bracketing,** Participant Ten also acknowledges the external factors at

play in supervision. Not only is he working to suspend his own emotional experience to the

competence questioning, but he is also **bracketing** his worry about the administrative pieces that

a pause in the supervision relationship could interrupt. The administrative parts of his job can

sometimes conflict or be in tension with the clinical needs of his supervisees, which is one of the

most important things for him to **bracket.**

Participant Ten: "It's also tricky, I work for the state, and so, my performance evaluation

is based on my clients, my counselors, and my supervisors performing in a certain way.

So, there's also this like this other inner voice of 'Well, they're not going to listen, they're

not going to hit your numbers.' And if they don't hit their numbers, you're going to look

bad in front of your boss, and I have to like actively quiet that down as well, because

administrative supervisor and clinical supervisor are almost synonyms in in the state

system... and there's a, there's a time for it that—the administrative piece. There's a time

for [the administrative supervision], but not in a clinical supervisory moment. Not if

we're talking about best practices for client-counselor, interaction. Because as a

counselor, I shouldn't be thinking about, 'This is what my manager wants.' Instead of

that, I need to be present as a supervisor, so that they can be present as the counselor. And

if I can't quiet that voice, then my administrative directives are going to also be speaking

louder than my clinical directives when they're sitting there with clients. But that's a

whole other set of external things that just have to be pushed out. And everyone's

defensive."

Participant Eight describes what happens when **bracketing** her experience doesn't

happen as effectively as it usually does. She notes that it can become a time where she **attends to**

rupture that occurs because of her level of distraction. She uses *transparency* to acknowledge

the supervisee's experience, re-grounds herself in the supervisor role, and proceeds with

supervision.

Participant 8: "If I'm really overwhelmed, if I'm distracted, if I have a lot of other stuff

going on, then I can sometimes show up to supervision in that way where I think the

student probably ends up feeling less attended to. I'm not fully showing up in the way

that they need. Which I think I've only gotten that feedback I think, last year, when I was

writing the [CACREP] self-study and we were down three faculty, and I was teaching a

course overload. The students kept saying, 'We can tell how busy you are. We could tell

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how stressed out you are.' So, it wasn't really them—they weren't questioning my competence, but they were noticing how I wasn't as present with them as either of us wanted me to be. So then again, I think it just is that ability to notice the signs of when that's happening, being able to observe it in the moment, and then being able to ground."

Defensiveness

Defensiveness is a ***subcategory*** that popped up several times as a common experience in round two interviews, especially when talking about reactions that require **bracketing.** Participant Nine describes what he thinks would happen if he let his initial experience of *defensiveness* alter how he treats supervisees. He **brackets** his *defensiveness* so that it doesn't take over the supervision session and relationship.

> Participant 9: "Defensiveness is what I initially start to think about, and that's what I thought about. I think if I feel a sense of defensiveness, that could be the key to potential compromise, you know, I guess defensiveness isn't necessarily a bad thing if it doesn't become destructive, you know. So, like, I think internally like the need to defend is natural, but I think if it comes out as a supervisor. Like treating the supervisee in a different way, to then put myself as better than, because internally I probably wanted to do that. Like, 'Wait a second. I know more. I'm better than you. I've been in this longer.' It didn't come out that way as I rationalize like, 'Wait a second. That's not okay.' And I know that it's not a better-than-worse-than situation. For me supervision is as collaborative as possible. But I think if it were completely compromised, my defensiveness would probably leak over, and I'd start to treat the supervisees in a negative way. Um like maybe be more condescending. I guess it never got to that level, but I think projecting to what it could turn into. Knowing my potential, like where things

could go, is it would be like some condescending need to be powerful, or 'I know it all.' Because I think that would be the overcompensation to you know, if somebody questions my competence, I want to overcompensate and think, well, 'Wait a second. I know everything.' Not that that's true, but I could see that's where I'd want to go… Yep, I would say bracket, and then not let take over. I would say too, I'm able to kind of bracket them, and then also the questioning of my own competence, or whatever doesn't hang over later on if that makes sense. Yeah, it's not something that persists."

For Participant Ten, **bracketing** his *defensiveness* and need to feel powerful allows for supervision to continue rather than for his emotional response to *persist*.

Persistent Emotions

Round two participants did not elaborate on *persistent emotions* that required bracketing in supervision. Instead, their emotional reactions did not remain persistent as they were resolved in processes of **grounding in psychological safety** and initial **bracketing**. They did, however, expand on how bracketing served their toleration of *supervisee discomfort* and *establishment of sustainable bracketing.*

Tolerating Supervisee Discomfort

This *subcategory* is defined as accepting that supervisees will sometimes feel uncomfortable feelings in supervision and allowing for that discomfort to happen. This process requires that supervisors view rupture and repair as a part of the supervision process, not something to be avoided at all costs. Participant Two outlines a rupture that she had with a student, and her decision to address the rupture and then allow the student to have their emotional response on their own. She *tolerated supervisee discomfort* and allowed her supervisee to have her own emotional process about the rupture.

Participant 2: "I left the benefit of the doubt with the student. You know, this is somebody who wasn't twenty-two years old. This was somebody who's in their thirties. They had seen combat twice, and I [addressed the competency questioning once, and then allowed the supervisee some space to process my confrontation]. Something told me, 'Just leave it alone. They need to sit in their feelings. They need to be pissed off at me. They need to be upset.'"

Participant Eight discussed her status as a "recovering people pleaser" and how freeing it has been to identify rupture (and ***supervisee discomfort***) as part of the process of supervision, rather than being motivated by people always liking her.

Participant 8: "Yes, I think I've gotten better at it with time where I'm pretty good at knowing what I need to say to preserve the relationship. But something I'm also realizing is rupture is not a bad thing. I think, as counselors, and by extension, supervisors and counselor educators are really afraid of rupture. It's been kind of a freeing thing for me to realize rupture is natural. And so, instead of trying to avoid it, it's just knowing how to deal with it when it comes up... That's part of the process for you too sounds like. Yes, well, and I'm a recovering people pleaser so I also work really hard to make people like me. So, doing that less these days, but in the beginning, I did a lot of that. So, that's my, that's my advice to you as an emerging faculty is they don't have to own you. It's okay. I wish I figured that out a little sooner. I spent a lot of energy getting them [supervisees] to like me."

She also is very clear in her commitment to ***attending to rupture***, not just letting it persist, and not avoiding it.

Sustainable Bracketing

Participant Two identified situational factors that contribute to their ability to attend to their supervisees' sustainably in supervision. Participant Two speaks about how the timing of class can influence how much energy it takes for her to do her best in supervision.

> Participant 2: "So, if I were in a supervision group that goes three to six, like all my antennas are out, I really pick up on what goes on. If it is the six to nine group, I catch it still pretty quick, but not as fast as I do between the hours of three and six. And I'm a night person to begin with, so I never run supervision groups or conduct individual supervision from nine to twelve. I already know that my brain doesn't work at that time."

She also discusses how it feels to have the support of her dean. She illustrates how knowing that her dean trusts her gives her confidence when she walks into the supervision room. Her supervisor intuition feels extra clear and accurate when she knows that she has support, juxtaposed to when she didn't have that same level of support from her administration and other colleagues.

> Participant 2: "I have a new dean now. She's a feminist. She's … the first dean I've had support from in a good while—since two thousand and twelve. And the difference going into supervision is, I feel even more confident than confident. I feel like somebody has my back. They fired the old dean (which they should have) … Supervision feels different when I walk into the room. So, when her and I check in—we have a weekly check in on a Friday at like ten o'clock— and the feedback from her is, 'Dude, I totally trust you. I know that you know what you're doing.' She's like, 'You are so smart.' She's like, 'You're also kind of a geek.' I'm like, 'True story.' She's like, 'You read supervision books for fun.' And I'm like, 'I kind of do.' I'm really interested in gender dynamics and

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supervision, and like, even if I never do anything with it, it's extra knowledge. I'm super

excited. So, to have support of somebody who says, 'I recognize your talent in this area,

and I recognize that even if you don't have to take an extra training, you take it in

supervision.' Anyways, having that backing makes supervision go so much easier. And

honestly, I think it clears up my spidey-sense as well. I think it makes it just more crisp to

be able to spot stuff even faster compared to a department where you have no support

from your other colleagues… Or you have to pull energy then from other places. And I

don't want to walk out of a nine-thirty classroom having used my extra reserves because I

had to use my original energy to do ten times the bracketing because of not being

supported by your dean or by your colleagues."

When she has that level of support, supervision is easier because she's not **bracketing**

her own feelings about not being trusted by people that she works with. The fewer things she

must bracket, the more *sustainable her bracketing* process is.

Attuning to Supervisee Needs

One **category** that emerged during Round Two analysis is **Attuning to Supervisee**

Needs. This **category** is defined as the supervisor's ability to clearly and compassionately

connect with supervisees and keep their growth (along with the safety of clients) at the heart of

supervision. Participant Two describes working to foster a supervision environment **grounded in**

safety where supervisees bring <u>vulnerable self-disclosure</u> so the supervision process can thrive.

Participant 2: "Uh, but if it, if we look at it like, I have to set up a safe environment for

my trainees to be able to tell me something then, yes, I already do that. I think that my

folks feel psychologically safe that, like, you know, I'm not gonna--we're not going to try

to trigger each other, right? We're not going to try to push buttons. They're not going to be

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like, I don't know, they're not going to get their hand smacked for saying, 'I have an attractive client that I'm also attracted to.' So, I think it already exists."

She continues by illustrating the intuitive process that she has developed throughout her ***training and experience as a supervisor***. This intuitive sense helps her understand what is happening in the room to identify potential conflicts or connections that are developing among her supervisees.

> Participant 2: "You know, instinct is a funny thing. You hear people say that 'My gut told me.' I'm like, 'Yeah, but our gut also gets us into trouble lots of times, too.' So that's not what I need. But I'm saying there is an instinct that to be a good supervisor you have to develop, and it comes through training. So, I can pretty much feel it— just like a whisker is off—going into picking out supervisees or students who are going to be my supervision group. It's a very weird thing. I don't actually know how to explain that, but that's it. It's a spidey-sense, right? It's not my gut, and I don't…instinct would be the next thing. But then the next thing by that is this: some kind of, I don't know weird, Parapsychology nonsense. That would explain how you just know if you're safe walking into a room full of trainees or if something is off. If I walk in a room, and something is off, I'm on it in like two seconds. I know it the minute I walk in the door. But how I know is what I don't know…Well, then, I stop. So, if I, if I look into a room, and I'm like something's up. It's not right, you know. I put up with my book bag. I'll put down my purse. I'll sit in my seat, and then usually it will occur to me what it is. It'll be like, 'oh, somebody's feeling some type of way…These two got into a fight in the lunchroom, or whatever.' It usually just comes to me. Again, I don't know how to explain that it's a sense I've had about other people, uh, probably, since I'm a kid… It's some fine-tuned antenna. Oh, something is off,

I set down my purse, set down my stuff, get in my seat. And then, all of a sudden, I just seem to like, look around, and I'm like, 'Okay, I see what's wrong.' But how I see it, I can't explain. I don't know. I don't know how to put it into words. It just is... I guess... maybe ESP: I have no idea again. I think it's stuff that parapsychologists study stuff like that. Like it's part of pre-cognition, you know. It's a thing I've had. I can remember second grade being able to do that kind of thing: of like walk in a room, and in less than five seconds—safe, not safe in a room, and then very quickly gather myself. And then know what the problem is. That's what people always want me on committees because I'm good at that kind of stuff. They always put me on search committees, and I used to think it was because, like, 'Am I the biggest sucker around here?' The provost said to me one time, 'No, there's something that you do when you walk into a room, and you're just like, that right there is the problem.'"

Participant Two uses this **attunement** to understand what supervisees are experiencing and needing in supervision. Participant Eight describes a similar intuitive response to supervision. For her, this intuition informs her about what resistance a supervisee might be experiencing, including competence questioning.

Participant 8: "And my gut a little bit too. If it feels someone is asking for too much or if someone is resisting me in a way that makes it really impossible for the work to occur…I think I've taken to understand what this should consist of. And so how do I hold responsibility? I think a piece of it is attending to their developmental level."

She continues by describing how she **attunes** to the developmental level of supervisees and adjusts the pace of supervision to attend to what they need at that time in their training. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach for Participant Eight's supervisees. She closes this excerpt

emphasizing her role **holding responsibility** for the supervision session by **attuning to supervisee needs.**

> Participant 8: "So, a skills student, a practicum student, the first semester internship, and a second semester internship student—at each of those points I'm working to move more of the responsibility over to them, knowing that our relationship is temporary, and that, my role in their life is temporary. So, I think in the beginning there's a much more emphasis on me providing external validation, me providing psycho education. I'm doing more of the leg work to facilitate what's happening in the room, because not only do they not know a lot about counseling, but they also don't know a lot about what to expect from me. So, I'm more directive, I think, in the earlier phases. As they get further on, I'm going to be moving more into that consultant role as much as possible, returning the responsibility to them. To say, 'What do you notice is happening for you? How are you conceptualizing? What personalizations are getting in the way? What do you think about that intervention that you did? Did it work? If it didn't work, why didn't it work?' And so really trying to put as much of it on them as I can while still providing that support and that feedback and that validation as needed. My ultimate goal, part of holding responsibility, is helping them develop a sense of internal validation, and a sense of internal agency. So, my goal throughout is to be tuned into, 'What am I doing?' That's helping them build agency, while also accessing humility.'"

The **category** of **attuning to supervisee needs** is expanded to include five *subcategories*— illustrated below.

Using Counseling Skills

When his competence was questioned, Participant Ten ***used his counseling skills*** to **attune to supervisee needs**. He **bracketed** his initial feelings of ***defensiveness*** by taking a time out and emotionally regulating. He then used <u>curiosity</u> to see where the supervisee is coming from and addresses the underlying need.

> Participant 10: "Like, the words are attacking me, but I don't think the intention is to say, 'Hey, you're an idiot, but I want to learn from you.' … I've got to put on my counselor hat and ask questions that will help me find that out. But that's what I've got to do. So usually, I just get a drink of water or whatever, come back, and then we can have that conversation. And then from there it's just the same probing questions you would ask to a client."

He uses ***validation and empathy*** to feel establish connection and then makes himself available to the student ***using his counseling skills*** to listen to their perspectives. Participant Ten further illustrates this in the following quote:

> Participant 10: "And I mean, I had to go through it, too. I came out of school, and I met with my first client, and I was like, 'School didn't teach me anything. What just happened?' And I had to go through this process of talking it through with people and learning to trust the process, even when it doesn't seem apparent in the moment, and just remember that I was there too…And they really don't want someone who's just super busy, they want someone who's willing to hear them out, whether they're the vocal veterans or the new 'I know everything' graduate. They really just want someone to say, 'Let me hear what you have to say and see how that gels with what we're doing.' And it took me like two years to realize that."

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Similarly, Participant Ten draws many parallels between the skills he uses in counseling and the skills he uses with supervisees, including group process skills. He emphasizes how critical counseling knowledge is to effective supervision relationships.

Participant 10: "[There is a] therapeutic switch that you have with clients [that] doesn't click on with coworkers quite as intensely. And a lot of those key counseling skills, documentation being one I've ranted on the most, being person centered, being able to depersonalize yourself in the moment, all of those things, they don't go away. And there seems to be a process of having to remember that…I don't know how much this affects this research, but I was thinking we've talked a lot about interpersonal or inner personal process. And, as I was talking, it just dawned on me how much group process became really important for running an office. And just exploring running an office and knowing group dynamics, were totally separate in my head. Until after the fact, and it's, it's just that process of remembering those aspects of what you learned in counseling and applying them to coworkers and stuff. Lifespan development. All that stuff. I'm really glad you're doing that research because that's been the pet peeve of mine. People become supervisors, and then set down everything they know."

Participant Ten revisits the importance of using counseling skills in supervision by discussing documentation as an essential counseling skill that needs to be exercised.

Participant 10: "I guess the one the one thing that has always stood out to me as a supervisor or at least observing other supervisors, is that a lot of the stuff of counseling doesn't go away when you become a supervisor. In that your supervisees become your caseload. But that also means that you have to document your sessions or your supervision sessions. You have to document positive and negative feedback. You have to

build on strengths and try to, when it comes to documenting their supervision, and that becomes a real problem when it comes to saying someone doesn't pass an internship or not gonna sign off on these licensure hours, or whatever that turns out to be. Remembering that you still you still have to take those notes and have a plan, and take your notes, and know your supervisee as well as you would expect to know your client, at least on a professional level. And a lot of supervisors fall asleep on that front, and then they end up getting angry and only documenting when they're angry, and then their notes look silly, or they're not detailed, or they don't show any attempt at remediation."

Participant Nine states that it's particularly important for supervisors to use counseling skills with their supervisees to **attune to supervisee needs** when managing rupture and repair. Participant Nine describes how he knows a repair has occurred after competence questioning through using his ability to conceptualize. Here, he also describes how <u>vulnerable supervisee disclosure </u>is one way he knows that they have ***returned to the tasks of supervision.***

Participant 9: "I think it's similar to counseling, you know, if something gets hurt in a relationship with a client similar to a supervisee, they may start to share less with you, they might become more defensive. Things feel more closed off. It's like this intuition as a counselor. You start to feel the nonverbals of the client, similarly, start to feel the nonverbals of the supervisee. Like they might shut down. They might not be as vulnerable, or be willing to share, what they might consider a bad client clip, but I think if a repair happens, they're gonna (like with a client) they're gonna talk about deeper stuff. Be more vulnerable with you. Be more genuine and honest and authentic and be willing to go back to sharing mistakes or things that didn't go so well."

This is Participant Nine's description of using his counseling intuition to inform his **attunement to supervisee needs.**

High Value of Supervision

The next ***subcategory*** that emerged when supervisors were discussing **attuning to supervisee needs** is the ***high value of supervision.*** This ***subcategory*** is defined by supervisors believing and demonstrating that supervision and the supervision relationship is an incredibly valuable tool in the profession of counseling and should be viewed as such by everyone. Participant Eight describes her feelings on this in the following quote:

> Participant 8: "I just think there's so many people that treat supervision as this box that just has to get checked. Oh, this is just a licensure requirement, and don't see it as this process and this dynamic. This relationship that is just as significant and just as profound as the counseling relationship. And that's what I see, our students and our graduates experience a lot as people that are just really task-oriented, or really casual, and aren't bringing intention into the supervision relationship. And it's just a really missed opportunity."

Participant Two also believes that supervision is something that should be focused on and honored by supervisees, supervisors, the field at large, and counseling regulatory boards to ensure that supervisees are not only getting supervision, but they're getting quality supervision. She discusses how expensive supervision can be and how supervisors should transparently integrate discussion about the process of supervision so that supervisees can see exactly what is happening. This explicit ***transparency*** is one essential component of *informed consent*—a *property* that emerged in Round One interviews. Participant Two uses *informed consent* to highlight how important supervision is as a tool to **attune to supervisee needs.**

Participant 2: "I hate that when I hear that [so many supervisees experience bad or harmful supervision]. It pokes me in my heart because I'm like 'dude, it doesn't have to be that way.' It really doesn't and supervisors could learn to be better. And frankly, if you don't want to supervise, then don't supervise. Supervisors around here— independent supervisors—a hundred and thirty dollars an hour is what they charge. And if you're in a group (like if you're in group supervision) it's like six people, I saw anywhere between sixty-five to eighty-five dollars for group supervision. Supervisors around here make a lot of money— there's a lot of them. I'm like, 'You don't feel bad about charging somebody, and you suck?' Like [it hurts] me internally, like I said. When I hear trainees, they're like, 'My supervisor never told me that,' or 'My supervisor didn't take the time to explain why we're engaging in parallel process,' or whatever. And I'm like, 'What the hell?' I'm like, 'What are you people doing?' Please get out of the business. Please step aside because that isn't it. It leaves supervisees in a funny spot. It's not right. It's not right. … I mean licensure boards also need to be looking at, 'Great, so you completed three thousand hours of supervised work. Was your supervisor any good? And are you going to be any good?'"

Participant Two's commitment to the **high value of supervision** is illustrated in how she speaks about the importance of high-quality post-degree supervision.

Validation and Empathy

In the **subcategory** of **validation and empathy** that emerged in Round One analysis, <u>curiosity</u> became a dimension in tension with a supervisor's <u>need to prove their competence.</u> *Validation and empathy* became such significant factors in attuning to supervisee needs that it rose to become its own **subcategory**, though other counseling skills also emerged as important.

Curiosity vs. Need to Prove Competence. Participant Ten illustrated this tension, and how he was able to move towards curiosity rather than needing to prove his competence to his supervisees by **grounding in psychological safety** and with additional *supervision training and experience.* He also identified that as part of his *Social Identity* (his age) changed, allowing him to let go of the need to prove himself and **attune to supervisee needs** (a present, available supervisor). He also explicitly states that his sense of **groundedness in psychological safety** is not his supervisees' responsibility—it's his.

Participant 10: "And now that I've become more of a vintage counselor, more of the median age, I don't have that Napoleonic complex that that I did first starting out. The supervisor's psychological safety is not the responsibility of the supervisee. So, there is a growth curve that I had to go through where I had to be able to set down this 'I have to prove myself' mindset and instead of thinking of myself as proving myself to the point of being beyond questioning, then to really just get comfortable with seeing those moments as learning moments. When I first started, I would take extra cases, I carried a case load, I sat on a million committees, and I did all these things to overwork myself to say, 'See, I'm in it, too.' And then I would get really angry because [my supervisees] would still question my competence. And here I am doing all these things, and they're not appreciating it or seeing it, or whatever. And they really don't want someone who's just super busy, they want someone who's willing to hear them out... And it took me like two years to realize that. Where I didn't have this prove myself, mentality of just, 'I'm going to go out and Superman it, and then they'll just unquestioningly take everything I say, because I'm doing the jobs of seven.'…"

Here, Participant Ten discusses how tempting it can be to highlight the quantity of tasks he's undertaking as a supervisor when his competence is questioned, rather than **attuning to supervisee needs** through <u>curiosity</u>.

Feedback with Compassion

One supervisee need that became apparent to Participant Eight was the need to offer *feedback with compassion*. She noted that her supervisees were much more inclined to integrate her feedback, especially in moments where they will question the competence of the supervisor (i.e., "you didn't teach me that") when she made clear that she was offering feedback to help her students grow.

> Participant Eight: "Usually it's being really transparent with them. So much of that process can feel kind of unconscious or subconscious where it's not spoken. It's something that's felt. And so, then I'll become really transparent with them about what I'm doing. And why. If I'm interacting with someone who I feel isn't taking responsibility for themselves. I'm gonna say, 'I'm not trying to put you in the hot seat. It just feels important for me that you're tuned into your responsibilities, and what you're accountable for in this dynamic. And I'm and I'm feeling you're not taking responsibility for that.' To give them the opportunity of like, either they're accountable enough that hearing that will catch them. Like, 'Oh, no, I do want to be accountable. Here's the ways that I'm accountable.' Or I'll start to see more defenses, more deflection, more lashing out. That says to me, 'okay, this is this is really somebody who struggles to take responsibility in this way.' …So I gave some tough feedback to one of my supervisees that I have in group supervision this semester… And you know, so I said to him in his written feedback, 'I'm noticing that this is the second time that you've told me that you

didn't know how to do something, and that by you saying that you're kind of casting off the responsibility, as if by acknowledging that, you're free from responsibility. And in each of those cases, you and I saw each other in person. You have my email address. Those are things that you could have asked for feedback on, that you didn't ask for feedback on. I need you to take some more responsibility. If you're confused, then ask. If you didn't ask, then take responsibility for the fact that you chose not to ask.' And then at the end I said, 'This is not me trying to come down hard on you. This is just a pattern that I'm noticing that you're engaging in, that I think it would be helpful for you to address so that this doesn't keep happening.' And so, I saw him in class, and at the end of the class, he said, 'I got your feedback.' I was like, 'Okay, did it land okay?' And he said, 'I was feeling really defensive until I got to the last line, and then that reminded me that, you're trying to help me, and that it was coming from a place of support. And I hear you.'"

Participant Eight offered this corrective ***feedback with compassion*** and support so that her supervisees know that one of her primary objectives in supervision is their growth and development, and she makes a point of transparently stating her intent.

Transparency

The ***subcategory*** of ***transparency*** grew in Round Two analysis to include the *properties* of *informed consent* and *role induction*. ***Transparency*** now includes Round One's *Foundations of Supervision* and is defined as a supervisor's intentional, appropriate use of disclosure about their experience and process in supervision.

Informed Consent. Informed Consent as a *property* moved into the **subcategory** of **transparency** because *informed consent* is commonly used by supervisors as a tool in being **transparent** about what supervision is and what supervisees can expect.

Role Induction. Role Induction emerged as a *property of **transparency.*** Participant Ten first acknowledged how roles can change, and that relationships change along with those roles.

> Participant 10: "And some of these [current supervisees used to be] my peers. We would drink coffee and joke about the boss together six months ago. And now they're drinking coffee and making jokes about me and that was an adjustment. And just realizing that that those relationships have changed, too."

Participant Nine discussed how he used role induction about the role of the client in the counseling relationship to help students understand how he as a supervisor can be helpful to them, even without specific experience with that population of client. He **bracketed** his initial ***defensiveness,*** used ***validation and empathy,*** and then used ***role induction*** to teach his supervisees about his competency across counseling specialty areas.

> Participant 9: "So, with the first experience, I felt more defensive like, 'Well wait a second!' It didn't come out that way, but internally I was having this battle of 'Well wait a second, clients don't necessarily change, so to say, based on whether they're in the field or of drug and alcohol, or in the school. People are people.' So, in my mind, I initially thought like 'What the hell?' I wanted to put the gloves up and defend myself. My actual response was to validate the supervisee's concern. I think it was more of a concern that the supervisee had, but it came out as like, 'You kind of don't know what you're doing.' So, I validated that. 'Well, you know you're right. I haven't worked a lot with supervising our clients in the drug and alcohol field. Help me to understand what it's like for you to

work with those clients.' And we talked more about it, and then I was able to kind of

redirect it back to like, 'Well, you know, humans and human functioning doesn't

necessarily change in a field, so to say. Like drug and alcohol clients are… we can't

segment people, you know, into like, well, you're a drug and alcohol client; you're a

mental health client; you're a school counseling client or student.' So, I think that's kind

of how it ended up like playing out. But my reaction was to want to defend myself…It

wasn't that big of a deal. I just kind of took it for what it was. But then I ended up like

internalizing it a little bit, and then I talked about it with my supervisor. So [my

supervisor is] one of my mentors. She was my supervisor for that class, that in like that

part of our internship. And I ended up talking to her about it, and we had a discussion

about, 'Okay, so maybe you haven't had school counseling in school experience. But

again, you know, you're educated about it. You've worked with a lot of students in a

private practice setting, but they are still students. So, you might not know exactly how

the system of the school runs inside of it. But you still do know students and children,

and their functioning.' You know, it kind of ties back to the drug and alcohol thing. I still

know children—I work with a lot of children. It doesn't necessarily mean that they're

different in school, as they are out. So, we talked a lot about students in parallel process,

so you can supervise these practicum students who are also working with students in the

school you may not have ever been in."

Participant Eight integrates her use of a ***supervision model*** with clear ***role induction*** to

transparently establish her expectations of supervisees.

Participant 8: "What I hear from a lot of first-year students (I mean this is more in terms

of advising, but it's been it turns into supervision) where they'll say, 'I don't know how

much [information is necessary]. I don't understand this relationship. I don't know how much to share with you.' So, if a student is having a hard time, and they're having their own emotional stuff come up, a lot of them are really wary about, 'Can I talk to you about this? I don't want you to be my counselor.' And what I always say to them is, 'I feel really clear on what that line is.' I know how to be a professor and a supervisor without being a counselor. 'I know you don't know me yet, and you don't know that you can trust me, but I trust myself, and I trust that line in that boundary, and I know where to find it. So why don't you just try sharing what you feel comfortable with, and I'll be transparent with you, and explain what I'm doing in terms of what role I'm taking on as we're talking about this.' So, within the discrimination model, there is that counselor role that can come up, but then, just making sure that I'm not getting stuck. That personalization task is fine. But that it's not shifting from the personalization task into just full-blown counseling—that whatever we're talking about is in the service of helping them figure out how to work with their clients versus just me doing full-blown counseling for them. It's such a boring answer, but rules and tasks. That's how I do it."

These *subcategories*, *dimensions*, and properties illustrate the **category of attuning to supervisee needs**; an essential component that supervisors consider when their competence is questioned in supervision.

Attending to Power

The **category Attending to Power** describes how supervisors use the power hierarchy within supervision when their competence is questioned. Participant Ten's approach is to give some of his power to his supervisee by using curiosity to then make the interaction about supervisee learning rather than proving his competence to his supervisee.

Participant 10: "Like, the words are attacking me, but I don't think the intention is to say,

'Hey, you're an idiot, but I want to learn from you.' So, usually once I take that time out,

it's easy to say like, 'Okay, this is something just like if a client does it.' There's

something going on here that's causing fear, confusion-- something in in their situation.

… Maybe give up some of the power and like move into more of like a curious spot."

Participant Ten elaborates further, describing his perspective on supervisees attempting to

take power from a supervisor. He points out that the nature of supervision (a supervisor helping a

supervisee grow) inherently creates a power dynamic that needs to be managed. Participant Ten

discusses the tension between having power taken from you as a supervisor and having the

opportunity to give away that power in the pursuit of an effective supervision relationship.

Participant 10: "I guess, by nature of asking someone for change, you're already

inherently creating that power dynamic. And then, when they challenge you back, they

cut that down. Which, as a supervisor, as a clinical supervisor, you want. But it feels

better if you give away that power rather than them take it, so I think that maybe there's

this this ego part that doesn't like having that taken rather than you giving it… There's a

decision, are we going to have a power struggle, am I going to fight for it back? Or am I

going to hand them that power, or let them keep it, or encourage them to keep it? And use

that as a way to basically teach them to do that with clients."

Participant Ten further illustrates how he **attends to power** when supervising people

using the following example. In the following example, he has recently become both a clinical

and an administrative supervisor in a clinical setting. He first observed the dynamics in the office

and listened to the concerns of all involved. Once he became clear about what was happening

and what was needed, he moved from intaking information to an authoritative position—exerting

his power with a few specific directives. He made clear that when managing conflict, he first listens to what is happening and then exerts his power; the process wouldn't be effective in any other order.

> Participant 10: "When I first went into [the] office, that was initially hostile. There were three staff that wouldn't talk to each other. There were three different roles that had to work together that wouldn't, and they were hostile towards each other, not really towards me. But I was new, but just a lot of interpersonal hostility. There were definitely two factions…But it was like some people during changes like they would literally lay on the ground and pound on the ground. Like I think of my youngest when they were three. Yeah, I never, I never witnessed anything like that. But that was the level of like and dislike going on in that office. And the level of behavior they would resort to. And just so I would talk to everybody, and I got to know the personalities, the motivations. I would just go around and ask people, 'Why are you in rehab? What do you like? What you hate?' And that was my introduction to everything, and then they would all confess each other's sins. And talk about how terrible the other people are, and then, any time one would do something the other didn't like, they wouldn't talk to each other. One would just run to me, and then I became this tool they would try to wield against the other staff members, but all that hostility wasn't towards me. But it was really simple to solve, too. What I noticed was everybody emailed each other rather than talk directly face to face. But we're talking about a thirty-foot office. I mean, no one was more than thirty feet, but they would email instead of talk. They would accept or reject clients without a conversation. And then they would voice all their complaints to me instead of each other. So, I literally said, 'You guys, counseling and placement, you all have to talk to each

other before. If you're gonna refer someone to placement, you have to go talk to placement, sit down face to face, have a conversation, and vice versa. You can't reject anyone based on the paperwork they send you. You have to have a conversation.' And so, I forced people to start talking to each other—literally said, 'I will write you up if you email each other.' And then went from there. A lot of it came from listening, listening, listening, and what I saw was it was communication issues…But face to face, all of those, all overnight, went away…They're working really well with each other, and then the same thing, anytime someone would come to me with a complaint about somebody (unless it was something I had to go to HR with which was almost never). My first words were, 'What did they say when you talk to them about it?' And if they hadn't, I would set up a meeting where they would have to talk about it with me there. Everyone did get along a lot better. But I don't know if that's either because they stopped looking for things to complain about, because those meetings are wildly uncomfortable for all involved, or if they just started to, by talking face to face, they started to see each other as people, not just the email on the other end. But I had to really do the authority. I had to pull the authority role on both of those, but I didn't know what to pull it on until I really sat down and listen to everyone and find out what their complaints were, and really understood that everybody's unhappy about the same thing, just perceiving it radically different. And my role really was to help people get on the same side perception wise, but I had to pull an authoritative card to do it."

One of the ways Participant Two **attends to power** in her group supervision sessions is by using a secret ballot system so that everyone's voice is heard. She establishes these rules in her supervision group using her power to ensure that everyone's voices are heard equitably, even

for more administrative decisions like changing how long the supervision session of the day will be.

> Participant 2: "Yeah, there will be other days where I'll be like, 'Does everybody really want to be this serious?' And we do everything by like secret ballot in Supervision group. And I'll say, 'Okay, so do we want to cut the class an hour early and find the hours somewhere else?' And I don't take hands because I don't want anybody to feel pressured. So, they all write [their answers] down on a little slip of paper, and they pass it around, and then it comes, and I was like all right. So, it looks like we're going to be here for the next hour, or it looks like everybody's had a really crappy day, and we're gonna bail. And again, keep those rules steady the whole time. I think it's important."

Participant Nine talked about how he strives to lower the hierarchy of power within the supervision relationship in favor of having shared power. After **bracketing** his initial *defensiveness,* he gives away some of his power in the room using ***intentional vulnerability*** to ***return to the tasks of supervision.***

> Participant 9: "And then, either you could defend back like 'Well, no, you really…' It could turn it to an argument. Power struggle, or the supervisee might feel squashed, you know, not validated, and then supervision work is not that be quality … I was just gonna say I think of it in like this, 'I'm above you. You're above me.' and then, you're right. It kind of has to shift. Just naturally, I think counseling is a field of equality, you know, so like even with students, I try to be as equal as possible with them, although it's super different, being older teaching. I teach a class as well, so like they already see me in a position of power as a teacher and a counselor, but I try to make it as even as possible. You know it's similar to what supervision is, obviously... Yeah, And I think that was

really hard as a counselor. But as a supervisor it's hard because you are giving away

power, saying like, 'Hey? I'm willing to share my mistakes, too.' But I think eventually it

leads to more shared power, I guess. Then they're willing to say like, 'Hey? You know

I'm not in this alone.' You know, because I try to share a lot of my early experiences with

those that are ready to hear it. Not to make it about myself, but to share. Like to validate.

"You're not alone." I remember being there as well, but it does become vulnerable to

share that the professional has also made mistakes, too, but it is giving away some power,

and that was hard for me. Initially, I'm supposed to be the power person. No, that's not

how it works, and that's not how I want it to work honestly."

Participant Eight describes how individual **supervisee factors** influence how power is

wielded in the supervision relationship. She gives the example of how she notices that a

supervisee's gender often plays a role in how supervisees typically react to the power dynamic of

the supervision relationship.

Participant 8: "Pull on that power dynamic to say, 'I need more power in this?' For sure.

Yes, I would say white men in particular want me to be less involved in the beginning

without realizing that I need to be more involved. So yeah, that's one of the things that we

were just talking about in our faculty meeting. These men that come in with this attitude

that they've already done all their work. That they already have the skill set that they need

to be good at this, and [graduate school] is just a hoop that they have to jump through.

There's also a really interesting dynamic that all of our faculty are female right now,

except for our clinic director. And so, it's been interesting watching this new group of

men responding to a full group of female faculty. So, in those conversations I find myself

having to say more of like, 'You're new at this. You don't know how to do this, yet. Your

intuition is not online in the way that it needs to be in order for you to be making these decisions independently, and I need you to let me be involved in this.' Whereas I would say with women it comes to be, anyone that's not a cis man, essentially. Like, 'What's preventing you from being able to listen to yourself? What's preventing you from being able to trust yourself?' So that in those cases it's more about them trying to give me more power, with a system that tends to be more about trying to take power, and that's a generalization. But it's real, and it's kind of concerning. It's been coming up more for us."

This **category** illuminates how power and a supervisor's *social identities* can intersect in how supervisors manage competency questioning in the supervision relationship. Supervisors who hold more power in society can **attend to power** when their competence is being questioned in a different way than supervisors with marginalized identities. Supervisors with more power can give some away to their supervisees in the process of managing competency questioning without bringing the hierarchy completely out of balance, whereas supervisors who find themselves defending their role against microaggressions or other manifestations of prejudice have to navigate a more complicated hierarchy, often with significantly less power.

Supervisor Holding Responsibility

One of the primary ways that supervisors **attend to power** in the supervision relationship is by *holding responsibility* for the supervision relationship. My second-round participants all discussed *holding responsibility* in the context of their competence being questioned.

Participant Two first acknowledges that supervisor's primary responsibility in supervision is to ensure that no harm comes to the client. She then describes her perspective on the supervision hierarchy. She integrates the idea of being **grounded in psychological safety** for both she and her supervisees and takes responsibility for ensuring that all are grounded in the

room, even when a supervisee factor is getting in the way of the process of group supervision. She fosters groundedness in the session by remaining consistent and focusing the whole group on client issues.

> Participant 2: "I mean our primary responsibility as supervisors is the client. It's the client that's first, you know. Then the supervisee, then the agency, then me. So, I'm the last in line, and I'm the one who's getting like everything that is rolling down… So yeah, I would say ninety-nine percent of the time, I've been very confident, just walking in. I feel like it's a safe environment. I try to keep things even safe when those dangerous people are in a supervision group. The other students—it's good, and it's bad—the other students will rally to my safety because they're like, 'What the hell is wrong with, student A or student B right?' And then I'm just like, "okay, who's got clients that we have to discuss this week, or what are we doing?" And everybody is like [upset], and then I can see the rest of the group is being affected as well. I try to bring it back and try to keep it normal, so they all have a safe environment to discuss their concerns, their issues, their growth, whatever is going on with them."

Participant Eight integrates holding responsibility by **attuning to supervisee needs**, specifically through *role induction*. She views one of her primary responsibilities in supervision as empowering her students to develop a sense of internal validation built on agency as well as humility. She adjusts her focus of supervision based on which developmental stage her supervisee is in, and what they need in the moment.

> Participant 8: "And so how do I hold responsibility? I think a piece of it is attending to their developmental level. Right? So, a skills student, a practicum student, the first semester internship, and a second semester internship student—at each of those points

I'm working to move more of the responsibility over to them, knowing that our

relationship is temporary, and that, my role in their life is temporary. So, I think in the

beginning there's a much more emphasis on me providing external validation, me

providing psychoeducation. I'm doing more of the leg work to facilitate what's happening

in the room, because not only do they not know a lot about counseling, but they also don't

know a lot about what to expect from me. So, I'm more directive, I think, in the earlier

phases…My ultimate goal, part of holding responsibility is helping them develop a sense

of internal validation, and in a sense of internal agency."

Participant Ten talks about reminding himself that he **holds responsibility in the**

supervision relationship when he feels *defensive*. He views his role in supervision as a model

of how to *use counseling skills*. He *uses counseling skills* to demonstrate the parallel cycle of

rupture and repair in the supervision relationship—and holds himself accountable to ensure that

he is the leader in repairing the rupture.

Participant 10: "You have to go through it and coach best practices in the moment,

because when you try to preemptively teach [relationship factors], sometimes it sounds

crazy…I largely see it as my job to model what they need to do when their clients

confront them. Uh, so in those moments where my face gets hot and I don't take the time

out, it's also on me to come back and say, 'I got angry, and I didn't take that moment to

walk away.' And come back and so now we've got to have that conversation where I have

egg on my face. But it, I mean it's a large part of my role, I think, to demonstrate that

these skills can happen, and that the outcome can result from it. And so, if I don't take

ownership of those moments and they spin out of control, then I'm just showing this is

how you can let your session spin out of control—your case, your crisis de-escalation situation spin out of control."

Participant Nine talks about holding responsibility for competency questioning and other ruptures even when it's not actively happening in the moment. He had a group of school counseling students question his competence because he had never worked in a school. After initially feeling **defensive,** he used curiosity to **validate and empathize** with his students and found a teachable moment that was not about him as a supervisor, but rather about the value of supervision, even across specialties.

> Participant 9: "So, in my mind, I initially thought like 'What the hell?' I wanted to put the gloves up and defend myself. My actual response was to validate the supervisees concern. I think it was more of a concern that the supervisee had, but it came out as like, 'You don't know what you're doing.' So, I validated that. 'Well, you know you're right. I haven't worked a lot with supervising our clients in the drug and alcohol field. Help me to understand what it's like for you to work with those clients.' And we talked more about it, and then I was able to kind of redirect it back to like, 'Well, you know, humans and human functioning doesn't necessarily change in a field.' Like drug and alcohol clients are… we can't segment people, you know, into like; well, you're a drug and alcohol client; You're a mental health client; You're a school counseling client or student. So, I think that's kind of how it ended up like playing out. But my reaction was to want to defend myself."

He views the repair process as a dynamic part of relationship growth, not just a one-off event. Even when uncomfortable, he views it as his responsibility to readdress it until growth happens. When asked about **persistent rupture**, he responded,

Participant 9: "[*discussing unresolved persistent rupture*] I'm not sure if that's ever happened, because I think it's possible that that's happened, and I just missed it. It just kind of went over my head. Some unintentional miss, but I think there were times when it was more direct, or it felt more direct questioning of competence, I might not have initially addressed it, but I circled back to it. So, like in that supervision session, I might not have brought [competency questioning] up or talked about it. But I would bring it back up later on and say, you know, 'Hey, we started this conversation. I wanted to circle back and talk about it. And this is what I was feeling. This is what happened.' …So, I think part of [my response] goes back to my therapeutic modality of unfinished business. You know for me things that are unfinished don't sit well with me. You know whether it's just bringing it back up and allowing them to finish [the thought] or allowing us to collaboratively finish something that just didn't get settled. If [the supervision relationship] feels unsettled for me, it probably feels unsettled for them. I think it's a teaching moment where I can show them, whether we directly talk about that, and how it applies to clients. But I think, if I come back and circle back to something that felt uncomfortable to me, it lets them know that it's okay to do that in a counseling setting, too. [My practicum instructor] in my practicum I remember teaching me that just because you miss something in a session, and you're reflecting on it later doesn't mean you can't circle back to it. It's the same in supervision. It's okay to mull it over and then think, 'Wait a second! We need to readdress this.' So, I think part of it is like therapeutic modality. I hate unfinished business, and it sits with me for a very long time. So, I think that's part of what leads me to go back and talk about it, as uncomfortable as it may be. But I think if it's not talked about soon after it's just gonna get bigger. It's just gonna

grow, and it could potentially become a bigger animal that can't be addressed. Or if it does become addressed, then it could turn bigger than it needs to be, I guess, because the elephant will continue to grow and grow, and they all grow. So, it it if it doesn't get addressed, it's going to be something that's always there, anyway. Yeah, I'm almost thinking of an infection, like if you don't treat the infection as soon as possible, it's just going to boil over. It's going to turn into this like massive issue… Yup, and if it goes away for a little while it will come back again in another way. Similar. It'll be similar, but different. But now you'll have two things that are unaddressed if you don't address that."

Here, he reiterates that the competency questioning (like any conflict in a supervision relationship) will repeatedly come up if it isn't addressed and that as the supervisor, it is his responsibility to address it.

Intentional Vulnerability

Round Two analysis yielded a new ***subcategory*** in **Attending to Power** called ***intentional vulnerability. Intentional Vulnerability*** is when supervisors appropriately use vulnerable self-disclosure to further the goals and tasks of supervision. Participant Nine illustrates how his authenticity modeled the type of <u>vulnerable supervisee disclosure</u> that he finds most productive in supervision.

Participant 9: "I don't think there's been one that's ever been unrepairable, or that hasn't repaired. I think there have been, I would say, more particularly in the situation in where I was the supervisor of students, practicum students. It seemed to linger on a little longer, because they were talking about school settings and things like that. There were a lot of questions that came up as they were talking about school things, like more the level of logistics of schools, and not necessarily always working with students, but things that I

just honestly didn't know. Sometimes I felt like I got the sense that they didn't necessarily want to share in all the details of what truly might have been going on because I had never been in a school before. I subscribe to Gestalt therapy. So, I had to be very authentic with them. 'Hey? It kind of seems like you're hesitant to share.' So really had to be super authentic with them and, and just be genuine and say, 'Hey look, it seems like you're hesitant to share something. What's going on?' And I think that helped draw things out, and then we were able to have a conversation about what they were truly struggling with. So, I think that, honestly being vulnerable and like going to that level, helped things repair. Being okay and being super awkward, I guess."

He then continues by describing what it was like as the supervisor to use ***intentional vulnerability.*** He describes feeling afraid but that the vulnerability was worth it because it built trust with his supervisees.

Participant 9: "'Call it a fear bond' I said, Yeah, a lot of times. I remember in that class saying, 'Well, we're going to have a fear bond today.' And we would go to places that would be anxiety provoking. And we got there, and bonds were built, and trust happened, and I was willing to call them out. And I think that then led to them calling me out, and it led to more authentic conversation. I think that's how the bond worked. Then they started to trust me more— knowing that I was willing to be vulnerable with them, too. So, because supervisees are super vulnerable, an authentic supervisor is willing to share, the super not good stuff, especially…I think initially it didn't happen. I think it's like, 'Hold, on, hold on, hold on.' And then eventually I think I became just secure enough. I don't know where it happened along the way, but I think there needed to be, and there has been, a sense of security in my own vulnerability."

Participant Nine finishes his description by connecting ***intentional vulnerability*** with releasing some power over the supervision relationship. He uses vulnerability to connect with his supervisees and reduces some of the power hierarchy so that both he and his supervisees can attend to the supervision relationship that they've developed—a relationship that's intended to be effective, not perfect.

> Participant 9: "I can still be the professional and super educated and super smart and super competent and be normal. I can still struggle. I can still have times that things don't go well. So really is checking the idea of perfect, like there's nothing that's perfect. And it's okay. And I think the quicker and the faster I finally got to deep down admit that, that that's when things got to that place. I just feel like it was just letting go of that like need to hold control. I guess, for me, power and control sometimes go together so like, I don't need to control it. I don't have to be a control freak over it, and like constantly hold it. It's okay to let go of some of that power and be vulnerable."

Participant Two also discusses the use of ***intentional vulnerability*** with her supervisees as she moves within the natural power dynamic in the supervision relationship. She begins by establishing clear, authoritative rules about how supervision goes, and then relaxes and allows for the human experience to enter the supervision relationship through ***intentional vulnerability.*** In the following quote, Participant Two illustrates how ***intentional vulnerability*** can complement a stronger, more authoritative approach to communication in supervision as well.

> Participant 2: "You know my supervisees will be like, 'Well, we only had to do three cases. How come you guys only have to do like two cases, or how come that group had to do four cases?' 'Why, don't you mind your business and listen to the person who's in charge?' And they're like, 'All right.' So, there we go. Building that trust right from the

jump comes from the boundaries and enforcing your own rules for your supervision group. Yeah, I think people know what to expect. I'm also very open, like, you know what? 'I'm really tired today. So please don't try my patience.' And students are like, 'Okay.'"

Participant Two is modeling the variability in how she **attends to power** using *intentional vulnerability*. She sometimes pairs a more authoritative voice with the structure of the class, and other times discloses how she's feeling to acknowledge and model how the basic needs of humanity may intersect with counseling and supervision.

Supervisor Growth

The final *subcategory* in **Attending to Power** is *supervisor growth.* This *subcategory* is defined by supervisors being open to their own growth in supervision and has three *properties: self-reflection, integrating feedback, and humility.*

Self-Reflection. The *property* of *self-reflection* remained the same through Round Two analysis, though it did move to fall under the **category** of **Attending to Power.** This *property* moved to this **category** due to the restructuring and expanding of supervisor responses. *Self-reflection* landed in **attending to power** because it is one of the main ways that supervisors assess how to respond when their competence is questioned.

Integrating Supervisee Feedback. Participant Two *integrates supervisee feedback* in a very intentional way to further her growth. She first identifies the most positive and most negative feedback from her supervisees because she finds that usually those are more about being liked or disliked rather than her skills as a supervisor. She then finds the consistent comments and adjusts based on those comments. This *integration of supervisee feedback* is a practice that she has developed through years of **supervision training and experience**.

Participant 2: "And now that I learned through trial and error, people getting mad at me, supervisors giving me like bad emails and taking the emails for what they're worth. I always throw out the highest one and the lowest one. There's one supervisee, he was like, 'You're the B. I'm going to give you all the As.' And I'm like, 'Yay,' and then I throw that one away because I'm like, 'You love me?' And then there's always one student who is like, 'You suck.' I throw those away, too. And then I look at the ones in the center. And in those early years, if I kept seeing the same consistent comments... I know in the early years, I never turned back stuff on time. That's actually kind of come full circle now that I think about it. But back in the early years, people would turn in their cases, and they're waiting for feedback, and it'd be like their second case would already be ready, and they didn't get their feedback from their first. When I started to see that you know initially, I'm like they'll tell me what to do, and then it was like, I am the person who tells them what to do. I had to remember those things, so that was a little bit of a, I would say, it was a little bit more imposter syndrome in earlier years, and that kind of left the more I supervised, and the better I got it, it, the more training I had in mentoring as well."

Participant Eight also elicits feedback from her supervisees after they leave the program and compares it to her perception of how things went in the supervision relationship.

Participant 8: "And so, I hear back from a lot of students about, 'Here's what I loved about our supervision. And here's what I'm not getting now.' And so that's part of the inventory.

Humility. Participant Two identified *humility* as an essential component of managing competency questioning in supervision. Once she establishes the firm guidelines about how supervision will proceed with *informed consent* and *role induction*, she surprises her supervisees

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with aspects of her humanity to remind supervisees that everyone in the room can learn as well as impart knowledge. While confident in her skills as a supervisor, she strives to be humble and open to learning from her supervisees at every turn.

> Participant 2: "I've done stuff like weird plaid stripes, polka dots and tie-dye all at the same time in the supervision group, and part of that is: number one, I want to throw people off their square. Right? I want that. We need to be able to roll with things as they come up in supervision. And this is just another thing to make sure that you are paying attention. We're all trying to be human beings in this room. But the humanity and humility need to be built into supervision. I think too many people think that if they're the supervisor, they, of course, are the expert of everything you know. 'I know everything, and I'm going to tell you everything, and you should be just like me.' I've never believed in any of that ever. Being a supervisor to me, is a very humbling thing that people trust me to guide them. So, if every once in a while, I feed them, or they feed me with food or stuff, it's it. People should be humble to be supervisors. Not like if you're arrogant, you think you know everything, even if you're like all the way up there. There's always more to learn from supervisees. There always is, and if you're not growing, neither are your people, which means your clients are getting sucky quackery work in that room. And that is our primary concern. So yeah, there's so much learned from supervisees. I think supervisors need to remember that very much. So, a great quote right there. Yeah, that was really fabulous, because I am fabulous. Yes, that that was amazing. So, there we go."

Participant Two believes that the supervisor has to be growing for the supervisees to grow as well, and a valuable component of supervisor growth is having humility to learn from supervisees.

Supervisor Growth leads directly into the *consultation subcategory*, though is more focused on the supervisor's growth rather than troubleshooting supervisee struggles.

Consultation

The *subcategory* of *consultation* remained similar to the findings in Round One, however the use of *consultation* was further clarified into a dimension with one end of the spectrum being <u>integrating feedback</u> and the other characterized by using *consultation* to <u>leverage power</u>.

This *subcategory* overlaps significantly with the previous *subcategory* of *supervisor growth* in that supervisors need to be open and attentive to their own growth to be able to seek out consultation that is focused on <u>integrating feedback.</u>

<u>Integrating Feedback</u>. Participant Nine discusses his focus on his own growth when he seeks out *consultation* with his own mentors when his competence is questioned in supervision. He needs to know that feedback is coming from a trusted person, and from a place that's oriented to help him grow, not tear him down. The following quote is an example of *consultation* with the intent of <u>integrating feedback</u>.

> Participant 9: "Yeah. And sometimes it's hard to hear, some honest feedback, but it's good. I try to surround myself with people that, if they do give honest feedback that might go against what I think, it comes from a place of like care as a person and a professional, you know. I think, like the guy, if he said, 'Dude, you blew it.' It wouldn't be to put me down, but it would be to help me grow and be a better supervisor or counselor. So, think like collaborating and consulting with people that I trust, and I hope that all counselors do that—just finding someone. Because there's some hard feedback that happens especially, I'm sure you know, in your dissertation process. There's some

hard things. But knowing that it comes from a place of love, like a sense of love, not like

a partner love. But you know, loving your co-worker, and you know your students and

those types of things, so that's part of how I try to check those things. It's hard at times

because it's humbling, but it's super needed."

Leveraging Power. The dimension of leveraging power primarily emerged in round one

when supervisors were discussing seeking **consultation** with people higher in the departmental

hierarchy to protect themselves or pass on responsibility for the supervisee to someone with

more power.

Addressing Rupture

Addressing Rupture is the final ***subcategory*** in the **category** of **attending to power.**

Participant Ten describes his process of ***addressing rupture*** in the following quote. When rupture

occurs, he gives himself a moment to *self-reflect* and then apologizes to the supervisee. He

focuses on ***validation and empathy*** and then proceeds by addressing the supervisees concerns.

> Participant 10: Usually, the minute I'm out of the situation [the rupture]. I'll have my
>
> three minutes of self-righteous 'I got him!' Then it's like, 'Oh, I shouldn't have done that.'
>
> And then I start to see things through their perspective. And then I cool things down. I
>
> had to go and apologize and validate their experience or validate what I see to be their
>
> experience. Not take that window to re-explain what I want, but just validate. 'Okay,
>
> you've got some legitimate concerns here, and I want to explore them. They're real, and
>
> they they're worth exploring.'"

Participant Two ***addresses rupture*** in the following situation by addressing a comment

that her supervisee made at her site. Once she addressed the supervisee and discussed the

situation, she felt a degree of intensity in the relationship that she wasn't sure was productive. As

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she reflected on the supervision relationship, she wondered whether she should approach the supervisee and ***address the rupture*** again, or just remain consistent.

> Participant 2: "So I said to the supervisee, I was like, 'Yeah, I want to talk to you after class.' And this person was a veteran as well. They were in their late thirties at that time, and I was probably maybe mid-forties, and like she was a tough broad, and I liked her quite a bit. And I said, 'You know, what did you say to your supervisor?' And they were like, 'What are you talking about?' And I'm like, 'So I already know what you said to your supervisor, because I got a phone call, and I need to know what it is that you said, because I got to fix things over there.' And that supervisee got super pissed that the information wasn't confidential that they shared with their other supervisor. And now they're pissed at me for addressing it. 'Dude. What are you saying at your site? That I'm getting a phone call from your supervisor.' And I would say that was a little bit of a rupture in the relationship because I think we went from having a very good relationship to having about six weeks of 'Should I say something? Should I not say something?' I just carried on as normal and they came back around."

She continues the process of supervision throughout the duration of the rupture and ***tolerates the supervisee's discomfort*** and the supervision relationship eventually returned to baseline. She states that her ability to **bracket,** giving the student some space and allowing the student to have their own emotional process while maintaining consistency in supervision, were the factors that influenced how she ***addressed rupture*** in this supervision relationship.

> Participant 2: "I believe I might have told you. You know, I start off with the same three questions, every supervision group: like a fun item. And I kept all that stuff the same. I kept the rotation the same. I kept the case presentations—everything— I kept the same. I

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really just kind of invited them [the supervisee] to come back in by being steady, you know. Uh, and they eventually came back around, and I think everything ended well. I am still in touch with them, and they're out of school…I think what was helpful was to bracket anger; was to have a plan of how to address this to begin with. The second part was, I wasn't going to address it in the classroom or in the supervision group. Third part was when we were able to part after the conversation we went in opposite directions. It wasn't like we were walking to our cars together, and then trying to be fake like nice. [We went] in opposite directions after that conversation."

Participant Eight uses ***transparency*** to ***address rupture*** with her supervisees. She gives clear, direct ***feedback with compassion*** and then allows the supervisees the space to decide if they'd like to take action, or if they start lashing out in a defensive way. The supervisee's response to her feedback is information that she uses to know how to proceed.

She gives an example of a student where she wasn't sure right away if a repair had happened after they had repeatedly ***addressed a rupture*** that had occurred in their supervision relationship. Participant Eight says that she usually asks directly if repair is there, but in this case, she needed more information from the student to see if they could ***return to tasks of supervision.***

Participant 8: "That's a good question. *[How do you know when repair has happened?]* I think just by asking directly. But I think I've also had to come to terms with the fact that, sometimes they're not going to tell you. So, there is a student that I had a rupture with last spring, and she did a really wonderful job of communicating to me that she felt hurt, and that she felt mad at me. And we had like, I think, three meetings about it. And at the end of the third one I was like, 'Still, get this feeling that you're upset. And I can't tell if we're

okay and also, it's okay if we're not okay. But I'm also willing to keep having these conversations if we need to.' She's a very internal processor. And so, you know, just with kind of a flat affect. She's like, 'We're okay. I'm okay.' And then she ended up writing me a letter. And she put it on this piece of cloth on canvas. It was this really wonderful thing. And there was a poem about rupture. And then, a letter to me on the back, and it was just, 'I've never had somebody in a position of power be willing to do that with me. I know that that required a lot of effort.' So that was nice evidence."

Participant Nine discusses how his perspective on when ***competency questioning is expected*** influences how he ***addresses rupture*** in the supervision relationship. He allows himself some time to **bracket** his own responses to the competency questioning and knows that it will come up again in supervision so that he can address it then. He ***consults*** with other professionals to <u>integrate feedback</u> on their perspective on how to address it most productively, and then broaches the subject with the supervisee.

Participant 9: "I think [rupture due to competency questioning] initially could turn into that, like it could turn into something detrimental. But I think, like reminding myself in the moment, like 'All right, you don't have to respond to this now.' There's not the immediacy factor of like, if you're competence is questioned, you don't have to defend it and address it right at that moment. It's okay to—I don't want to say work around it but find a way to come back to that collaborative place with the supervisee. Talk about it with another professional, and then loop back to it the next time. Because I think for me, I know the initial reaction. I want to defend myself, but if I jump to that every time, then it's gonna look like I'm constantly like, 'Hey! You can't question me!' But I think it's natural for a supervisee to have some questions about who is supervising them. So, I have

to check that as well like, 'Hey, that's gonna happen.' You know it doesn't necessarily mean they think I'm an idiot, but that's my own inferiority and negative self-talk: if somebody questions my competence, then that means I'm an idiot. But I have to check myself like I'm almost doing my own CBT counseling in my mind like, just because someone questions your competence or is questioning your background does not mean you are a poor supervisor. So, it's almost like doing your own counseling to make sure that the relationship [is maintained]. So, it's almost like at a moment's glance you have to be introspective enough to know, 'Oh! Hmm! It's not.' And for now, let's go back to it. Be tactful. You need to circle back and read it. That's okay. So, it doesn't necessarily turn into a missed opportunity, I guess. But you can still circle back…I think it's similar to counseling, you know, if something gets hurt in a relationship with a client similar to a supervisee, they may start to share less with you, they might become more defensive. Things feel more closed off. It's like this intuition as a counselor. You start to feel the nonverbals of the of the client, similarly, start to feel the nonverbals of the supervisee. Like they might shut down. They might not be as vulnerable, or be willing to share, what they might consider a bad client clip, but I think if a repair happens, they're gonna (like with a client) they're gonna talk about deeper stuff. Be more vulnerable with you. Be more genuine and honest and authentic and be willing to go back to sharing mistakes or things that didn't go so well."

In sum, Participant Ten finishes by describing what it feels like to **_return to the tasks of supervision_**—by seeing that his supervisees are willing to offer <u>vulnerable supervisee disclosure</u> when the **_rupture has been addressed_** effectively, especially when considering timing, tact, and freedom to loop back to questioning and rupture without pressure to address it immediately.

Outcomes of Questioning

Like the **category Supervisor Outcomes** from Round One analysis, the current **category** of **outcomes of questioning** was developed. The name of the **category** was adjusted to **outcomes of questioning** to reflect outcomes that include the supervisee as well as the overall supervision relationship. This **category** is defined as what happens in the supervision relationship after competency questioning happens. The *subcategories* include *programmatic mistrust, return to supervision, leaving the field* and *persistent rupture. Returning to the tasks of supervision* includes the *property* of *vulnerable supervisee disclosure* and the *subcategory* of *persistent rupture* includes the *property* of *administrative supervision.*

Programmatic Mistrust

This *subcategory* didn't change between Round One analysis and Round Two analysis. It remains defined as a supervisor or supervisee losing the trust of the environment or program that they're a part of.

Return to Tasks of Supervision

A new *subcategory* that emerged through round two analysis is the *subcategory* of *return to tasks of supervision.* This *subcategory* includes a *property* of *vulnerable supervisee disclosure.* One way Participant Two knows that the supervision relationship has stabilized and that they have *returned to tasks of supervision* is when there is a feeling of steadiness in the supervision group. She double checks her assessment and is reassured when her supervisees keep in touch long after the supervision relationship has ended.

Participant 2: "I really just kind of invited them to come back in by being steady, you know. Uh, and they eventually came back around, and I think everything ended well. I am still in touch with them, and they're out of school. They were in the class of twenty-

twenty, and I talk to them about once a month. They invited me to their wedding. Like stuff like that, so I believe that things have been repaired. I just carried on as normal and tried not to be weird."

She noted that one of the strategies that she used to **return to tasks of supervision** after **addressing rupture** with one of her supervisees was to preserve the norms that had been previously established so that her supervisees knew what to expect—without weirdness and tolerate their discomfort while she held things steady.

Vulnerable Supervisee Disclosure. Participant Ten describes the *property* of **returning to tasks of supervision,** *vulnerable supervisee disclosure*. When supervisees feel comfortable to disclose challenging aspects of their development or counseling practice, Participant Ten knows that they have re-entered a productive supervision relationship (maybe even more productive than when the competency questioning happened).

Participant 10: "Usually I know that the repair has been successful when you can see that they're comfortable being vulnerable again—they can admit they don't know something. They can admit they didn't see something, and not just in those ten minutes after apology. 'Oh, I totally didn't see that.' But actually, they're able to say, 'Okay, I was working with this client, and he said this, and it brought this reaction.' Openly—that's how I know, okay, we're back, we're back to baseline, or we're better than before, because a lot of times repair can bring you to better than baseline. Once you can see that they're vulnerable again, and we're collaborating again. It's not that, that parent-child dynamic or parent-teenager dynamic is the one we use a lot. Where I speak, and they go like this (rolls eyes). But that actual peer-to-peer interaction. Same goals, different approaches, same goals. 'Gonna work together to figure it out' is back and that's usually how I can

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tell. And usually for me, I have just this tension, this internal tension, when I feel like a relationship is off. And then that just like releases when I feel like we're working together again."

Here, Participant Ten refers to an intuitive feeling that the tension has been resolved in the room when supervisees are ready for *vulnerable disclosure*.

Participant Eight discusses knowing that the supervision relationship has **returned to tasks of supervision** when her students seek her out for things that aren't explicitly required in the context of supervision. She looks for moments when supervisees seek out her supervision rather than only do what is required of them.

> Participant 8: "I think covertly, the way I know is if they seek me out again. If there's a rupture, we process it through. We take responsibility in the ways that we need to, and it still feels a little bit funky again. Part of that [recovering people pleaser] is just not trying to micromanage that, and just letting it be. 'I've done my part. I've said my piece. I can't control how they feel about me at this point.' But then, a month later, if they email me and say, 'Can I meet to talk to you about this or can I process this with you?' That sort of is a seeking out of me that they're not required to do, that they choose to do. Then that says to me, 'Okay, regardless of what happened before, there's enough repair that they're willing to interact with me again.'"

Leaving the Field

Like other **subcategories** in the **Outcomes category,** *leaving the field* remained the same during Round Two analysis. This **category** continues to be defined as one or both members of the supervision dyad leaving the field of counseling as a result (at least in part) of the rupture in the supervision relationship.

Persistent Rupture

Participants Two and Eight describe what it's like for them to have a ***persistent rupture*** with Supervisees. This ***subcategory*** intersects quite a bit with supervisee factors. Participant Two described her experience of being accused of harassment by a supervisee. The rupture was so profound that there was no repair possible for the supervisor. She followed up by saying that she was required by her program to maintain supervision with this supervisee without employing gatekeeping procedures.

> Participant 2: "But I knew that I was going in that room with a person who hated my guts. And they tried to do everything that they could to throw me under the bus. Everything, everything possible. One of them filed sexual harassment charges. And all made up nonsense. The other one tried to say that I was racist. And what was great about both of those was, I'm a title nine investigator. And on my campus, if anybody tries anything fishy, I like, pop up out of a garbage can. I'm like 'That was sexual harassment. You can't say that to people. That's just wrong.' So, accusing me of sexual harassment was a punch in the gut and accusing me of being a racist, I've been part of DEI initiative since 2002. So, when they brought both of those charges, people were like, 'Wait.' Nobody believed any of that… But the fact that things got that bad, and I was still stuck with them as trainees… There wasn't anybody else to give them to, and the school wouldn't let me kick them out, either."

Participant Eight also had a supervisee where a ***rupture persisted*** due to fundamental differences in their values. She attempted to address the ruptures several times but was unable to repair with this student due to the time limited nature of the semester-long class. Participant

Eight's example is one where she was in both the role of a supervisor and the role of a teacher with this student.

> Participant 8: "There was one in Multicultural where we had this flaming Trumper and he was pretty belligerent in class, and he and I had a lot of one-on-one meetings. And I don't think that we were ever fully okay. He was pretty uninterested in taking responsibility for his part in the dynamic. That's the only one I can think of... Yeah, for sure. They're just, I think, we weren't going to get there. I was a communist in his mind. We both tried. I think otherwise… I mean, I'm sure there's students that left unhappy with me, but not that I know of."

Administrative Supervision. Participant Nine also illustrates a *property* of **persistent rupture** which is when supervisees only engage their supervisors in *administrative supervision*. *Administrative supervision* is when supervisees avoid disclosing challenges that they have clinically, and work to shift the focus of supervision to administrative tasks or only showing their best work. This *property* began to take shape in Round One analysis but became a *property* on its own with the following quote. *Administrative supervision* is in direct tension with *vulnerable supervisee disclosure*, where supervisees take risks and share challenging clinical content with supervisors, even things they aren't proud of. When this happens, Participant Nine knows that there is something missing in the supervision relationship that's persistently blocking the supervisee's ability to share vulnerably with the supervisor, and that repair is needed.

> Participant 9: "Yup! [Supervisees leaning toward administrative supervision is] typically not a good sign. It's good to see good stuff, and it's also good to see not good stuff, because we all have not good stuff. It doesn't matter, and I've realized that now. Like there's still times I meet with, a supervisee or a student and I'm like, 'That probably

wasn't good.' And that's okay, it happens, it happens. If I'm seeing things that are the best

you could possibly ever ask for all the time, it's not reality."

In summary, the **outcomes of questioning** that emerged in round one, restructured and

expanded to include *returning to the tasks of supervision* and begins to speak to the processes

that supervisors go through as they manage competency questioning.

Process Analysis

    Processes leading to returning to the tasks of supervision.

    As Round Two analysis developed, there was a clear process that supervisors tapped into

when their competence was questioned in supervision in order to *return to the tasks of*

supervision. Once supervisors **perceived questioning** from their supervisees, they found

themselves moving between **Bracketing, Grounding in Psychological Safety, Attending to**

Power, and **Attuning to Supervisee Needs**. Each of the supervisors in Round Two discussed

attending to each of the four **categories** once their competence was questioned to be able to

Return to Tasks of Supervision. If the processes of **grounding in psychological safety,**

bracketing, attending to power, and **attuning to supervisee needs** weren't resolved

successfully or were interrupted, these supervisors experienced *persistent rupture* in the

supervision relationship, and supervision became focused on the rupture rather than the clinical

tasks of supervision.

    Participant Eight discusses needing to find her footing in supervision before supervision

can proceed. She grounds herself and then proceeds to **attune to supervisee needs** by using

transparency. She **attends to power** in the supervision relationship by *addressing the rupture* in

the relationship and offering *feedback* while *tolerating supervisee discomfort* about how the

supervisee's unprofessional communication is being received in the program. She finishes this

quote by stating that she had to notice and **bracket** her own responses in order for supervision to proceed and for her to give helpful feedback.

> Participant 8: "Usually it's being really transparent with them. So much of that process can feel kind of unconscious or subconscious where it's not spoken. It's something that's felt. And so, then I'll become really transparent with them about what I'm doing. And why. If I'm interacting with someone who I feel isn't taking responsibility for themselves. I'm gonna say, 'I'm not trying to put you in the hot seat. It just feels important for me that you're tuned into your responsibilities, and what you're accountable for in this dynamic. And I'm and I'm feeling you're not taking responsibility for that.' To give them the opportunity of like, either they're accountable enough that hearing that will catch them. Like, 'Oh, no, I do want to be accountable. Here's the ways that I'm accountable.' Or I'll start to see more defenses, more deflection, more lashing out. That says to me, 'Okay, this is this is really somebody who struggles to take responsibility in this way.' I had a meeting with that same student, but it was the very first meeting we had before we knew how bad it was going to be, and I had given her feedback… She sent to me a really rude email and I had given her feedback on that, and she was not accepting my feedback, and essentially at our meeting, she kept saying, 'I can't take responsibility for your feelings. If you decided to feel upset about my email, that's not my responsibility.' What I said to her was, 'The expression that you're using right now to me is a deflection of responsibility. My feelings are fine. I can tend to those on my own. I know how to do that. What I'm responding to is a dispositional issue. Your behavior is inappropriate and doesn't align with what I need to see in counseling students, particularly right off the bat. You're coming in real hot, real fast. And I need you to understand what the boundaries of our

relationship are and what level of professionalism is expected in this program, and interacting with me in that way is not appropriate.' But in order to say that. I had to notice, 'I'm getting confused, I'm feeling this is my fault. I'm feeling disoriented.' And then point out what I'm observing and point out what I need."

In the above example, Participant Eight describes how she attends to all four categories: **grounding in psychological safety, bracketing, attending to power,** and **attuning to supervisee needs.**

Participant Nine discusses his process of attending to all of the **categories** when his competence is questioned in the following quote. When his competency is questioned, he first takes a breath and reminds himself that he doesn't need to attend to the questioning immediately—he has time to **ground himself in psychological safety.** He integrates **attending to power** through *consultation*, **bracketing** his *defensiveness,* **attunement to supervisee needs** using *validation and empathy,* and reminds himself that *competency questioning is expected* and to **ground himself in psychological safety.** He finishes by looking for <u>vulnerable supervisee disclosure</u> to indicate that they have **returned to the tasks of supervision.**

Participant 9: "I think [rupture due to competency questioning] initially could turn into that, like it could turn into something detrimental. But I think, like reminding myself in the moment, like 'All right, you don't have to respond to this now.' There's not the immediacy factor of like, if your competence is questioned, you don't have to defend it and address it right at that moment. It's okay to—I don't want to say work around it but find a way to come back to that collaborative place with the Supervisee. Talk about it with another professional, and then loop back to it the next time. Because I think for me, I know the initial reaction. I want to defend myself, but if I jump to that every time, then

it's gonna look like I'm constantly like, 'Hey! You can't question me!' But I think it's natural for a supervisee to have some questions about who is supervising them. So, I have to check that as well like, 'Hey, that's gonna happen.' You know it doesn't necessarily mean they think I'm an idiot, but that's my own inferiority and negative self-talk. If somebody questions my competence, then that means I'm an idiot. But I have to check myself like I'm almost doing my own CBT counseling in my mind like, just because someone questions your competence or is questioning your background does not mean you are a poor supervisor. So, it's almost like doing your own counseling to make sure that the relationship [is maintained]. So, it's almost like at a moment's glance you have to be introspective enough to know. 'Oh! Hmm! [This doesn't mean I'm a bad supervisor].' And for now, let's go back to it. Be tactful. You need to circle back and read it. That's okay. So, it doesn't necessarily turn into a missed opportunity, I guess. But you can still circle back…I think it's similar to counseling, you know, if something gets hurt in a relationship with a client similar to a supervisee, they may start to share less with you, they might become more defensive. Things feel more closed off. It's like this intuition as a counselor. You start to feel the nonverbals of the of the client, similarly, start to feel the nonverbals of the supervisee. Like they might shut down. They might not be as vulnerable, or be willing to share, what they might consider a bad client clip, but I think if a repair happens, they're gonna (like with a client) they're gonna talk about deeper stuff. Be more vulnerable with you. Be more genuine and honest and authentic and be willing to go back to sharing mistakes or things that didn't go so well.

He monitors the rupture and looks for vulnerable supervisee disclosure to indicate that a rupture has occurred and that the focus of supervision has ***returned to the tasks of supervision.***

Participant Ten outlined a very similar process. He begins by noticing and **bracketing** his *defensiveness* and *tolerates supervisee discomfort* so that he can use *validation and empathy* to **attune to supervisee needs.** He **attends to power** in the relationship by *addressing the rupture* and *uses counseling skills* to find out what need the supervisee is expressing. He **grounds himself in psychological safety** by reminding himself of the *supervisee factors* at play (supervisee developmental level) and then *returns to the tasks of supervision.*

> Participant 10: "So, I think my initial feeling, (when particularly challenged in a way that makes me feel like I'm incompetent, or whether they're calling me incompetent) my initial reaction is a very defensive one. Usually, I can feel if my face starts to get warm, that's an indicator that I need to stop and not say what I'm thinking out loud. So, I don't. My face will start to get warm. Usually that's like adrenaline or whatever. But I'll have to say, 'All right, let's pause and come back to this. I want you to tell me why this won't work. You told me why I can't come up with a good idea. But I want you to tell me why this won't work.' And I'm going to come back, and we'll talk more about why I think it does, and if we can come to a middle ground, we will. But really like that, I have to time it out when my face is hot. That's not the time for me to be, Mr. Supervisor… they're not going to be in the interpersonal developmental processes I'm looking for. So [I'm] like, 'Let's think about it. Come back in a day, an hour, twenty minutes, whatever.' And usually it just takes me a second to reframe. Like, the words are attacking me, but I don't think the intention is to say, 'Hey, you're an idiot, but I want to learn from you.' So, usually once I take that time out, it's easy to say like, 'Okay, this is something just like if a client does it.' There's something going on here that's causing fear, confusion-- something in in their situation. I'm giving them a minute to figure it out. I've got to put

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on my counselor hat and ask questions that will help me find that out. But that's what I've got to do. So usually, I just get a drink of water or whatever, come back, and then we can have that conversation, and then from there it's just the same probing questions you would ask to a client."

AV: **"**You become aware of that emotional response, you bracket it, and then you slide into that counselor role."

Participant 10: **"**Maybe give up some of the power and like move into more of like a curious spot rather than like, 'This is just what we're going to do.' 'What sore spot has been touched on me?' Uh, and for some reason it's harder. If a client questions my competence, I can sit there with that, and I don't need the break. We can just kinda roll with it. When a staff member— a co-worker, does it, there's a much stronger internal response. Fortunately, they're not doing a paid session, so we can take a break and come back to it. I don't know why there's that that difference in response. But yeah, so I have to take that step back, and then re-engage from a different mindset. Which I remember that I'm shaping someone who none of this stuff makes any sense to quite yet."

Just like Participants Eight and Nine, Participant Ten attends to all four essential **categories** when addressing competency questioning in supervision.

Participant Two describes her process addressing competency questioning in the following quote. She **perceived questioning** when her competence to be a supervisor was questioned by a site supervisor based upon their experience with one of her supervisees. When describing what happened for her, she begins by stating that *systemic hostility* influenced the rupture. Another factor that she took into consideration when **grounding in psychological safety**

were *supervisee factors*. She **attended to power** in the supervision relationship by *addressing the rupture*.

> Participant 2: **"**How do I know when a repair has happened? Okay, so I can think of one big rupture where a supervisee… (again. I had no departmental support and no support from my dean). And well, I never said anything. There was six of them. The group had picked up on like, [my feeling as a supervisor that] I'm just gonna get the hell out of [this job]. Like, I'm just gonna quit, because I'm not gonna stick around for this. I can't take that kind of pressure at work. And one of the supervisees went to their site and was a little bit of a hot mess, and the site was like 'Yo. What's your problem?' And the Supervisee said, 'I'm afraid that my supervisor at the school is gonna quit. Like I'm afraid that she's gonna leave, and I don't want her to go because we're gonna end up with the sucky supervisor and blah blah blah.' And I then got a phone call from that site that was like, 'I don't know what's going on at your school, but you better get it together because your trainee is not performing at my site.' and I'm like, 'Fuck me! You gotta be kidding me with this.' So, I said to the supervisee, I was like, 'Yeah, I want to talk to you after class.' And this person was a veteran as well. They were in their late thirties at that time, and I was probably maybe mid-forties, and like she was a tough broad, and I liked her quite a bit. And I said, 'You know, what did you say to your supervisor?' And they were like, 'What are you talking about?' And I'm like, 'So I already know what you said to your supervisor, because I got a phone call, and I need to know what it is that you said, because I got to fix things over there.' And that supervisee got super pissed that the information wasn't confidential that they shared with their other supervisor. And now they're pissed at me for addressing it. 'Dude. What are you saying at your site? That I'm

getting a phone call from your supervisor.' And I would say that was a little bit of a rupture in the relationship because I think we went from having a very good relationship to having about six weeks of 'Should I say something? Should I not say something?' I just carried on as normal and they came back around."

She continues to say that she had to **bracket** her initial feelings of anger in order to maintain consistency in her supervision group. Participant Two has a ***high value of supervision*** and didn't let the rupture disrupt from the process of supervision.

Participant 2: "You know, I start off with the same three questions, every supervision group: like a fun item. And I kept all that stuff the same. I kept the rotation the same. I kept the case presentations—everything— I kept the same. I really just kind of invited them to come back in by being steady, you know. Uh, and they eventually came back around, and I think everything ended well. I am still in touch with them, and they're out of school… I talk to them about once a month. They invited me to their wedding. Like stuff like that, so I believe that things have been repaired. I just carried on as normal and tried not to be weird, like I had to bracket myself at the door because I was pissed. I was pissed about the way that that went down. I was irate when I got that phone call from the other site. Like 'This is what your trainee is saying. If you're going to quit, quit. But we can't have a trainee not being able to keep their shit together because they're afraid that you're going to leave.' So yeah, I was mad. I was mad, mad, mad."

AV**: "**So, you bracketed that anger at the door. You walked in, and you were like just business, as usual. What contributed to your decision not to address it after that first conversation?"

Participant 2: "So, the person was a veteran. There was quite a bit of PTSD that was going on with that person. They had a service dog and everything. I left the benefit of the doubt with the student. You know, this is somebody who wasn't twenty-two years old. This was somebody who's in their thirties. They had seen combat twice, and I left it. Something told me. Just leave it alone. They need to sit in their feelings. They need to be pissed off at me. They need to be upset. Obviously, I'm not leaving because I'm still here, and I'm still here fourteen years later. So, I think some of those things contributed to, 'We're going to talk about this one time.' The other thing is, we had that conversation outside of the classroom. We had that conversation outside of the building, out away from the building like on a park bench—somewhere else on campus. I think that also made a little bit easier. And, the student went in a different direction, and I went like in the other direction when the conversation was over. So, it was a pretty clean break after that conversation. My expectation is that things kind of are going to put themselves back together. I think it was just at the end of that conversation. Just chop like cut, and we're moving on. We're doing something different today, and hopefully we can get back where we were, which we did so. I think what was helpful was to bracket anger; was to have a plan of how to address this to begin with. The second part was, I wasn't going to address it in the classroom or in the supervision group. Third part was when we were able to part after the conversation we went in opposite directions. It wasn't like we were walking to our cars together, and then trying to be fake like nice. [We went] in opposite directions after that conversation. I make my trainees change seats every week. Now we have like a conference room, but I don't let people sit in the same seat. So, at some point everybody has to sit next to me. And I think that also helped in some kind of random way. So maybe

it wasn't like whatever rotation we were on, you know, person a is in seat one this person

may have started off, maybe in seat three. So, by the time that they ended up in the seat

that was next to me, which was Seat Number Six, because I was Seven. They had a little

bit of time to reflect and think about. 'How do they feel about the relationship?' And, 'Yo,

do you want another thing in your life at your age that you're pissed off about, or do you

just want things to be better?' So, I think it was responsibility on both parts actually to

kind of leave it alone. It wasn't just me."

Participant Two **attuned to supervisee needs** by recognizing that they needed some time

to have their own emotional process and continued to assess the rupture. Eventually, they

returned to the tasks of supervision through supervisor consistency and transparency. Again, in

this example, each category was represented in Participant Two's process—**grounding in**

psychological safety, **bracketing**, **attuning to supervisee needs**, and **attending to power.**

Processes leading to programmatic mistrust.

Participant Two experienced ***systemic hostility*** that intersected with supervisee rupture.

She attempted to ***address the rupture*** but was unable to without the support from her department.

Participant Two described the ***systemic hostility*** being so invasive that she ***considered leaving***

the field.

Participant 2: "There were contextual things that were happening in the department. I

knew that I did not have the support of my dean with either one of those students. And

you know, there's not always going to be people that always like you. People can still

work in our field. You can still have space to work together, even if you don't like it.

Those two [supervisees], they just hated me inherently. I don't even think that they liked

me. I think that they actually hated me. So, the context would be. The department was not

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supportive. The dean was not supportive. And I would try to call out behavior, and then I would get no result from the trainees. So, then I would take it to the next person and be like 'Yo, I'm having this consistent issue with this person.' I'm suggesting, you know, 'Do this theoretical orientation and technique.' And the student says, 'Yeah, I'm just not going to do that.' [*Participant 2 to her department*] 'Can I maybe get a hand from you, my counterpart?' And the psychological unsafety would occur when I had no other support. But I knew that I was going in that room with a person who hated my guts. And they tried to do everything that they could to throw me under the bus. Everything, everything possible. One of them filed sexual harassment charges. And all made up nonsense. The other one tried to say that I was racist. And what was great about both of those was; I'm a title nine investigator. And on my campus, if anybody tries anything fishy, I like, pop up out of a garbage can. I'm like 'That was sexual harassment. You can't say that to people. That's just wrong.' So, accusing me of sexual harassment was a punch in the gut and accusing me of being a racist, I've been part of DEI initiative since two thousand and two. So, when they brought both of those charges, people were like, 'Wait.' Nobody believed any of that. But the fact that things got that bad, and I was still stuck with them as trainees… There wasn't anybody else to give them to, and the school wouldn't let me kick them out, either. So, I have one [supervisee] now. He's on his way out. Like the paperwork is in place, the lawyers are involved. He's not suitable to be a professional. He makes me feel very, very psychologically unsafe. So, it's the covertness, right, that happens in those kinds of situations. Um, it is the lack of support for me: either your department, your dean, or your colleagues, and then people escalate, and you know that it's escalating, but yet no way for you to get out of it because you're the supervisor. …

The group had picked up on like, [my feeling as a supervisor that] I'm just gonna get the hell out of [this job]. Like, I'm just gonna quit, because I'm not gonna stick around for this. I can't take that kind of pressure at work."

The **systemic hostility** distracted so profoundly from the **tasks of supervision** that **programmatic mistrust** occurred.

Processes leading to leaving the field.

In the following example, Participant Eight describes a time when **supervisee factors** required the program to engage in gatekeeping practices resulting in the supervisee **leaving the field.** Participant Eight describes her process between these four categories. She initially **perceives questioning** during a remediation process when **competency questioning is expected**. Then, she assessed **supervisee factors** that were influencing her ability to experience **grounding in psychological safety** through her *supervision training and experience*. In this case, the sustained **supervisee factors** were such that supervision could not occur because the supervisee and Participant Eight couldn't **return to the tasks of supervision**.

> Participant 8: "So, I would say remediation is a place that [competency questioning] shows up, so it seems it feels common when we're questioning a student's readiness or student dispositions. That tends to be the time where all of a sudden, our competence is being questioned. So, it feels oftentimes a kind of a defensive reaction versus getting really explicit feedback of, 'This is what you [supervisor] did, and this is why I don't trust your competence.' So, specific example. I had a student last year, who was exhibiting signs of a narcissistic personality disorder, who we ended up removing from the program at the end of the first fall semester. She had a lot of issues, but the one that sort of pushed it over the line where we had to act on it was, she was refusing to use feeling reflections

in the skills class because they were unethical and inappropriate and imposing. She would

continue to come back to class and talk about it in her journals, about how our training

methods were unethical. Yeah, just continued to question that. We knew what we were

doing— that we had the right to be asking her to do these things and that she knew better.

So yeah, us being unethical was a big frame that she used a lot, and then, when we gave

her the feedback and gave her the opportunity for remediation, she refused to take that

opportunity and left the program. And then, like, proceeded to talk about how

inappropriate and unprofessional we were, and how we let her go. So that's sort of the

most recent and extreme example that I can think of. … I think, when a student has

primitive defenses, that affects my sense of groundedness. So, when I see a lot of

projection or projective identification, or splitting, or being duplicitous or deceptive,

whether they feel that they need to be or not, that is where I lose my footing a little bit. I

think I've interacted with it enough now that I can feel it when it's happening. The

description I always give to students when they're working with primitive defenses is, if

you walk out of a room and you feel like you've lost track of where the floor and the

ceiling are, you've been interacting with primitive defenses. So, I can feel that pretty

quickly if I start to feel confused in a situation that doesn't make sense that I'm confused.

And then I'm like, okay, 'There's something coming at me.' That indicates somebody

who has a, has difficulty taking a responsibility for themselves and has difficulty

observing themselves. And so that's where I can lose my footing. But once I notice that's

what's happening, I can find it again. But it just takes more mindfulness, and more

breathing and grounding to remember this person is again, consciously or unconsciously,

trying to pull me away from my reality. I'm going to choose to stay in it. So that's I would

say, when I become less grounded. And that's how I re-ground. I think that's I think that

kind of covers it."

Processes leading to persistent rupture.

The organizational structure that emerged as round two analysis progressed led us to look

back at round one and analyze for process. Participant Seven's interview illustrated a ***process***

leading to persistent rupture. She describes a scenario in which she needed to make a decision

about her supervisee's caseload, and the subsequent rupture was never resolved—it became

persistent rupture demonstrated by the supervisee's focus on *administrative supervision* and

avoidance of *vulnerable supervisee disclosure.* The supervisor worked hard to **bracket** her initial

surprise when her competence was questioned. The supervision relationship was interrupted by

the rupture in the supervision dyad, and it wasn't addressed.

Participant 7: "So, when I saw your study, I was like, yeah, this really hits home…I'm the

supervisor. [I assign] the caseloads and priorities of who we see, and my decision was

challenged [by my supervisee] … I assumed she was trained like I was trained. I made a

lot of assumptions about how she understood the supervisor relationship, the

organization, really like how it ran and everything… There was a member of our

community who lost a daughter and it's a very small community. So, we have to be

careful with dual relationships or who knows who and stuff. There was a lot of times

where [dual relationships] happen, you know, because it's a small community. And we are

the only (besides behavioral health at the hospital) we're the only providers. So, there was

the parent of the daughter who died, the teen that died, who wanted counseling. But [that

parent] wanted it only with my supervisee whose husband works with the other [parent of

the teen that died]. So, there were all these social layers because they socialize together.

My supervisee and the client's husband socialize together. [I said to my supervisee,] 'You know, there's other options. You're not the only option. Like, this is not a good idea. I don't think this is a good idea.' So, I thought we were good. I had this conversation with the [supervisee], you know, 'I don't think this is a good idea… I don't think this should happen. This is not great.' So, I thought we were clear. [My supervisee] really wanted to help this person because [the potential client was] distressed when [my supervisee] talked to them... It just kind of spiraled. And then [it got to] to the point where the potential client was (of course she's grieving) mean and insulting to the [supervisee]. So, then the [supervisee] was like mad at me and it was just a mess… There's still not great trust between her and I. I'm trying to work on it… I was floored because this is somebody who, it was just her and I for a long time, because we were so short-staffed, and we were always short-staffed. So, it was just her and I, and we're like in the trenches… We had a conversation where basically, I thought we were on the same page that you weren't comfortable seeing this person. So, I think she was offended that I made that decision… And she was like, 'I should just see her.' My [supervisee] was like, 'I should just see her.' And I was like, 'No, definitely not… We have other options for this person.' It's still something I'm trying to, um, recover from in terms of the working relationship… The communication is a lot more formal, like short and curt. Or if I have supervision with her, she doesn't seem to seek [feedback], besides the administrative and like organizational systemic things. She doesn't really seek any clinical conversation with me anymore like she used to. It doesn't feel like there's trust and liability to be like vulnerable and talk about a case or things you're struggling with or things you're doing well on. Um, it just

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seems to be more like '[My supervisor] wants to meet with me. So, I'll just check the box and get it over with.'"

Participant Seven had several moments with this supervisee where she believed that they were on the same page (she was trying to be **attuned to supervisee needs)** but was *surprised* at the supervisee's reaction. This lack of **attunement** for the supervisor being on the same page with the supervisee led to rupture that was not addressed. This experience between Participant Seven and her supervisee illustrates a process that led to ***persistent rupture*** in the supervision relationship.

Summary of Findings from Round Two Analysis

This chapter outlined the findings from analysis of a second round of interviews with participants. Four second round interviews were conducted—three with new participants who were selected using theoretical sampling, and one participant from round one. The four **categories** from round one analysis were reshuffled and expanded upon to illustrate six round two **categories.** Along with illustrating the experiences from round two participants, processes began to emerge and were described in the second part of this chapter. As processes began to be identified and become clear, round one data was analyzed for process data and incorporated into the discussion of emerging process. In the next chapter, I will discuss the integration and combination of first round analysis and round two analysis.

CHAPTER 5: Building Bridges: Supervisors' Management of Competency Questioning

Ten participants were interviewed about having their competence questioned in supervision. The following chapter outlines a theory about what happens for supervisors when their competence is questioned in clinical supervision. Once supervisors **perceive questioning,** they navigate four distinct **categories** in response to questioning. When interruptions occur in any of the **categories**, outcomes in supervision resulted in **programmatic mistrust**, **leaving the field**, and **persistent rupture**. Generally, when supervisors effectively attend to each of the four categories, they **returned to the tasks of supervision** with their supervisees. There are some examples of when **returning to the tasks of supervision** is not the goal. In situations where factors that are outside supervisors' control become prevalent, like <u>sustained supervisee factors</u>, a result of supervisees **leaving the field** through appropriate, ethical gatekeeping becomes the objective.

The Bridge

The theory of supervisors managing competency questioning is depicted in the conceptual map of a bridge (see Figure 3). This illustration depicts how each of the six categories relate to the goal of returning to the tasks of supervision. Supervisors begin their journey with competency questioning when they **perceive questioning**. They then have the opportunity to **ground in psychological safety**, engage in **bracketing**, **attune to supervisee needs**, and **attend to power** in the pursuit of returning to the tasks of supervision. If there is an interruption in any of those four essential components, the supervisors encountered outcomes resulting in *programmatic mistrust, leaving the field,* and *persistent rupture*.
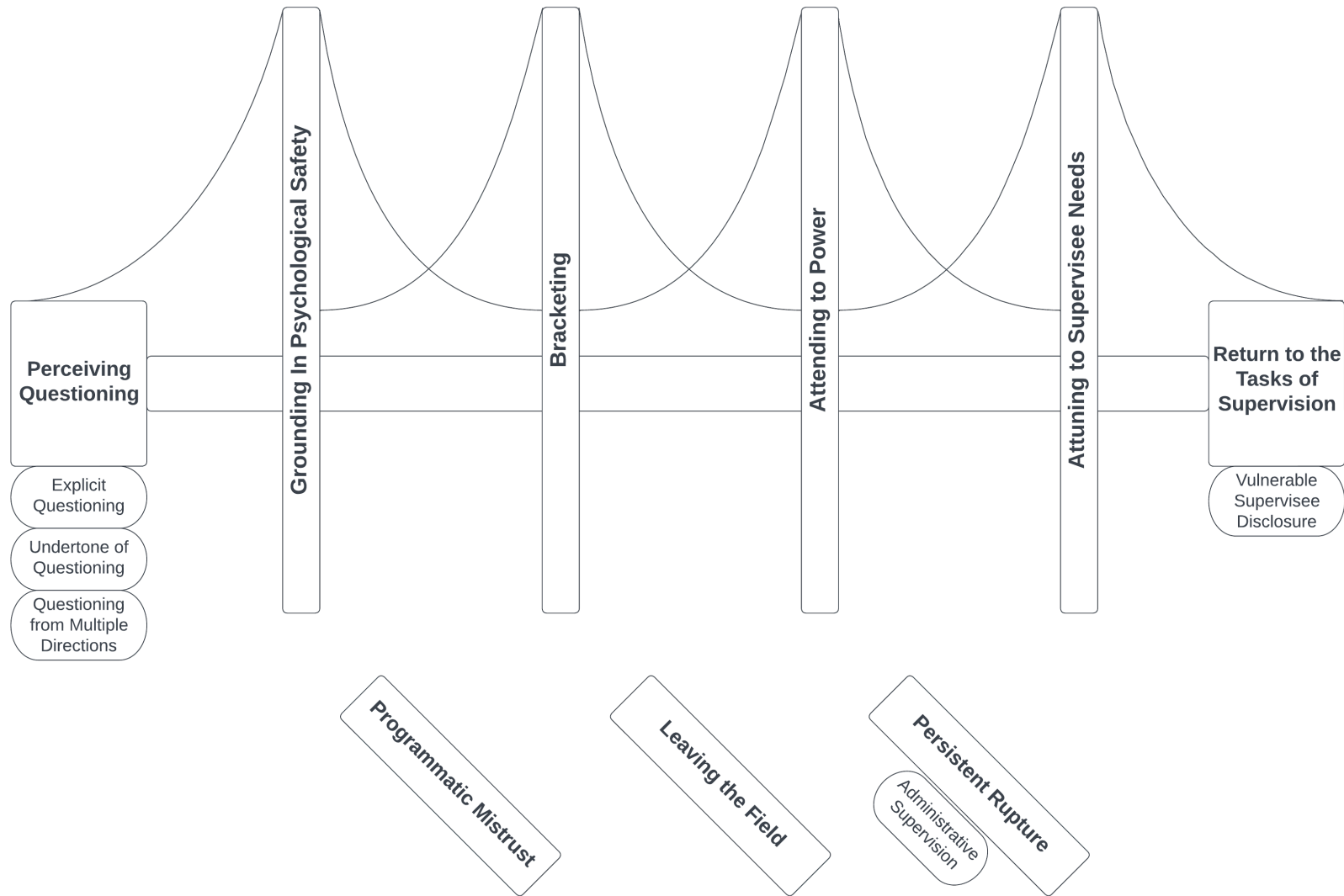
Figure 3 The Bridge

Perceiving Questioning

The first experience participants identify is **perceiving** their competence being questioned by their supervisees. This perception happened for participants in several different ways, sorted into *subcategories*. The *subcategories* that emerged were *explicit questioning, undertone of questioning,* and *questioning from multiple directions.*

Explicit Questioning

One-way participants experienced their competence being questioned was through *explicit questioning.* This type of competency questioning came in the form of supervisees explicitly saying that they weren't sure that their supervisor could handle the tasks of supervision or understood what the supervisees were bringing to them.

Undertone of Questioning

The predominant way that participants discussed **perceiving questioning** was by experiencing an *undertone of questioning* from their supervisees. Several participants identified supervisees using an *undertone* that supervisors interpreted as questioning their competence. This *undertone* is defined as a general feeling of their competence being questioned that was indirectly communicated by their supervisees. Some non-direct behaviors that supervisors experienced as an *undertone of questioning* included passive aggressive comments, statements that the supervisor "didn't understand," and receiving personal verbal attacks from supervisees about a supervisor's choices or identity outside of the supervision relationship. For example, one supervisor received pushback and judgement from students regarding her holiday travel plans because their views on the safety and ethics of travel during the COVID-19 pandemic were different than the supervisor's.

Questioning from Multiple Directions

Finally, supervisors **perceived questioning** when they received *questioning from multiple directions.* Supervisors experienced *questioning from multiple directions* when they received pushback from site supervisors, on-site office administrators, or other faculty. One supervisor even identified feeling good about supervision in the moment with her supervisees, and then frustration when students would return the next week after being influenced against her by other faculty.

Once participants **perceived questioning**, they then moved onto the bridge, supported by four **categories** that require attention when managing competency questioning that **returns to the tasks of supervision**.

Grounding In Psychological Safety

The first essential component supervisors attend to when successfully managing competency questioning is **grounding in psychological safety**. The definition of **grounding in psychological safety** is the combination of factors that influence a supervisor's ability to feel secure in their role as a supervisor. Participants articulated several *subcategories* to describe their experiences establishing a sense of **psychological safety,** as well as barriers to their security in the supervision relationship. Specific *subcategories* of this **category** are illustrated later in this chapter. When supervisors are unable to **ground in psychological safety**, the supervision relationship can be interrupted and halt the process of effectively **returning to the tasks of supervision.**

Bracketing

The second essential component in supervisors' quest to **return to the tasks of supervision** is **bracketing**. **Bracketing** is the process that supervisors go through to manage

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their emotional response to competency questioning. Managing these emotional reactions allows them to refocus their attention on the supervisee. Participants identified several different emotions that emerged for them as well as some barriers that could interrupt the process of bracketing in the quest to **return to the tasks of supervision**. Some common emotions that emerged were *surprise*, and *defensiveness*. These *subcategories* will be expounded upon later in this chapter.

Attending to Power

Attending to power is the next essential component stabilizing the bridge. This **category** is defined as a supervisor's experience and process managing the power hierarchy in the supervision relationship. When a supervisor can successfully manage the power imbalance, it can smooth the path to **returning to the tasks of supervision** and allow for successful progression across the bridge. When power is managed successfully, the power hierarchy appropriately operates in service of the supervisee's growth, providing structure to the supervision relationship. The five *subcategories* of **attending to power** are illustrated as this chapter progresses.

Attunement to Supervisee Needs

The final essential component supervisors need to attend to is **attunement to supervisee needs**. This is defined as a supervisor's ability to identify and respond to the needs a supervisee is expressing through their competency questioning. Supervisors may attend to supervisee needs through processes like *role induction*, using *transparency*, or revisiting *informed consent*. *Subcategories* of **attunement to supervisee needs** are discussed at the end of this chapter.

Returning to Tasks of Supervision

When a supervisor's competence is questioned, the optimal **outcome of questioning** is **returning to tasks of supervision.** Returning to the tasks of supervision occurs when a

supervisor's perceived questioning is managed and the supervision relationship adjusts to focus

on tasks of supervision (such as assisting a supervisee in the integration of a theoretical

orientation into their counselor identity) rather than needing to focus on the supervisee's

perspective of the competence of the supervisor. Supervisors assess that they have **returned to**

tasks of supervision when their supervisees can offer *vulnerable supervisee disclosure*.

Supervisors view this level of disclosure as an indication that supervisees trust in the process of

supervision enough to be vulnerable with their struggles, victories, and development.

Interruptions Progressing Across the Bridge

When progress across the bridge to **returning to the tasks of supervision** is interrupted,

three alternative **outcomes of questioning** may occur.

Programmatic Mistrust

The first outcome that participants identified is ***programmatic mistrust.*** This

Supervision Outcome *subcategory* is defined as a supervisor losing the trust of the system in

which they work. When the program (including supervisees) loses trust in a supervisor,

returning to the tasks of supervision becomes impossible and supervision shifts to working to

gain or regain trust. ***Programmatic mistrust*** can manifest from a program or department through

systemic hostility and also could arise as a result of distinct actions of ***persistent defensiveness***

by the supervisor. ***Programmatic mistrust*** can evolve from multiple places—it can be earned

from the supervisor and also can be a projection of the system in which supervision takes place.

Leaving the Field

Processes of competency questioning can also result in ***leaving the field.*** This can occur

for both supervisors and supervisees, often involving gatekeeping for supervisees. When

supervisees ***leave the field*** as a result of gatekeeping, supervisees are demonstrating *a sustained*

supervisee factor (such as persistent aggression) that cannot be reasonably resolved in the context of counselor education. Additionally, some supervisors discussed their own desire to leave the field after their competence was questioned. These participants discussed leaving academia entirely as a result of encountering *systemic hostility* in their workplace.

Persistent Rupture

The final potential outcome, ***persistent rupture,*** exists when the process of **returning to the tasks of supervision** is interrupted and no ***repair of the rupture*** occurs. Supervisors reported identifying ***persistent rupture*** when their supervisees stopped *vulnerable supervisee disclosure* and supervisors shifted the focus of supervision to *administrative supervision*, avoiding the supervision tasks of providing feedback on the development of a supervisee's clinical skills and focusing on logistics such as scheduling or how to record counseling hours.

Zooming in On the Essential Components

The following conceptual map outlines the essential components that supervisors attend to when their competence is questioned in supervision. These essential concepts are ***grounding in psychological safety, bracketing, attending to power,*** and ***attuning to supervisee needs.*** When there are interruptions to any of these ***subcategories,*** participants weren't able to **return to the tasks of supervision.** Figure 4 illustrates a zoomed in version of the components that make up each of the four essential components as well as details of **perceiving questioning** and **outcomes of questioning**.
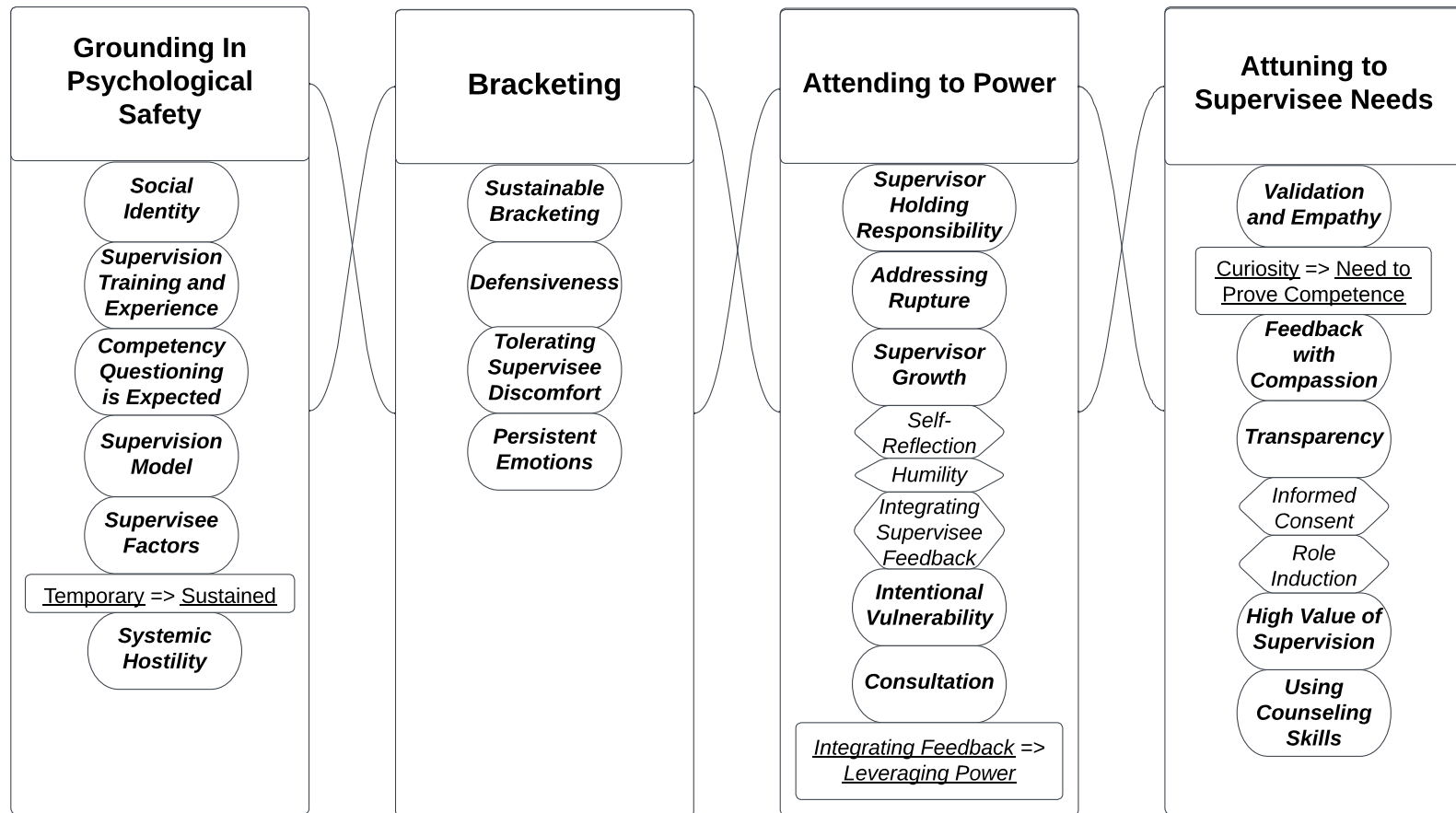
Figure 4 Zooming in on Essential Concepts

Subcategories of Grounding in Psychological Safety

The *subcategories* of **grounding in psychological safety** illustrate factors influencing supervisors' process of seeking psychological safety in their identity as a supervisor: *social identity*, *supervision training and experience*, *competency questioning is expected*, integration of a *supervision model*, *supervisee factors* (both <u>temporary</u> and <u>sustained</u>) and finally, *systemic hostility*. Alongside discussing these factors that influence a supervisor's psychological safety, this **category** also contains examples of barriers to **grounding in psychological safety.**

Social Identity

Participants identified many different *properties* of their **social identities** that influence the power that they walk into the supervision room with. **Social identities,** such as *age, gender, location, professional role and specialty, race, and socioeconomic status* impact how supervisees view and treat supervisors. These social locations can heighten systemic barriers supervisors encounter and have detrimental effects on a supervisor's sense of psychological safety. When a supervisor is spending energy actively combating microaggressions, they may have less energy to attend to supervision. For example, one participant was told by her supervisee that she (the supervisor) reminded her supervisee of "the lady on the pancake box." Her supervisee also told her that she speaks "so smart." This racism influenced the power hierarchy in the supervision relationship and significantly inhibited her sense of psychological safety in her role as the supervisor in this supervision dyad.

Supervision Training and Experience

The amount and type of **supervision training and experience** that a supervisor has can influence how supervisors see themselves in their development as a supervisor. Similarly, the amount of training and experience that supervisees perceive their supervisors to have also can

influence the supervisee's perspective on their supervisor's competence. Participants discussed feeling less able to ground in psychological safety when they had less training and experience. For example, one participant stated that she noticed that her competence was questioned far more in her first and second years as a supervisor in comparison to when she had more training and experience. Supervisors can feel more **grounded in psychological safety** when they feel confident in their *supervisor training and experience.*

Competency Questioning is Expected

When supervisors respond to competency questioning from an understanding that some degree of *competency questioning is expected* in a healthy supervision relationship, it allows for supervisors to plan for and consider how they will respond to questioning and anticipate it. *Transparency* about *competency questioning* as an *expected* supervision process can influence how supervisees question competence and may enable them to *explicitly* state what their needs are rather than indirectly communicating. When *competency questioning is expected* as a part of a supervision relationship, supervisors can respond to this questioning less personally, allowing them to make the competency questioning about a supervisee's needs in the supervision process, not an attack on the supervisor.

Supervision Model

Participants identified the role that subscribing to a *supervision model* played in their overall sense of security as a supervisor. When supervisors have the guiding principles of a *supervision model*, they feel supported in their tasks of supervision in a different way than if they didn't have a solid theoretical foundation to practice supervision or understand their supervisees.

Supervisee Factors

The **subcategory** of **supervisee factors** is defined as supervisee events or characteristics that position them to question the competence of a supervisor. This **subcategory** is informed by two <u>dimensions</u>: <u>temporary factors </u>and <u>sustained factors.</u>

<u>Temporary Factors</u>. <u>Temporary Factors </u>capture anything that influences a supervisee in a given moment to begin questioning. Examples of <u>temporary factors </u>include situations like a supervisee being stressed or tired during supervision. These factors are temporary in nature and generally can be quickly addressed.

<u>Sustained Factors. </u>Supervisee <u>sustained factors </u>include qualities or circumstances that supervisees bring into the supervision relationship that inhibit their ability to integrate feedback. Participants identified factors like family stress, unchecked symptoms of personality disorders, or excessive and unmanaged anxiety as <u>sustained factors </u>that influence a supervisee's ability to thrive in the role of a counselor in training.

<u>Sustained supervisee factors </u>are largely outside of the control of their supervisors and can significantly influence the supervision relationship. Participants discussed how <u>sustained factors </u>sometimes led to **persistent rupture**, and sometimes made supervisors feel hopeless about **returning to tasks of supervision**. Supervisors who worked with <u>sustained supervisee factors </u>often had a harder time **grounding in psychological safety** because they weren't in control of the repair process or were managing far bigger supervisee behaviors. For example, one supervisor discussed a <u>sustained supervisee factor </u>of aggressive communication and stated that she had to be really intentional ensuring that she was **grounded in psychological safety** in a different way than she would with other supervisees so that she could do her best to effectively supervise.

Systemic Hostility

The final *subcategory* in the **category** of **grounding in psychological safety** is *systemic hostility.* This *subcategory* is defined as when supervisors have adverse relationships with the systems that they supervise in. One supervisor described how different her sense of security in supervision is when she feels supported in her department, in contrast to the times she feels unsupported. She described an experience of focusing on building rapport with supervisees and feeling quite good about the supervision relationship. She then had to rebuild rapport every week because supervisees would come back into class after hearing the other faculty speak poorly about her. Her experience is an example of how *systemic hostility* outside the supervision relationship can significantly affect the supervision dyad.

Subcategories of Bracketing

Bracketing emerged as one of the essential components that supervisors attend to once they perceive competence questioning. Supervisors generally experienced emotional responses once their competence was questioned, and successfully **bracketing** these emotions led to an ability to attend to the other essential components of supervision. Most common emotional responses when supervisors **perceived questioning** included *defensiveness* and *surprise*. The *subcategories* of **bracketing** are *sustainable bracketing*, *defensiveness*, *tolerating supervisee discomfort* and *persistent emotions*.

Sustainable Bracketing

The *subcategory* of *sustainable bracketing* was illustrated by a supervisor's ability to bracket their emotions in a way that was sustainable. Participants acknowledged that there are some barriers to *sustainable bracketing* such as *systemic hostility.* When working to **bracket** their emotions, departmental support allows for supervisors to attend to the needs of the

supervisee rather than focusing on protecting themselves. One participant discussed a situation when bracketing was taking so much energy that it was approaching unsustainability. She stated that she felt unsupported by her dean, and the amount of energy it took to defend herself to her dean as well as provide quality supervision began taking a toll on her ability to bracket her exhaustion. She found herself feeling tempted to avoid challenging conversations with her supervisees because it was easier to reserve her energy to manage her feelings about her lack of support from her dean. Now, she feels very supported due to a change in administration and finds that it is much easier to bracket her emotions and focus on her supervisees.

Defensiveness

Defensiveness was a common experience that required bracketing when supervisors' competence was questioned. Participants discussed needing to manage *defensiveness* in order to **attune to supervisee needs**. Unbracketed *defensiveness* led to *persistent rupture* in the supervision relationship or *programmatic mistrust*. Similarly, when a supervisor experiences *programmatic mistrust, defensiveness* may not only be directed at the supervisee, but at the supervision system as a whole.

Tolerating Supervisee Discomfort

A protective skill supervisors used while bracketing was the ability to *tolerate supervisee discomfort*. When supervisees grow, sometimes they can experience discomfort as a result of being outside their comfort zone. Supervisors who can effectively *tolerate supervisee discomfort* allow themselves to be the catalyst for the discomfort of supervisee growth, without shielding themselves and supervisees from this appropriate discomfort. This *subcategory* illustrates how difficult learning to be a counselor can be and encourages supervisors to allow their supervisees to struggle with that growth, rather than trying to rescue them from being outside their comfort

zones. This struggle can actually be what supervisees need to process their own feelings and personal growth as their clinical skills grow. Supervisors who can **bracket** their own impulse to rescue their supervisees from all the uncomfortable feelings associated with growth and **attune to their supervisees' need** to have space to appropriately experience all of their emotions end up facilitating supervisee development in a different way than supervisors who avoid the discomfort associated with change.

Persistent Emotions

Finally, *persistent emotions* describe the emotional experiences supervisors have that linger after questioning and are not easily **bracketed.** These *persistent emotions* include supervisor *discomfort* such as anger, frustration, anxiety, or a feeling of inadequacy when no longer engaged in direct supervision. If these *emotions persist* without being *bracketed,* supervisors can spend so much effort managing these emotions that they aren't able to attend to other essential components of supervision. *Persistent emotions,* specifically inadequacy, can interfere with a supervisor's ability to **ground in psychological safety** as they navigate confirmation bias—looking for evidence that they are inadequate and interpreting neutral interactions as negative.

Subcategories of Attending to Power

Attending to power in the supervision relationships is an essential **category** when managing questioning. While supervisors manage the other three essential components (**grounding in psychological safety, bracketing, and attuning to supervisee needs**), they simultaneously attend to the hierarchy in the supervision relationship. The following *subcategories* illustrate several factors supervisors attend to when managing power in the supervision relationship.

Supervisor Holding Responsibility

Supervisor holding responsibility emphasizes the importance of supervisor role clarity and the power they inherently hold in the supervision dyad. This power orients the supervisor to specific and explicit responsibilities to the clients served, the supervisee, and the supervision relationship. For example, it is a supervisor's responsibility to move towards the supervisee and acknowledge the strain and tension on the supervision relationship when a supervisee is questioning the competence of the supervisor. What happens in supervision, and by extension in counseling, is the supervisor's responsibility and therefore needs to be addressed by the supervisor. When supervisors embrace these responsibilities and see themselves as able to influence the repair process, it is more likely that a repair will happen. When supervisors avoid responsibility, then the rupture usually goes unaddressed and lapses into a ***persistent rupture***.

Addressing Rupture

Rupture is something that often occurs in the supervision relationship, and competency questioning is no exception. Participants identified that it is the supervisor's responsibility to ***address rupture*** in the supervision relationship, and appropriately readdress it if it isn't resolved.

Supervisor Growth

Supervisors who are oriented toward their own growth also **attend to power** through *self-reflection, humility,* and *integration of supervisee feedback.* Participants noted that having a growth mindset about their supervision allowed them to meet supervisees and **attune to their needs** rather than getting stuck in an authoritative dynamic. This orientation toward ***supervisor growth*** isn't apologetic or self-effacing, but rather grounded in strength of learning about oneself and uncovering blind spots. Supervisors who continue to grow inspire supervisees to invest in the supervision process and grow as well.

Self-Reflection. The property of *self-reflection* emerged as a strategy that supervisors use to assess their own role and room for growth when their competence is questioned. Participants also used *self-reflection* to clearly identify their emotional responses to questioning so that they can **bracket** them when interacting with supervisees.

Humility. Some level of *humility* is also required for **supervisor growth** to occur. Supervisors that are ***transparent*** about their room to grow use *humility* to **attend to power** in the supervision relationship. *Humility* is a key part of attending to the power hierarchy so that it provides appropriate structure to **attune to supervisee needs** and consider how, as the supervisor, one may be contributing to the dynamic blocking a return to the tasks of supervision**.**

Integrating Supervisee Feedback. Soliciting and *integrating supervisee feedback* is a tool that supervisors use to **attend to power** and **attune to supervisee needs.** Supervisors who listen to the feedback that supervisees offer and strive to integrate that feedback communicate to supervisees that their needs are important to them. Eliciting feedback, not just giving feedback, communicates to supervisees that their thoughts, effort, investment and ideas on the supervision relationship matter and can be an effective strategy in managing competency questioning.

Intentional Vulnerability

Intentional vulnerability is yet another way supervisors use their own vulnerability to provide some insight into their process managing competency questioning while also **attending to power** in the supervision relationship. Using ***intentional vulnerability*** can serve the supervision relationship by aligning supervisor experiences with supervisee experiences. Participants identified how helpful ***transparency*** with ***vulnerability*** can be in aligning supervisor and supervisee in pursuit of growth rather than in an adversarial orientation. For example, one supervisor disclosed feeling tired one day during supervision, and modeled what it is like to

bracket feeling tired in a clinical role. By disclosing how she was feeling, she allowed supervisees some insight into her experience that day in supervision. Another supervisor used ***intentional vulnerability*** by disclosing that it can be uncomfortable for him to broach rupture in the supervision relationship. By acknowledging this discomfort, he gave supervisees the opportunity to join him in the discomfort and helped them know that he valued an effective supervision relationship enough to do something that feels uncomfortable (broaching rupture) in the quest for repair.

Consultation

Each participant discussed ***consultation*** as integral to the process after their competence is questioned in supervision. Supervisors disclosed that they used ***consultation*** for several purposes when managing power. Some used it to protect themselves by "getting ahead" of the competency questioning and reporting it to their superiors, while others consulted with the intention of ensuring that they were providing quality supervision to their supervisees. These differences are illustrated in the two <u>dimensions </u>of ***consultation***; <u>integrating feedback </u>and <u>leveraging power.</u>

<u>Integrating Feedback.</u> This <u>dimension</u> emerged as supervisors discussed how helpful it is for their *self-reflection* process to consult about supervision, especially their relationships with supervisees. When supervisors approach ***consultation*** with the intent of getting more feedback about how to manage competency questioning, the goal of ***consultation*** is oriented towards improving the supervision relationship. When integrating feedback, participants noted that it is important to ***consult*** with someone that they trust, who has their best interests in mind, and who is also a good supervisor.

Leveraging Power. When *consultation* is used to <u>leverage power,</u> supervisors became worried that the competency questioning put them at risk in their department. Here, participants described consulting with another supervisor who held more power than them in the system. The way that supervisors <u>leveraged power</u> was varied. One method that supervisors used was reporting what supervisees said and did to question their competence as a method of documenting the event. Supervisors also <u>leveraged power</u> using *consultation* with the intention to ask their boss to intervene on their behalf. *Consultation* to <u>leverage power</u> was usually accompanied by a *persistent emotion* of fear for participants. Supervisors who <u>leveraged power</u> through *consultation* often were seeking out a sense of self-protection in their interactions.

Subcategories of Attuning to Supervisee Needs

The final essential component for managing competency questioning is **attuning to supervisee needs**. When a supervisee questions the competence of their supervisor, they're communicating that they have a need (or needs) that aren't being met. As stated in previous chapters, there are many reasons why a supervisee may question the competence of a supervisor—some having nothing to do with the supervisor at all—and supervisees are consistently expressing an unmet need when doing so. Supervisors who can accurately **attune to supervisee needs** can address the competency questioning directly in order to preserve and repair the supervision alliance.

Validation and Empathy

The primary *subcategory* of **attuning to supervisee needs** is responding to competency questioning with *validation and empathy.* Participants noted that it became easier to understand what need the supervisee was expressing when they moved towards supervisees using *validation*

and empathy. Two *properties* of **validation and empathy** emerged; responding to supervisors with *curiosity* and supervisors' *need to prove competence*.

Curiosity. Supervisors who could access their *curiosity* after bracketing their emotions were able to uncover what supervisees were asking for when they were questioning their competence. *Curiosity,* paired with appropriate **counseling skills** (another subcategory of attuning to supervisee needs) helped supervisors establish a deeper understanding of the purpose of the questioning.

Need to Prove Competence. Contrary to using *curiosity*, supervisors who got stuck *needing to prove their competence* to supervisees found it very challenging to approach supervisees with the goal of attunement, experienced blocks in implementing **empathy and validation***,* and found themselves navigating **persistent rupture** in the supervision relationship after questioning occurred.

Feedback with Compassion

Supervisors noticed that supervisees were more willing to accept feedback when they offered it **with compassion,** especially when the supervisees had questioned their competence. Sometimes, gentle **feedback with compassion** was the need that the supervisee was expressing through their questioning. **Feedback with compassion** runs deeper than simple interventions like "sandwiching" negative feedback with positive and is more about helping supervisees know that that their supervisor is offering difficult feedback because they care about their supervisee's growth, not just to ruin their day. One participant discusses how **feedback with compassion** enabled her to give tough feedback to a supervisee in a way that he would work to integrate it. After receiving the feedback, he told her that it was really hard to hear, but that he really

appreciated knowing that it was coming from a place of compassion. He worked to integrate the feedback because he trusted that she was working in his best interest.

Transparency

Supervisors define *transparency* in the supervision relationship as a supervisor's intentional disclosure about the process of supervision, the supervisor's perspective on the supervision relationship, or the developmental stage of the supervisee. Counselor education can be a hard process for supervisees, and they can feel some discomfort about their own developmental experience. Supervisors who appropriately use *transparency* about their perspective on the supervision relationship can help supervisees **attune to their own needs** in a process that none of them have ever done before. By being *transparent* about the process of supervisee growth, as well as what they themselves are experiencing, the power differential between supervisor and supervisee can become less charged and make it easier for the supervisee to clearly communicate their needs and a supervisor to understand them. Supervisors use **attunement** to evaluate what information may be helpful to the supervisee, and then use strategies like *informed consent* and *role induction* to communicate that information.

Informed Consent. One form of *transparency* is supervisor *informed consent* about the process of supervision. Supervisors who use *informed consent* to clearly communicate that supervisor feedback is a part of the supervision process may find it easier to **attune to supervisee needs.** These supervisors are less likely to have to spend energy **bracketing** emotions like shock or surprise because they seek out feedback from their supervisees. A supervisor can also use informed consent to clearly state what their scope of practice is as a supervisor, so supervisees know what to expect. For example, one participant describes using *informed consent* to inform her supervisees about which populations she has had experiences

working with and which she hasn't so she can help her supervisees find expert resources about working with those populations from other sources.

  Role Induction. Role induction is another tool that supervisors use when being **transparent** with their supervisees. Supervisors sometimes manage competency questioning by teaching supervisees about their role as a supervisee and the scope of supervision. When supervisors use *role induction,* they help supervisees establish clarity about the feedback process, the role of the supervisor and the role of the supervisee. They **attune to supervisee needs** to understand the roles and expectations of a supervision relationship they may have never been in before.

High Value of Supervision

  Supervisors who communicate that they value supervision as an essential pedagogical strategy in counselor development view **attuning to supervisee needs** as vital to the health of the supervision alliance. Supervisors who treat supervision as something of high value are attuning to the supervisee need of growth and view supervision as one of the main catalysts in that growth. As such, the health of the supervision relationship can become important to both the supervisor and the supervisee.

Using Counseling Skills

  When it came to **attuning to supervisee needs**, participants observed witnessing other supervisors abandoning their counseling skills when they become supervisors. While supervision and counseling are certainly different tasks and require different skills, supervisors who are great clinicians have the relevant counseling skills to be able to **attune to supervisee needs.** These supervisors intentionally demonstrate and use their counseling skills in the supervision relationship. For example, supervisors who can effectively use conceptualization to **attune to**

supervisee needs not only uncover what a supervisee needs but also may model the counseling skill of conceptualization through *transparency*.

Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined a grounded theory of how supervisors manage competency questioning in supervision. Ten participants contributed their thoughts, experiences, and processes of being questioned to create this theory. The process begins with **perceiving questioning** and then continues through managing each of the four essential components, **grounding in psychological safety, bracketing, attuning to supervisee needs,** and **attending to power**. If a supervision relationship is successful and effective in navigating the essential components, an outcome of **returning to the tasks of supervision** can be achieved. If the process of managing the essential components is interrupted, a different **outcome of questioning** is possible, including *programmatic mistrust, leaving the field,* or *persistent rupture.* This theory sheds light on supervisors' process managing competency questioning in supervision. The next chapter illustrates some ways that this theory can be used to improve supervision.

CHAPTER 6: Trustworthiness, Limitations, and Implications

This chapter illustrates methods used to establish trustworthiness and outlines the limitations that emerged as the study progressed. Implications of this research for supervisees, clients, supervisors, departments, deans, and administrators are also outlined. The chapter finishes with a discussion of future research opportunities built upon the theory presented in Chapter Five; Building Bridges: Supervisors' Management of Competency Questioning.

Establishing Trustworthiness

I used member checking, prolonged engagement, inquiry auditing, generation of rich, thick descriptions, and reflexivity as strategies to establish trustworthiness in this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline four components of trustworthiness to attended to: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. To attend to credibility, I used member checking and prolonged engagement. For dependability, I used inquiry auditing. To account for transferability, I generated rich, thick descriptions, and reflexivity. Finally, for confirmability, I used inquiry auditing and member checking. Of course, each of these methods of establishing trustworthiness most closely fit with one or two of Lincoln and Guba's components of trustworthiness, and as a collective contributed to all four.

Member Checking

To ensure that each participant had the opportunity to review the theory to establish credibility in this study, I conducted member checks. Throughout the process, I informally checked in with each participant throughout the interviews using paraphrases and confirming statements to establish a shared understanding during data collection. Inquiries for formal member checks were established after analysis and an initial theory was developed.

Member Check Procedures. I emailed each participant a summary of the theory (found in Appendix F) as well as the two conceptual maps found in Chapter Four and asked for their feedback. I invited participants to answer the following questions either via email or scheduling a meeting to provide feedback:

1. Is there anything about the conceptual maps or description that resonates with you?

2. Is there anything that I got wrong?

3. Is there anything that needs to be added?

4. Is there anything that needs to be changed or removed?

5. What are your overall impressions?

I then reviewed each of the Participant responses and the general feedback that they offered.

Member Check Results. Participant Three responded promptly to the email confirming the findings presented in the summary of the theory and stated that she admires the conceptual maps. In a brief email, she stated, "I believe that you have accurately captured the data. I am admiring both of the conceptual maps." Participant Ten also responded to the email with this brief quote, "I initially had some difficulty understanding the formulation, but I found the page 2 diagram particularly helpful. The outcomes of questioning really resonated with me." The first formulation that Participant Ten is referring to is the image of the bridge. As he progressed to the narrative explaining the theory and the figure zooming in on the essential concepts, the results were clarified for him. Participant Six responded to the email with the following quote, "The interpretations seem to mostly accurately represent the interview I had with you. It's very interesting to see the similar experiences others must have had, as well." Finally, Participant Five stated, "For me, grounding in psychological safety is so important to be able to stay objective when my competency as a supervisor comes into question. I think learning how to do this is an

important component especially for early career supervisors." She was the only participant who responded to all of the questions. When asked, if there was anything that needed to be changed or removed, her response was, "I am wondering on the bridge illustration if changing the 1st phrase to 'perceiving questioning of supervisory competency' would make this clearer. Since competency is what is being questioned, I think adding it would provide more precision." Her overall impression of the theory was summarized with, "Overall, I viewed your illustrations as easy to follow and understand. Your definitions and explanations were clear and concise." Additionally, Participant Two responded stating that they have not yet had time to review the results and that they looked forward to doing so as their schedule allowed. At the time that this dissertation was published, Participant Two hadn't yet responded. Most of my participants are faculty and received member check requests at a time of the year with heightened faculty responsibilities (the end of the spring term).

Prolonged Engagement

To establish credibility in the research process, I used prolonged engagement with my participants. I communicated via email several times with each participant to answer questions, inquire about demographic information, schedule interviews, and conduct member checks. Each interview lasted between 50 and 75 minutes. Throughout each interview, I built rapport and worked to establish a relationship with each participant. I used active listening skills and gave lots of space for participants to ask questions before, during and after the interviews. Several participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to discuss competency questioning in supervision, and one invited me to collaborate on other research projects. Between Round One and Round Two, it became apparent that theoretical sampling was necessary to fill in gaps in the research. Engaging in theoretical sampling had the effect of limiting prolonged engagement with

some of the participants in this study. Prolonged engagement varied among the participants due to the theoretical sampling that became necessary between rounds one and two of interviews. Participant Two was the only participant to participate in both interviews, beyond this, I conducted one interview with each other participant.

Inquiry Auditing

One of the primary strategies used to establish dependability and confirmability was inquiry auditing. Dr. Kirsten Murray, my dissertation chair, served as the primary inquiry auditor on this project. We met for 1 hour per week (excluding summers) from August 2020 through May 2023 to work on this study and provide mentorship. She reviewed each part of the research process, from design to the conclusion. Throughout our many meetings, Dr. Murray reviewed raw data, memos, each draft of this research, and we collaborated on several initial conceptual map drafts. Dr. Murray's feedback was critical to the development of this theory, and to the research process as a whole.

As well as reviewing the research process, I also used inquiry auditing to clarify and bracket my own biases as a supervisor. I discussed my experiences as a supervisor with Dr. Murray as this theory developed, and she helped tease out the data that was co-constructed with the participants and differentiate it from my own experiences as a supervisor, generating rich, thick descriptions from the participants in the study.

Generating Rich, Thick Descriptions

To establish transferability in the writing of this study, I generated rich, thick descriptions. Alongside the description of each category, subcategory, property, and dimension, I used many direct quotes from each participant to illustrate the experience and process participants described. I used direct quotes from the eleven interviews, prioritizing participants'

description of their experiences in their own words. This allows those words to bring the theory to life for the reader and presents the data with transparency, allowing the reader to determine the transferability of the data and theory. The inclusion of these rich, thick descriptions allows the reader to define the transferability of this data for themselves.

Reflexivity

The final method used to establish trustworthiness in my study was reflexivity. Throughout the research process, I conducted memos about the research process and my experience as a researcher. Then, collated all of these thoughts and illustrations into a notebook and constructed several iterations of each conceptual map included in this manuscript. Each draft of each conceptual map (see Appendices G and H) is a part of this journal and illustrates how the analysis process developed as new data was integrated. Through the expansion and contraction of categories, subcategories, properties and dimensions, the final theory captured the experiences of the eleven participants.

From the beginning of the research process, I paid special attention to the idea that supervisors who hold marginalized identities experience a different process of managing power in the supervision relationship, especially when compared to those who don't experience marginalization when part of an underrepresented group. This perspective, supported by my conceptual framework and part of the rationale for how maximum variation was defined, was confirmed throughout the research process. This perspective expanded to include supervisors with less training and experience than others—such as doctoral student supervisors. I found myself feeling frustrated and shocked after hearing participant experiences with supervisees that included overt prejudice against aspects of the supervisor's social identities. As the researcher, my experience of frustration and shock emphasized this data in the analysis process.

I also had the opportunity to continue supervising students while co constructing this theory. I used both inquiry auditing and reflexivity as a supervisor when my own supervision competence was questioned during the research process. This study itself became something that I needed to bracket in order to attune to supervisee needs, but also allowed me to reflect on the participant experiences to see if this data is transferable to my own process as a supervisor.

A final component that stood out in my reflexivity process occurred while conducting few of the round one interviews. I got the feeling that the act of sharing the experience of being questioned was really important to some of the participants. Some participants shared how they really valued their inclusion in this study, having someone to listen to their voice, and the existence of this research itself. My sense was that telling their story served to validate their experience.

Achieving Saturation

Throughout the research process, I sought saturation by gathering data in the form of interviews until no additional categories emerged, and those categories were sufficiently explained (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 6.). Saturation in this study occurred through theoretical sampling. Dr. Murray and I identified missing voices and experiences and sought out supervisors who were identified as expert supervisors to fill those gaps. Though there are some recommendations that saturation in qualitative studies often occurs after twelve interviews (Aldiabat & Navenec, 2018), I began to achieve saturation after analyzing interview number ten. After interview ten occurred, no new categories emerged. Interview eleven confirmed existing categories, while also adding depth and variation with her perspective on competency questioning in supervision. This final interview served to complete baseline saturation by achieving sufficient explanations for all categories. Though saturation is the goal, it isn't

something that can be entirely achieved. Of course, it is always possible that more information would be uncovered through more interviews with other participants.

Limitations

Despite efforts to establish trustworthiness, limitations emerged. There are several limitations including: differences in prolonged engagement between participants, not achieving maximum variation in the first round of interviews, and member check participation.

First, there was only one supervisor (Participant Two) who completed two rounds of interviews due to the shift in recruitment to achieve theoretical sampling. As a result, my ability to sustain prolonged engagement with Participant Two was very different than all the other supervisors. Six supervisors participated in only round one interviews, three supervisors participated in only round two interviews, and Participant Two participated in both rounds of interviews. Through consultation with Dr. Murray, we collectively decided that Participant Two may have more to add to round two. In round one, Participant Two discussed her experiences of having her competency questioned and the factors that influenced her experiences of returning to the tasks of supervision, and after analysis it seemed likely that she had more to add to expand on her process of managing competency questioning. The remaining supervisors in round one all described outcomes of competency questioning that did not return to the tasks of supervision. As such, the paths that resulted in persistent rupture, programmatic mistrust, and supervisors leaving the field had become well saturated. And, at this point, little was known about outcomes that sustained supervision.

Additionally, during the first call for participants for round one, maximum variation was not achieved because only women responded to the call for participants. As round one interviews progressed, it became clear that gender may be a factor in how supervisors experience

competency questioning, and so it became important to ensure that we heard from supervisors with other gender identities rather than just women. Gender identity emerged as important in how supervisors manage power in the supervision relationship as well as in grounding in psychological safety. In the second round of interview recruitment based on theoretical sampling, we were seeking "expert supervisors". From this call for participants, two men were willing to participate. Maximum variation was achieved during second round interviews, when the two participants who identify as men were interviewed.

The final limitation that emerged was a low response rate of member checks. Though I reached out twice to all ten participants, only four replied. Each offered brief feedback confirming the theory, though only one answered the member check questions in detail. One additional participant responded that intended to offer feedback as soon as they had time, but that feedback was not received by the time of this publication. Because I didn't hear from six of the ten participants, the theory could not be confirmed, denied nor expanded upon from those perspectives.

Implications

The theory of how supervisors manage competency questioning in supervision provides valuable insight for many different populations. Because supervision is such a vital aspect of counselor education, there are many implications for this new information about the supervision relationship. This section will outline implications for supervisors, supervisees, Counseling Departments, Deans, and other administrators.

Implications for Supervisors

Having a theory about how supervisors manage competency questioning in supervision sheds light on a process that heretofore has been overlooked. First, this research provides results

that may be valuable for supervisors, especially supervisors who experience competency questioning. For many supervisors, competency questioning leads to a block in the ability to return to the tasks of supervision. Understanding the process and the essential components of supervisors' responsibility and functioning, positions supervisors with a framework to address competency questioning. Though individual supervisors may not have control over each aspect that emerged (i.e., supervisee factors or systemic hostility), the existence of this theory may enable supervisors to pinpoint the specific component that isn't allowing for a return to the tasks of supervision.

When competency is questioned, supervisors may experience persistent emotions like stress, anxiety, and a feeling of inadequacy. Normalizing these feelings in this theory may allow supervisors to find ways bracket these emotions as part of a process, rather than feeling isolated in their emotional experience.

Another implication for supervisors could be that supervisors use this theory as a tool to establish their own psychological safety in supervision by expecting that competency questioning will happen. If supervisors go into a supervision relationship prepared to manage competency questioning, they may be more likely to preserve the supervision relationship and return to the tasks of supervision. Similarly, using transparency to name competency questioning in supervision when it occurs (even explaining it with this theory as a tool) could be a potential way to address rupture in the supervision relationship. This transparency could pave the way for supervisees to directly question a supervisor's competency and for the supervisor to address it without having to wade through indirect communication.

A final implication for supervisors is using the theory as a framework for exploring how they themselves may be contributing to persistent rupture. Though there are several aspects of

the essential concepts out of the supervisor's control (systemic hostility, supervisee factors), there are many that the supervisor can significantly influence in the pursuit of relational repair. Sometimes, a supervisor's role in rupture could be a blind spot for the supervisor. This theory provides one way to assess aspects of supervision and the supervision relationship that supervisors could mitigate. These are just some of the implications for supervisors as a result of this theory, as many are yet to be determined. Likewise, there are also several implications for supervisees.

Implications for Supervisees

This study provides supervisors with a framework about how supervisors manage competency questioning, often with the goal of returning to tasks of supervision. There are several implications for supervisees as a result of the findings in this study. Most importantly, this theory may equip supervisors with tools to help provide supervisees with attuned, efficient, productive supervision.

First, this study provides supervisors with a theory describing how other supervisors have managed competency questioning in the past and allows for an awareness of what might happen for them in their supervision relationships when competency questioning occurs. This may allow supervisors to be prepared for competency questioning and have less to bracket when working to attune to supervisee needs. This awareness may lead to supervisees more quickly getting what they need in supervision.

As demonstrated in the data, the social identities of supervisors and supervisees influence how competency questioning happens and is managed. In parallel to counseling, supervision is a context in which to practice multicultural competency. This theory gives supervisors a framework to name and address supervisee microaggressions in the supervision relationship.

Ethical counselors need to be attuned to multicultural considerations and social identities of their clients, and have the knowledge, skills and awareness to effectively work with them.

One of the outcomes of this study is supervisees leaving the field—either through choosing to discontinue their education or gatekeeping. Viewing rupture in the supervision relationship through the lens of this theory could lead to interrupted gatekeeping for supervisees who can be successful. In addition, this theory could provide supervisors with a framework for streamlining appropriate gatekeeping. For example, discerning whether a supervisee is experiencing interruptions in supervision due to temporary factors or sustained factors could shed light on appropriate interventions. If a supervisee is experiencing concerning behavior due to temporary factors, interventions could be put in place to help them navigate these factors to return to the tasks of supervision. On the other hand, if a supervisee is not responding to interventions and there are sustained supervisee factors at play, the effects on supervision could be illustrated through the use of this theoretical model. If supervisors aren't aware that sustained supervisee factors can lead to gatekeeping and supervision shifts its focus away from the tasks of supervision and focuses entirely on administrative level supervision due to a persistent rupture, it may be harder to justify appropriate gatekeeping. This theory may offer supervisors a different perspective on effective gatekeeping.

Finally, many supervisees will one day become supervisors, often with very little supervision training and after being licensed for only a short time. This theory provides supervisors with an opportunity to use transparency and role induction with supervisees to better understand the supervision relationship and goals of supervision. Many supervisors learn the art of supervision through modeling. This study may provide opportunities for supervisees to

consider their potential as a future supervisor and provide more clarity about their role in competency questioning in supervision.

Clients. When supervisees receive better supervision, there are implications for clients as well. Supervisors who can help their supervisees vulnerably disclose in supervision may be able to provide better supervision and help their supervisees improve their counseling skills. Effective management of competency questioning that leads to returning to the tasks of supervision with a focus on fostering the supervision relationship sets the stage for better counselor development. On the other hand, if supervision gets stuck in persistent rupture and focuses only on administrative supervision, supervisee non-disclosure of clinical concerns could lead to client endangerment. When supervision is effective, clients are far more likely protected and receive high quality services.

Implications for Departments

As entities responsible for counselor education and supervision, the theory presented in this study could have many implications for departments. Should supervisors use consultation with other supervisors when their competence is questioned, this theory could support supervision of supervision. Using this as a guide, colleagues and those supervising supervision may be able to help supervisors return to the tasks of supervision by supporting the essential components needed to address the supervision relationship.

Second, departments may use this theory to assist in evaluating effective supervisors and training new supervisors. By highlighting the essential components, a supervisor's sense of psychological safety becomes very important to effective supervision. Effective supervision grows from a place of psychological safety, and departments have the opportunity to provide

new supervisors with resources to bolster their sense of psychological safety through additional supervision training.

Throughout the research process, gender emerged as a likely component that influenced supervisors' experience of having their competence questioned. During the search for participants for the first round of interviews, no men responded to the call for participants. When some men were individually asked to participate, many responded saying that they would have loved to help, but they couldn't think of a time when their competence was questioned. For the second round of interviews, the call for participants included "expert supervisors" and two men responded. This research process suggests that gender may factor into when, who, and how a supervisor's competence is questioned. Through the lens of this theory, departments have the opportunity to explore how gender influences experiences of competency questioning for their supervisors.

Through the lens of this theory, departments have the opportunity to examine if they are a hospitable environment for effective supervision. This theory shines a light on essential components and gives the supervisors of supervisors opportunities to broach how essential components are being attended to. Broadly, departments can examine their own environment and assess how it influences supervision relationships.

Finally, departments can use this theory when constructing course evaluations to gather data about supervisee perspectives on competency questioning. Supervisees may be in a position to comment on the effectiveness of the essential components. These evaluations could offer supervisors clear, specific feedback on how supervisee needs were met and what may need to be adjusted to make supervision most effective.

Implications for Deans and Administrators

Finally, this study has implications for deans and administrators. Deans specifically were mentioned several times in the data. When supervisors felt supported by their deans and administrators, their experience of bracketing and grounding in psychological safety took significantly less energy than when supervisors felt unsupported. This could imply that a tangible way to support counselor education departments who are struggling with rupture in supervision is for deans and other administrators to assess, support and communicate trust in their supervisors more explicitly. Certainly, a dean or administrator's trust in supervisors should be earned and this theory provides a framework for deans to be able to evaluate the trustworthiness of a supervisor who experiences rupture in supervision. Deans can inquire about how supervisors, instructors, and departments are managing the essential components of returning to the tasks of supervision and provide support if necessary. This support can take many forms and could be anything from financially supporting supervision of supervision to creating fair workloads for the large tasks of clinical supervision. Additionally, if deans and other administrators know that competency questioning is an expected part of supervision, it can position them to be more curious rather than reactive to reports about competency questioning.

Deans also have the opportunity to be a supportive force in the field of gatekeeping. This theory provides a framework for deans to understand the complexity of managing supervision, and where supervisors have a responsibility to act. When engaging in the essential components of managing competency questioning, supervisors and administrators can better position themselves to engage in necessary professional gatekeeping. By engaging in the essential components, supervisors and their administrators can more efficiently establish how supervisee professional dispositions may be a part of sustained supervisee factors that interrupt effective

supervision. As such, deans may have a unique role in supporting faculty responsibility for public welfare through gatekeeping. In addition to these implications for applied practice, some directions for future research became clear.

Future Research

The supervision relationship is a vital part of counselor education, and there are many valuable areas of future research related to this study. Studying competency questioning provides one way to understand rupture in the supervision relationship. By studying rupture, supervisors will be better positioned to provide more effective supervision. This study outlines a theory about the experience and process of competency questioning of supervisors in supervision. There are several opportunities for future research that emerged as this research progressed.

First, this research was conducted from the perspective of supervisors about their experience and process in the supervision relationship, and there is an abundance of space for future studies to explore supervisee perspectives on competency questioning in supervision. In particular, it would be worth examining supervisee perspectives of questioning the competence of their supervisors in conjunction with the supervisors' experience of the same events.

Though one participant was a doctoral student and one supervised in the context of a clinic, this research primarily focused on the perspective of faculty supervisors. Looking at supervisors in other contexts and positions may provide different insights into how competency questioning is managed.

Additionally, rupture was an expected aspect of competency questioning in supervision for all participants. As such, there may be implications that this model holds to address other kinds of rupture in supervision, not just competency questioning. Generalizing the model for other or all forms of rupture would be a valuable addition to the existing body of knowledge.

Though a grounded theory methodology fits for this research question, there may be quantitative studies that seek generalizability about supervisor competency questioning. Specifically, the model presented in chapter five could be adapted and used to evaluate the strength of the supervision relationship through additional quantitative research before and after a competency questioning event.

Finally, this research could be expanded upon to examine the supervision relationships in other fields and disciplines that include supervision as a teaching strategy. Supervisors' perspectives on having their competence questioned could be influencing the development of other professionals, and this research could be a beginning point off of which other fields could build upon.

Conclusion

In the field of Counselor Education, supervision is primary when training new counselors to ensure healthy, productive client care. As such, recognizing and managing barriers to an effective supervision relationship is essential. Due to the complicated nature of the supervision relationship, it is imperative that Counselor Educators continue adding to the body of knowledge about supervision, both theoretical and applied, to ensure that counselors-in-training have access to effective supervision. This study begins to fill the gap in the literature about competency questioning in supervision and provides insight into how supervisors manage this phenomenon in ways that are productive to the supervision relationship and tasks of supervision. Additionally, this study sheds some light on how prejudice and oppression may be manifesting when a supervisor's competency is questioned and illustrates ways that supervisors can be effectively supported. The theory presented in this study represents ten participants' perspectives on how supervisors manage competency questioning in supervision.
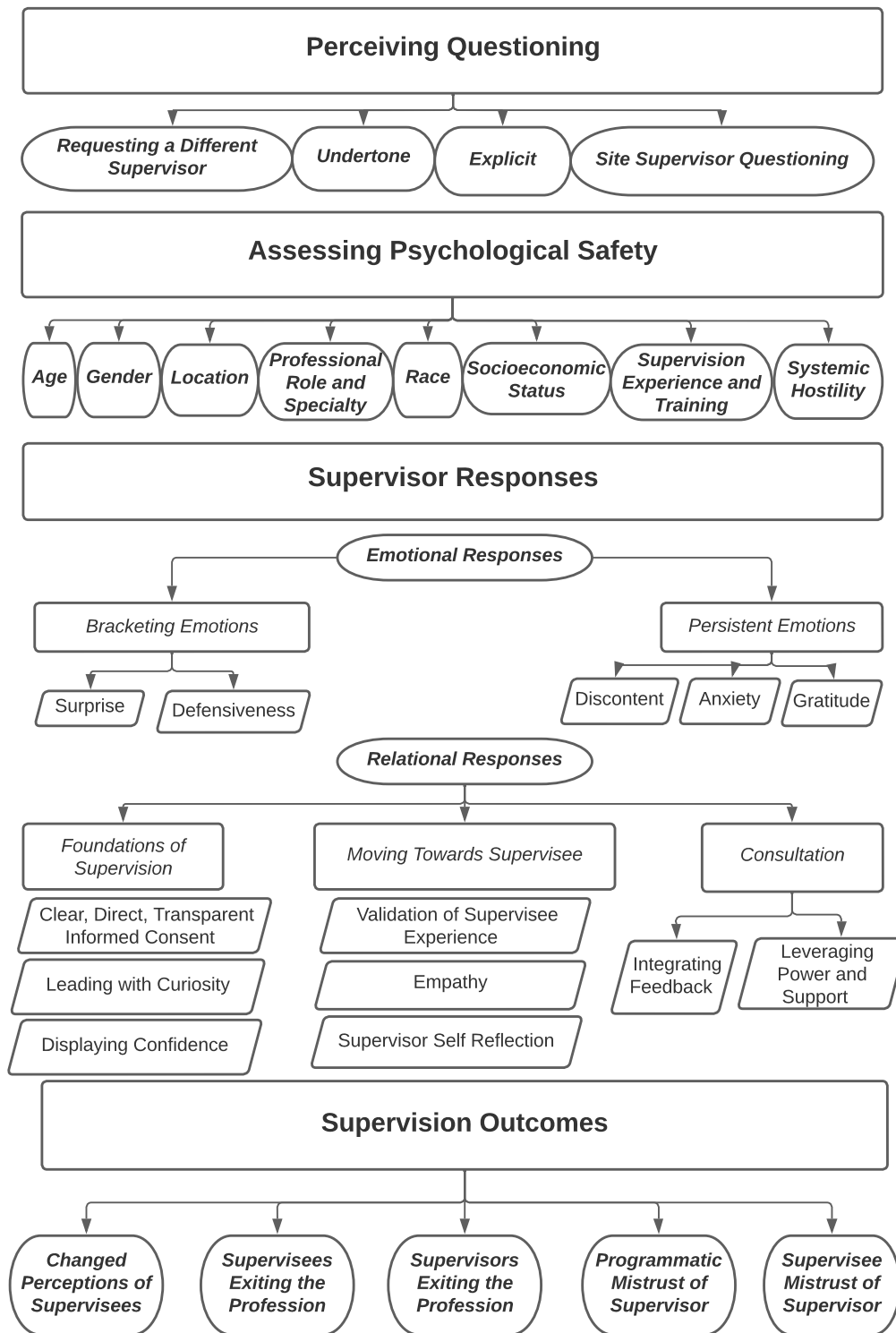
Figure 1 Conceptual Map of Round One Analysis
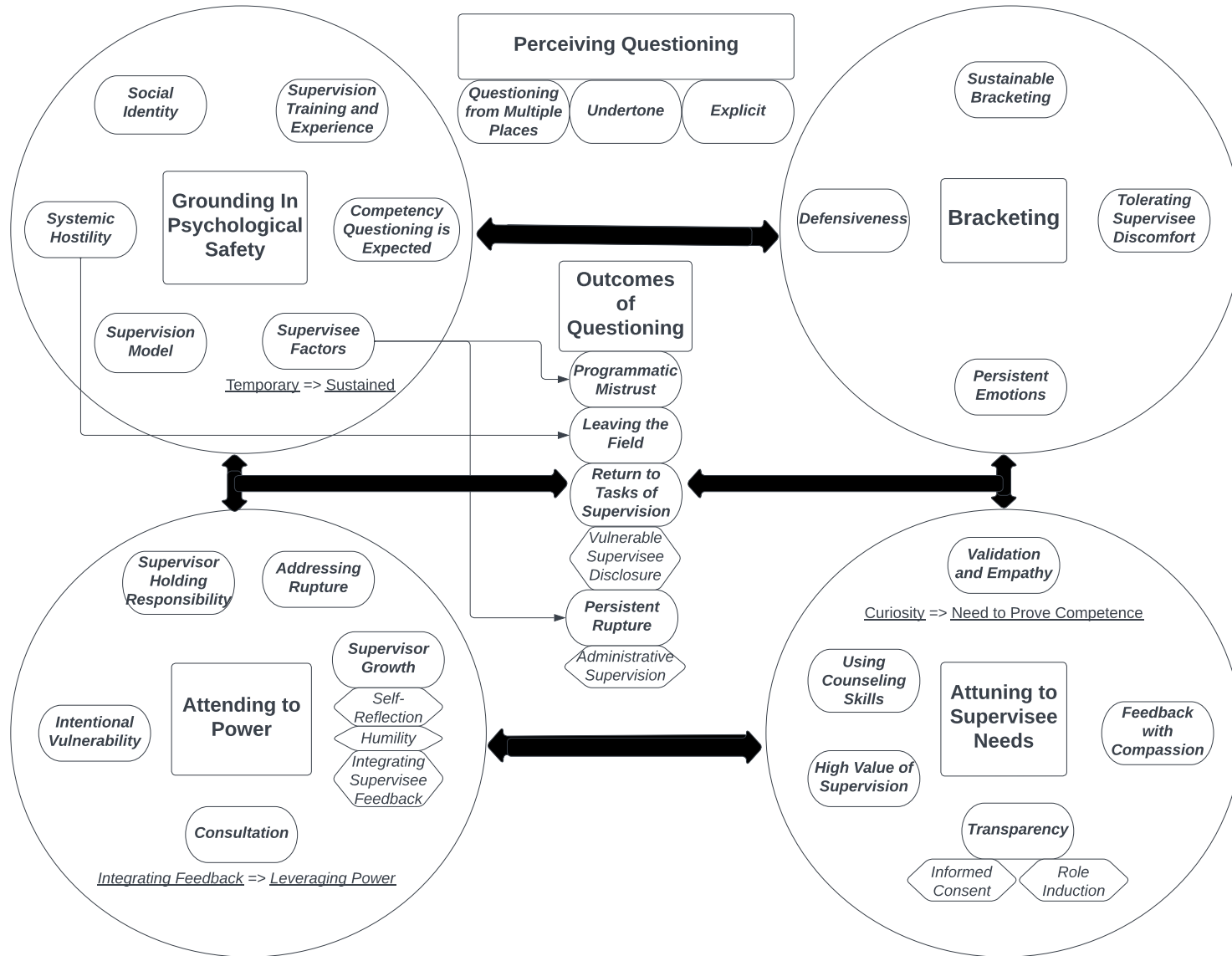
Figure 2 Conceptual Map of Second Round Analysis
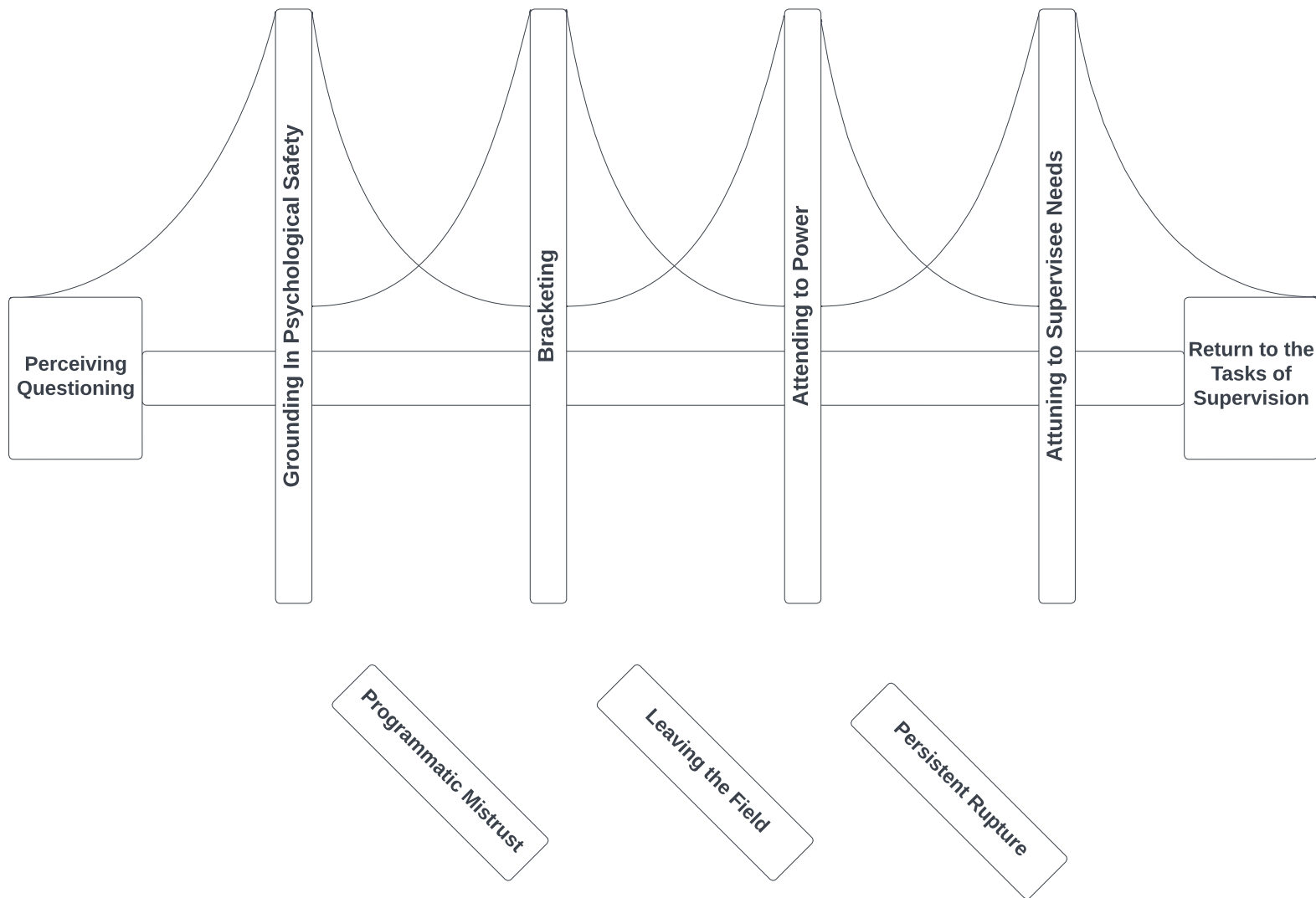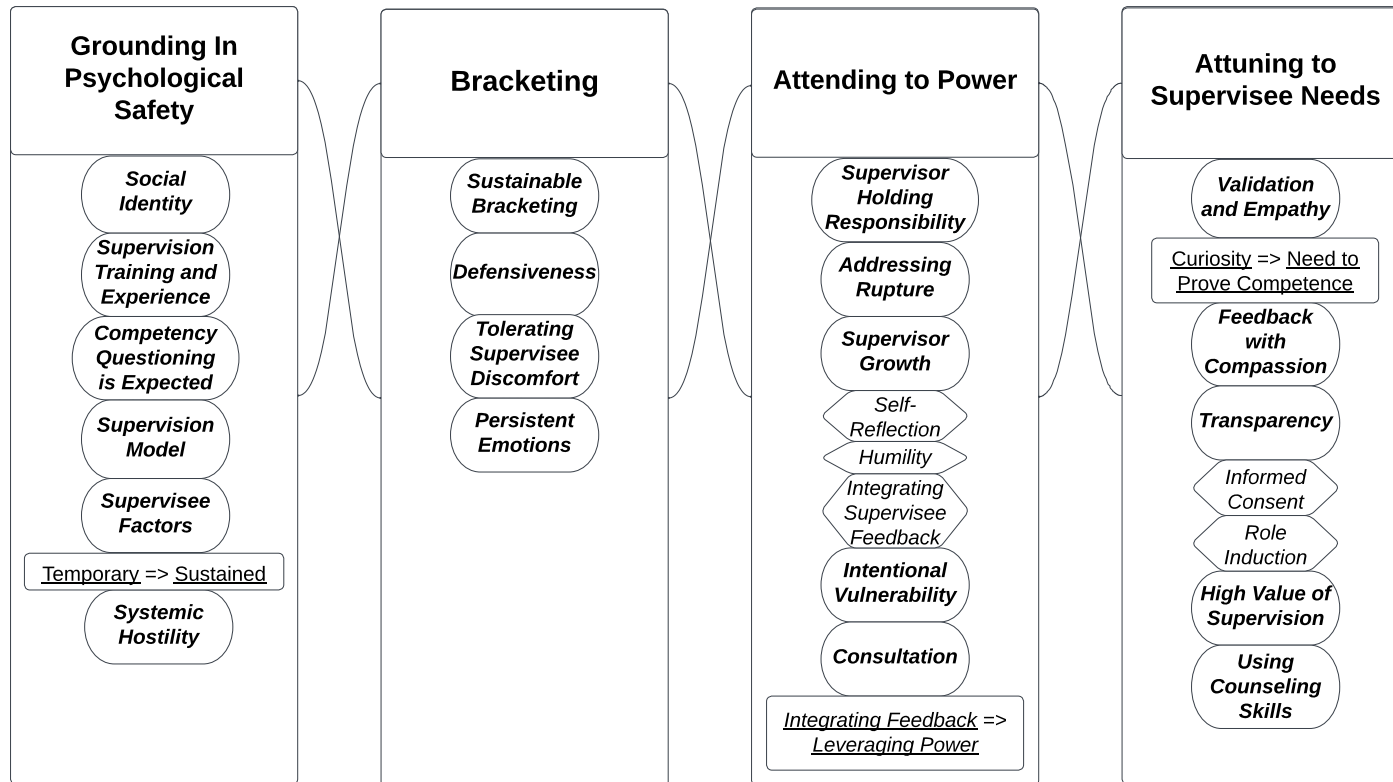
Figure 3 The Bridge

Figure 4 Zooming In On Essential Components

Appendix A: Effective Supervisor Practices

Falender and Shafranske (2014) identify effective supervisor practices as the ability to:

- Demonstrate respect for the supervisee and client(s);

- Collaboratively assess supervisee competence (with supervisee self-assessment and supervisor feedback) and develop goals and tasks to achieve these.

- Form a supervisory alliance;

- Identify strains to the supervisory relationship and work to repair them;

- Clarify and ensure understanding of supervisee roles and supervisor expectations.

- Assess, reflect on, and enhance specific supervisee competences;

- Collaboratively construct a supervision contract providing informed consent regarding expectations and supervisor and supervisee roles and responsibilities;

- Monitor, protect the client, and be a gatekeeper with transparency, sharing assessment of competencies with the supervisee. Gatekeeping refers to the supervisor responsibility to ensure the suitability of individuals entering the profession;

- Infuse awareness of the role diversity plays in clinical and supervision practice, including consideration of the multicultural identities of client, supervisee, and supervisor;

- Reflect on worldviews, attitudes, and biases, and infuse these in conceptualization, assessment, and intervention;

- Encourage and support supervisee reflection on clinical practice and the process of supervision;

- Engage the supervisee in skill development using interactive and experiential methods (e.g., role play, modeling);

- Attend to personal factors, unusual emotional reactivity, and countertransference and engage in management of these to inform the clinical process;

- Provide ongoing accurate positive and corrective feedback anchored in competencies;

- Observe directly—live or video—and use observation regularly to provide behavioral, anchored feedback on competencies and identified supervisee goals (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

Appendix B: Call for Participants

Dear (Participant name),

Thank you so much for your interest in my study! I really appreciate the time that you have given already in considering participating. As I develop my list of participants, I want to ensure that I have many different voices represented so that I can accurately illustrate the experience and process of supervisors having their competence questioned in supervision. Would you fill out the following demographic information and send it back to me? If you are uncomfortable answering any question, feel free to skip it. Of course, if you have any questions or concerns in this process, feel free to reach out and ask.

Thank you so much,

Arianna Vokos

1. I identify my gender as: _____.

2. I have had _____ years of experience as a clinical supervisor.

3. I live and work in the _____ region of the United States.

4. My racial identity includes _____.

Or

1. How do you identify your gender?

2. How many years have you been a clinical supervisor?

3. In what region of the United States do you live and work? (Northwest, southwest, etc.)

4. How do you identify your race?

Appendix C: University of Montana IRB Approval

Form RA-108
(Rev. 6/24/2019)

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

APPLICATION FOR IRB REVIEW

NOV 1 8 2020

IRB Protocol No.:

179-20

At the University of Montana (UM), the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the institutional review body responsible for oversight of all research activities involving human subjects as outlined in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Human Research Protections.

Instructions: A separate application must be submitted for each project. Email the completed form as a Word document to *IRB@umontana.edu*, or submit a hardcopy (no staples) to the IRB office in the Interdisciplinary Science Building, room 104. Student applications must be accompanied by email authorization by the supervising faculty member or a signed hard copy. *All fields must be completed. If an item does not apply to this project, write in: N/A.* Questions? Call the IRB office at 243-6672.

1. **Administrative Information**

Project Title: When Competence is Questioned: A Supervisor Perspective	
Principal Investigator: Arianna Vokos	UM Position: Doctoral Student
Department: Counseling	Office location: PJWCOE 337
Work Phone: (206)225-3451	Cell Phone: (206)225-3451

2. **Human Subjects Protection Training** *(All researchers, including faculty supervisors for student projects, must be listed below and have completed a self-study course on protection of human research subjects within the last three years and be able to supply the "Certificate(s) of Completion" upon request. If you need to add rows for more people, use the Additional Researchers Addendum.*

All Research Team Members (list yourself first)	PI	CO-PI	Faculty Supervisor	Research Assistant	DATE COMPLETED IRB-approved Course mm/dd/yyyy
Name: Arianna Vokos Email: arianna.vokos@umontana.edu	☒	☐	☐	☐	11/14/2020 ✓
Name: Kirsten Murray Email: kirsten.murray@umontana.edu	☐	☐	☒	☐	05/15/2019 ✓
Name: Email:	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Name: Email:	☐	☐	☐	☐	

3. **Project Funding** *(If federally funded, additional requirements may apply.)*

Is grant application currently under review at a grant funding agency? ☐Yes *(If yes, cite sponsor on ICF if applicable)* ☒No			Has grant proposal received approval and funding? ☐Yes *(If yes, cite sponsor on ICF if applicable)* ☒No		
Agency	Grant No.	e-Prop #	Start Date	End Date	PI on grant

For UM-IRB Use Only

IRB Determination:

Note to PI: Use any attached IRB-approved forms (signed/dated) as "masters" when preparing copies. Notify the IRB if any significant changes or unanticipated events occur. Failure to follow these directions constitutes non-compliance with UM policy.

_____ Not Human Subjects Research
_____ Approved by Exempt Review, Category # _____
_X_ Approved by Expedited Review, Category # _7 - Waiver - Electronic Sig._
_____ Full IRB Determination
    _____ Approved *(see Note to PI)*
    _____ Conditional Approval *(see memo)* - IRB Chair Signature/Date: _____
        _____ Conditions Met *(see Note to PI)*
    _____ Resubmit Proposal *(see memo)*   Risk Level: Minimal
    _____ Disapproved *(see memo)*

Final Approval by IRB Chair/Manager: _____ Date: 11/23/20 Expires: N/A

Appendix D: IRB Amendment

Form RA-110
(Rev. 08/18)

FEB 2 3 2021

THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA-MISSOULA
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research
AMENDMENT REQUEST

Please provide
IRB Protocol No.:
179-20

Email this request as a Word document to *IRB@umontana.edu*, or provide a hardcopy to the IRB office in the Interdisciplinary Science Building, room 104. NOTE: Submission of this form from a University email account constitutes an individual's signature; students submitting electronically **must** copy their faculty supervisors.

Project Title:	When Competence is Questioned: A Supervisor Perspective		
Principal Investigator:	Arianna Vokos	Title:	
Signature:			
Email address:	arianna.vokos@umontana.edu		
Work Phone:		Cell Phone:	(206)225-3451
Department:	Counseling	Office location:	PJWCOE 337
Faculty Supervisor (if student project):	Dr. Kirsten Murray		
Department:	Counseling	Work Phone:	
Signature:		Email: Kirsten.murray@umontana.edu	

Detail the proposed amendment (protocol, recruitment, confidentiality plan) below and attach any consent/assent/permission forms for IRB-approval (if possible, use Office's "track changes" feature in your attachments):

I am applying to amend my inclusion criteria for this study. I am changing the current inclusion criteria from;

Inclusion Criteria:
To be eligible for this study you must be:
- Counselor Education Faculty
- Teaching at a CACREP accredited master's program
- Supervising interns

to now read as follows:

Inclusion Criteria:
To be eligible for this study you must be supervising counselors in training (CITs).

ok.

Attached you will find the updated informed consent with the amended inclusion criteria.

This Section for UM-IRB Use Only

IRB Determination:

____ Approved by Exempt Review, category # _____
__X__ Approved by Expedited Review, category # _7_ Waiver - Using electronic signature
____ Approved by Administrative Review
____ Full IRB Determination
_____ Approved
_____ Conditional Approval *(see email)* - IRB Chair Signature/Date: _____
_____ Conditions Met
_____ Resubmit Proposal *(see email)*   Risk level: Minimal
_____ Disapproved *(see email)*

Final Approval by IRB Chair: _____ Date: 2/26/21 Expires: N/A

Appendix E: Informed Consent

SUBJECT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: When Competence is Questioned: A Supervisor Perspective

Investigator(s):
Doctoral Student: Arianna Vokos, MA, LCPC
Department of Counseling at the University of Montana
Arianna.vokos@umontana.edu
(206) 225-3451

Faculty Supervisor: Kirsten Murray, Ph.D.
Department of Counseling at the University of Montana
Kirsten.murray@umontana.edu
(724) 910-1905

Inclusion Criteria:
To be eligible for this study you must be supervising counselors in training (CITs).

Purpose:
The purpose of this grounded theory study is to explore the experience and process of having your competence questioned in clinical supervision as a supervisor. This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a doctoral dissertation and results may be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals and professional conference presentations. Understanding more about the supervision relationship may enhance the field of supervision as well as the tasks of supervision including counselor development and client protection.

Procedures:
If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked a series of interview questions about your experiences in supervision. You will be interviewed via Zoom. Interviews will take place in a confidential space. You will be asked permission to record this interview for the purposes of transcription. Recordings will be encrypted and stored in Box, encrypted online storage. Identifying information in the transcription will be altered to protect your confidentiality. All interview data will be kept in an encrypted folder for 7 years and then will be destroyed. The interview session will last approximately one hour.

Risks/Discomforts:
Mild discomfort may result from discussing your experiences in clinical supervision. You have the right to stop at any time with no negative consequences.

Benefits:
Your participation in this study may help inform how supervisors respond to having their competency questioned in clinical supervision. There is a possibility that you will not receive any benefits from participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

The University of Montana IRB
Expiration Date _None_
Date Approved _2-26-2021_
Chair/Admin _____

Your records will be kept confidential and will not be released without your consent except as required by law. All efforts will be made to keep your identity private. The data will be stored on Box, encrypted online storage. Your signed consent form will be stored in an encrypted folder, separate from the data. Identifying information in the transcription will be altered to protect your confidentiality. All interview recordings will be destroyed after 7 years.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to take part or you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason.

Questions:

If you have any questions about the research now or during the study, please contact Arianna Vokos at (206) 225-3451or arianna.vokos@umontana.edu or you may contact the supervising faculty, Kirsten Murray, Ph.D. at (724) 910-1905 or Kirsten.murray@umontana.edu.
If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UM Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (406) 243-6672.

Statement of Your Consent:

I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by a member of the research team. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____

Printed Name of Subject

_____   _____

Subject's Signature   Date

Statement of Consent to be Videotaped:

I understand that video recordings will be taken during the study. I understand that all recordings will be destroyed after 7 years, and that no identifying information will be included in the transcription.

_____   _____

Subject's Signature   Date

The University of Montana IRB
Expiration Date _None_
Date Approved _2-26-2021_
Chair/Admin _____

Appendix F: Conceptual Maps and Summary of Theory for Member Checking
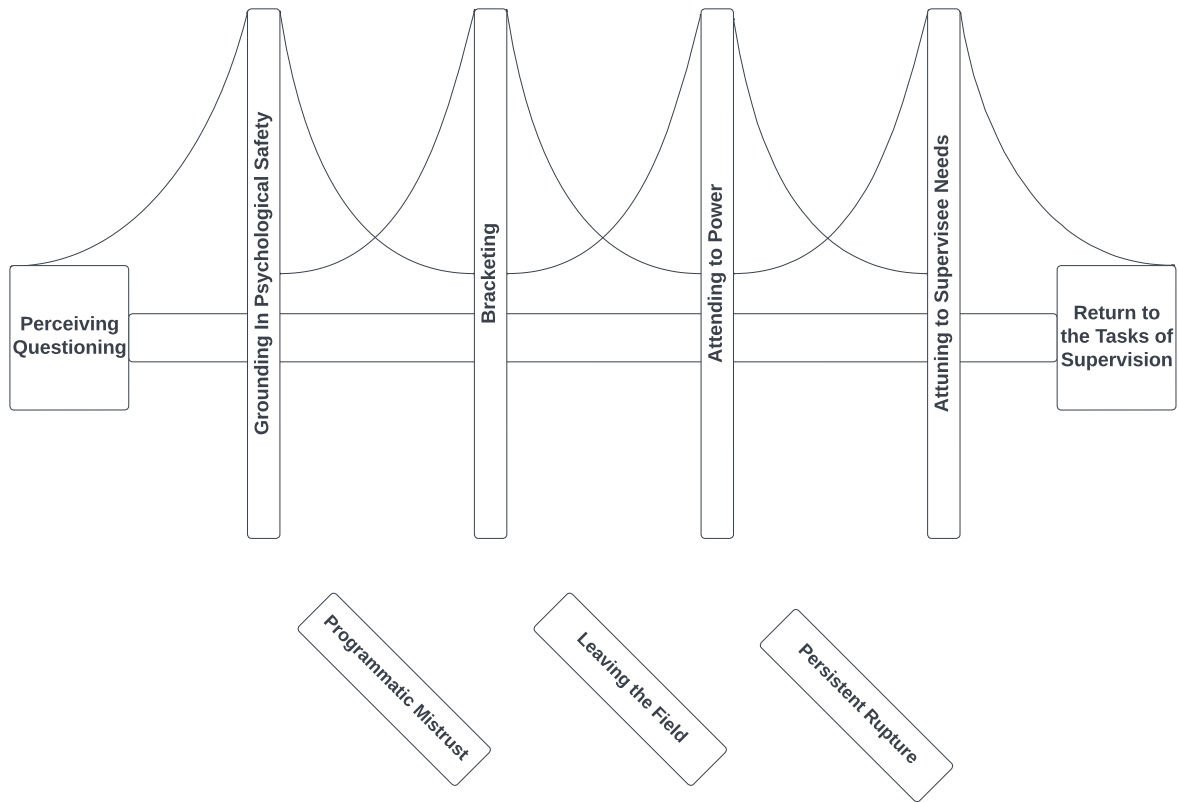
The overall theory is depicted in the first conceptual map of a bridge. This illustration depicts how each of the six categories relate to the goal of returning to the tasks of supervision after competency questioning. Supervisors begin their journey with perceiving questioning. From that point they can ground in psychological safety, engage in bracketing, attune to supervisee needs, and attend to power in the pursuit of returning to the tasks of supervision. If a supervision relationship is successful and effective navigating these essential components, an outcome of returning to the tasks of supervision can be achieved. If the process of managing the essential components is interrupted, a different outcome of questioning is possible: programmatic mistrust, leaving the field, or persistent rupture.

The next conceptual map outlines the essential components that supervisors attend to when their competence is questioned in supervision. These essential concepts are grounding in psychological safety, bracketing, attending to power, and attuning to supervisee needs. When there are interruptions to any of these subcategories, supervisors may not be able to return to the tasks of supervision. This conceptual map illustrates a zoomed in version of the components that make up each of the four essential components as well as the other two categories, perceiving questioning and outcomes of questioning.
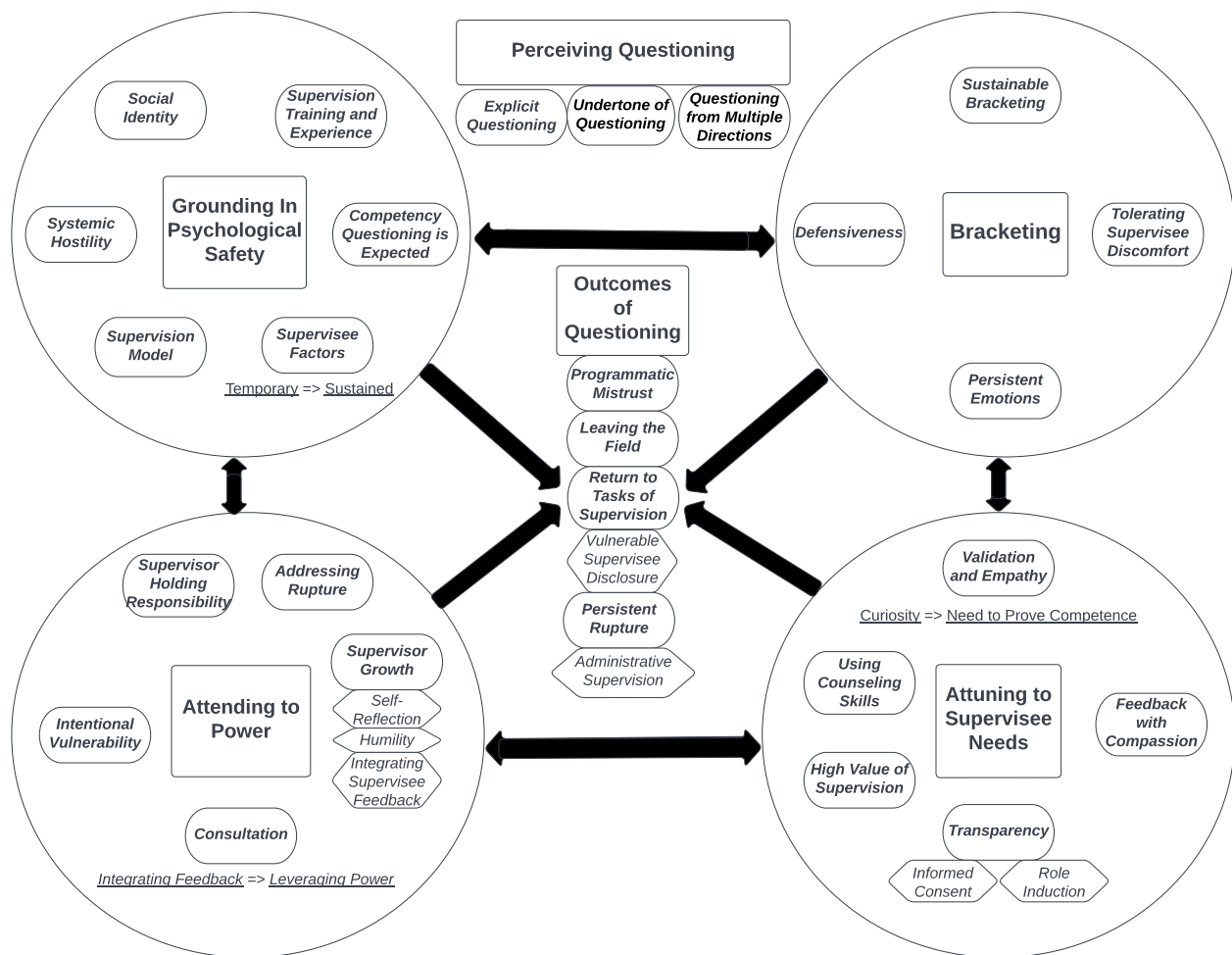
Perceiving Questioning: This perception happens for supervisors in several different ways, sorted into subcategories. These subcategories that emerged were explicit questioning, undertone of questioning, and questioning from multiple directions.

Grounding in psychological safety: These are factors that influence a supervisor's ability to establish security in their role as a supervisor. There were several subcategories to describe supervisors' experiences establishing psychological safety, as well as barriers to creating this security. These subcategories are as follows; social identity, supervision training and experience, systemic hostility, supervision model, supervisee factors and competency questioning as an expected part of supervision.

Bracketing: this is how supervisors manage their emotional response to questioning so that they can regulate and refocus their attention on the supervisee and goals of supervision.

Attending to power: Here, supervisors manage the power hierarchy in the supervision relationship. When a supervisor can successfully manage the power imbalance, it can smooth that barrier to returning to the tasks of supervision and allow for successful progression across the bridge.

Attunement to supervisee needs: This is defined as a supervisor's ability to identify and respond to the needs a supervisee is expressing when questioning their supervisor. This attunement process includes both the overt needs that supervisees directly express, and the covert needs that supervisees may not be able to need that are uncovered as part of the supervision relationship.

Outcomes of Competency Questioning:

Returning to tasks of supervision: This occurs when a supervisor finds that their supervisee's competency questioning has been managed and the supervision relationship has adjusted to focus on tasks of supervision, rather than the competence of the supervisor. Supervisors assess that they have returned to tasks of supervision when their supervisees can
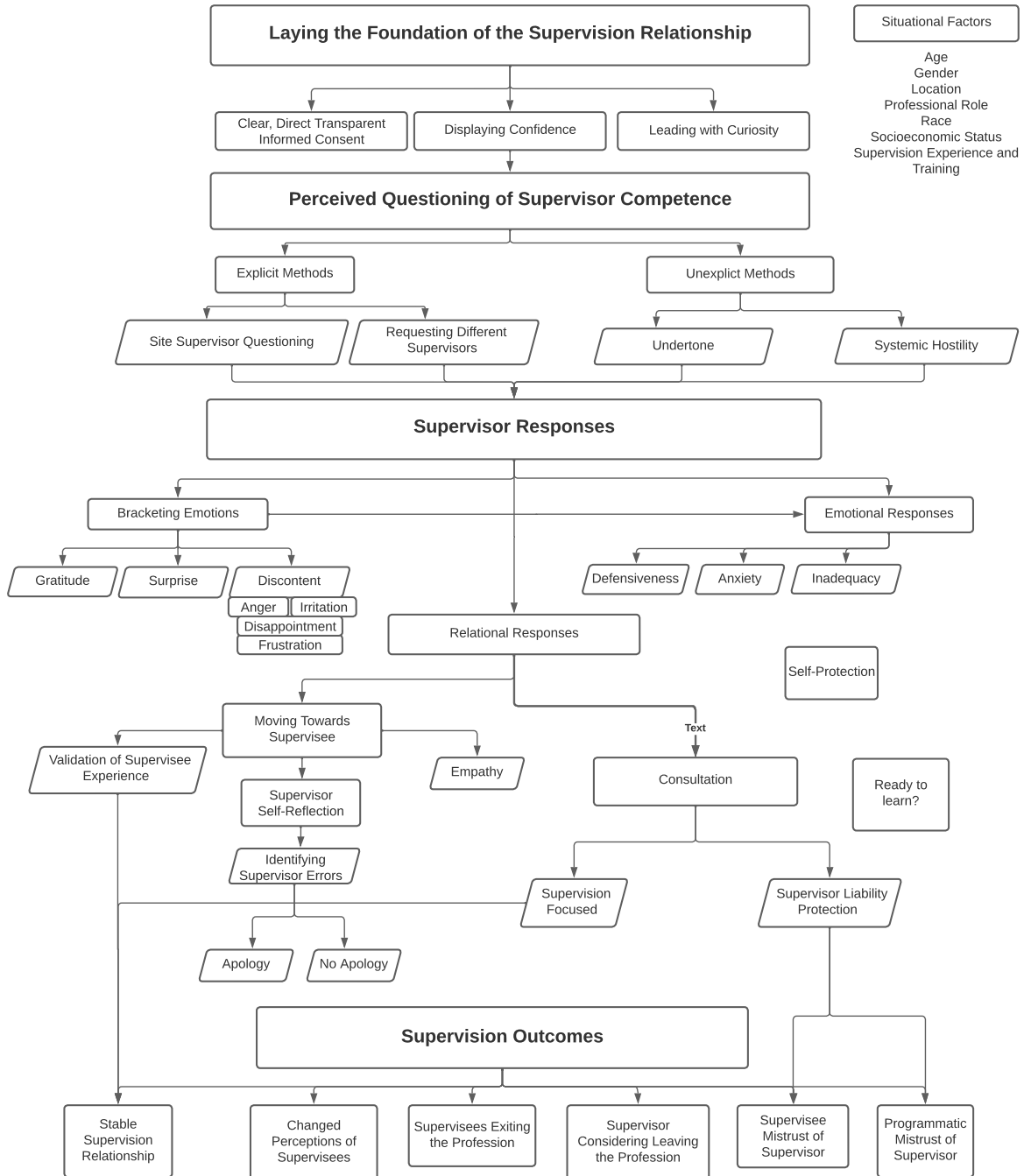
offer vulnerable supervisee disclosure. Supervisors view this level of supervisee disclosure as an indication that trust in the process of supervision has returned.

Programmatic mistrust: This subcategory is defined as a supervisor losing the trust of the system in which they work. When the program (including supervisees) loses trust in a supervisor, returning to the tasks of supervision becomes impossible and the focus of supervision is shifted to working to gain or regain trust.

Leaving the field: This can occur for supervisors or supervisees and may include gatekeeping for supervisees. Supervisees leaving the field due to gatekeeping usually intersect with sustained supervisee factors of concern. Supervisors discussed how stress related to systemic hostility and a lack of support pushed them to consider other career paths.

Persistent rupture: Here, returning to the tasks of supervision is interrupted when a supervisor isn't able to repair a rupture with the supervisee. Supervisors reported identifying persistent rupture when their supervisees stopped vulnerable disclosure and worked to shift the focus of supervision towards administrative supervision tasks.

Appendix G: Evolution of Conceptual Maps Round One

Appendix H: Evolution of Conceptual Maps Round Two

Social Identity

Supervision Training and Experience

Systemic Hostility

Supervisee Factors

Supervision Model

Competency Questioning as an Expected Process

sustainted patterns of behavior

personality disorder

Perceiving Questioning

Questioning from Multiple Places

Undertone

Grounding in Psychological Safety

Bracketing

Defensiveness

Tolerating Supervisee Discomfort

Sustainable Bracketing

Persistent Emotions

Attunement to Supervisee Needs

Attending to Power

Supervisor Growth

Humility

Self Reflection

Intentional Vulnerability

Feedback with Compassion

Validation and Empathy

Curiosity

Need to Prove My Competence

High Value of Supervision

Transparency

Informed Consent

Role Induction

Outcomes of Questioning

Leaving the Field

Programmatic Mistrust

Return to Supervision

Persistent Rupture

Vulnerable Supervisee Disclosure

Administrative Supervision

Using Counseling Skills

Documentation

Supervisor Holding Responsibility

Consultation

Integrating Feedback

Leveraging Power

Attending to Rupture

Perceiving Questioning

Explicit???

Sustainable Bracketing

Social Identity

Supervision Training and Experience

Questioning from Multiple Places

Undertone

Systemic Hostility

Grounding In Psychological Safety

Competency Questioning is Expected

Defensiveness

Bracketing

Tolerating Supervisee Discomfort

Outcomes of Questioning

Supervision Model

Supervisee Factors

Temporary => Sustained

Programmatic Mistrust

Persistent Emotions

Leaving the Field

Persistent Rupture

Administrative Supervision

Validation and Empathy

Supervisor Holding Responsibility

Addressing Rupture

Return to Tasks of Supervision

Curiosity => Need to Prove Competence

Vulnerable Supervisee Disclosure

Using Counseling Skills

Attuning to Supervisee Needs

Supervisor Growth

Self-Reflection

Feedback with Compassion

Intentional Vulnerability

Attending to Power

Humility

High Value of Supervision

Integrating Supervisee Feedback

Consultation

Transparency

Integrating Feedback => Leveraging Power

Informed Consent

Role Induction

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