WEAVING THE WEB: FACULTY’S MULTILAYERED APPROACH TO PROBLEMS OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE (PPC)

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WEAVING THE WEB: FACULTY’S MULTILAYERED APPROACH TO PROBLEMS OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE (PPC)

By

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Dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in
Counselor Education and Supervision

The University of Montana
Missoula, MT

July 2024

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In Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs, doctoral students assume five primary professional roles: counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy. Counselor educators bear the responsibility of assessing doctoral students’ professional development in these roles, encompassing professional dispositions and competence. This study explores how counselor educators in CES programs experience and address problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students. Given the limited research on this topic, a constructivist grounded theory approach was employed. The study involved eight counselor educators from CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs. Data collection included semi-structured interviews conducted in two rounds, followed by member checks. Data analysis followed Charmaz’s (2014) coding principles to identify emerging themes and develop a grounded theory. Findings revealed that faculty address PPC through a comprehensive, multilayered approach symbolized by the analogy of a spider weaving a web. This process includes understanding doctoral students’ experiences, recognizing the complexities of PPC, addressing issues of marginalization and power, responding to PPC, and enhancing PPC management. Faculty start by setting a baseline of expectations and identifying PPC types and methods to address them, followed by managing outcomes. They also focus on power dynamics and marginalization, respond to PPC through internal and external processes, and continuously improve PPC management strategies. This research provides a detailed framework illustrating the interconnected steps faculty take to address PPC among doctoral students, highlighting the complexity and dedication involved. The findings offer insights into effective gatekeeping practices, aiming to improve faculty approaches to evaluating PPC and support the professional development of aspiring counselor educators.
Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere and deepest gratitude to my mentor, advisor, and dissertation chair, Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano. Jayna, I am immensely grateful for all your support throughout this research project. Over the past year, I have grown both personally and professionally, and I would not be where I am today without your encouragement, care, and guidance. I appreciate your trust in me and my abilities. I especially value your balance of offering the guidance I needed while treating me with compassion, empathy, and understanding. I have learned so much from you and am profoundly grateful for your ability to help me recognize qualities in myself that I was previously blind to. Thank you for being my guiding light in my professional endeavors.

Additionally, I would like to thank my other dissertation committee members, Dr. Veronica Johnson, Dr. Kirsten Murray, Dr. Sara Polanchek, and Dr. Ashby Kinch, for your encouragement, commitment, and support throughout this dissertation study. I am grateful for your availability, support, and expertise as I navigated this new role as a researcher. Each of you has taught me valuable lessons that I will carry forward.

I would like to acknowledge Catherine Filardi from the University of Montana Writing Center. Catherine, your support, encouragement, and understanding during this process have been a source of great comfort. I will always cherish our weekly meetings and your kindness in providing a space for me to discuss my research. I am immensely grateful for your guidance in my writing.

Lastly, I wish to thank a special group of people who have been my steadfast support system and cheerleaders. My family has been my anchor throughout this process, offering
unconditional love, support, and encouragement, for which I am deeply grateful. To my parents,
thank you for giving me the opportunity to become who I am today, for your investment, and for
teaching me valuable life lessons. Ram, I am so grateful to have you by my side, always knowing
that I can rely on your support no matter what. Dimash, thank you for your words of wisdom and
daily motivational quotes, which helped me get through this process! Scotty, your unwavering
support, encouragement, and patience have been a cornerstone of my journey. Thank you for
always believing in me! To my friends, thank you for your constant support and for reminding
me that I can achieve my goals. Finally, to my best friend, Rex, I love and miss you.
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The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; 2024) sets standards for counseling programs to follow and maintain. Based on these standards, doctoral programs have specific guidelines and expectations of students to ensure that they receive adequate training, display professional behavior, and develop the professional identity of counselor educator. Following CACREP standards, doctoral programs in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) must offer training and knowledge in five primary professional roles: (1) counseling, (2) teaching, (3) supervision, (4) research and scholarship, and (5) leadership and/or advocacy (CACREP, 2024). Doctoral students must meet these standards and expectations through their academic work in courses as well as the actual practice in teaching, supervision, and research or scholarship opportunities.

During the course of doctoral training, doctoral students take on increasing amounts of responsibility. They often enter contracts with the counseling department and their institutions to complete various tasks, including teaching undergraduate-level courses, co-teaching graduate-level CACREP courses, supervising counselors-in-training (CITs), grading, evaluating master-level students, and participating in admission interviews. Teaching and supervision experience is typically gained through a teaching assistant (TA) position, where doctoral students frequently establish close working relationships with master’s students. These relationships significantly influence the skill development and overall training of the master-level students (Baltrinic & Suddeath, 2020; Li & Liu, 2020; Li, 2016). (for clarity, note that the terms CIT and master-level student will be used interchangeably in this chapter).
Doctoral students have a unique position in CES departments, juggling multiple responsibilities that necessitate continuous support and guidance from faculty. Consequently, students may expect counseling departments to provide clear guidance and regulations regarding the evaluation process, the professional dispositions students are expected to embody, and what constitutes professional competence. However, the current available literature primarily focuses on problems of professional competence (PPC) among master-level students and faculty, often neglecting doctoral students. Existing research covers PPC for CITs, including various factors and aspects of the gatekeeping process (Brown, 2013; Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013; Bryant et al., 2013; Freeman et al., 2019; Glance et al., 2012; Goodrich & Shin, 2013; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014; Shuermann et al., 2018). Researchers also address issues of PPC among faculty (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2015; Kress & Dixon, 2007; Lamb et al., 1987; Nigro, 2004), with limited attention given to how PPC is defined, addressed, and evaluated at the doctoral level. Furthermore, many CES programs lack specificity and clarity in handling doctoral students’ PPC through various stages of the gatekeeping process, as compared to CITs (Bryant et al., 2013; Lambie et al., 2018; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014). Given the crucial role that doctoral students play within counseling departments, scholars in their studies have emphasized the need for systems to evaluate doctoral students’ performance and address any potential PPC through remediation or gatekeeping steps (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019; Krinke, 2021).

Despite counseling departments conducting annual evaluations and outlining specific standards in student handbooks to meet CACREP (2024) standards, they often fail to distinguish between the evaluation of doctoral roles and CITs. This oversight can lead to confusion, role ambiguity, and potentially PPC (Brown, 2013). Understanding the processes employed by counselor educators to address and resolve PPC among doctoral students may clarify methods to
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handle PPC in the five primary professional roles of doctoral students. This information has the potential to inform how counselor educators meet instructional and ethical standards, as well as how they engage in the evaluation process. Research on this topic could enhance the quality of doctoral programs by emphasizing the need for more clarity, specificity, and transparency in the evaluation of doctoral roles, all while striving to graduate competent counselor educators.
CHAPTER 1: Conceptual Framework

This chapter highlights the significance of doctoral roles in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs and discusses the complexity of problems of professional competence (PPC) that doctoral students may encounter. First, the chapter will present an overview and background of doctoral roles in CES programs, encompassing the five distinct roles of CES doctoral students. Second, the chapter will delve into relevant literature from counseling and psychology to provide an in-depth examination of PPC in the context of doctoral students. This section will also cover (a) pertinent definitions and terminology, (b) various types of PPC, (c) the repercussions of doctoral students’ PPC on master-level students, doctoral peers, the counselor educator profession, and CES programs, and (d) the functional interplay between PPC and the gatekeeping process. Finally, the chapter will conclude by offering a clear statement of the problem.

Roles of Doctoral Students in Counselor Education and Supervision Programs (CES)

Doctoral students are counselor educators-in-training, acquiring knowledge and developing skills in specific areas. As mentioned earlier, in addition to maintaining an existing professional identity of a counselor, doctoral students expand their roles to encompass teaching, research, supervision, and leadership/advocacy— all of which are associated with being a counselor educator (CACREP, 2024; Dollarhide et al., 2013). Alongside adhering to the CACREP (2024) standards, doctoral students must also follow the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014). Consequently, doctoral students are obligated to uphold the ethical responsibilities of a practicing counselor while simultaneously teaching these standards in their role as supervisors to master-level students.
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Doctoral students face the challenge of integrating a counselor identity with other doctoral roles, necessitating guidance and mentorship from faculty (Dollarhide et al., 2013). This collaboration entails faculty stating clear responsibilities of doctoral roles, providing feedback on tasks, and conducting evaluations of professional development. In addition to the support from faculty, support from doctoral peers during a Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program plays a significant role in students’ ability to integrate roles of counselor, doctoral student, and counselor educator (Dollarhide et al., 2013). Specifically, “peer relationships seem to be crucial in the development of legitimacy” (Dollarhide et al., 2013, p. 148). To gain such legitimacy, doctoral students must develop skills, knowledge, professional behavior, and dispositions across the five roles described below.

Counselor

The counselor role includes the following areas of training: (a) ability to examine evidence of scholarly work in counseling process and theories, (b) relevant application of theories into a counseling process, (c) ability to conceptualize clients from various theoretical modalities, (d) evidence of scholarly examination of a cultural approach across services, (e) evaluation of effectiveness of counseling, and (f) understanding of legal and ethical disputes and responsibilities across various settings in a counseling background (CACREP, 2024, p. 27).

Supervisor

The supervisor role includes the following areas of training: (a) theories and modalities of counseling supervision, (b) skills in counseling supervision across different settings, (c) evaluation of supervisees’ development, characteristics, and specific skills, (d) administrative work and responsibilities related to supervision, (e) consistent evaluation, remediation, and
gatekeeping processes, and (f) understanding of legal and ethical responsibilities and duties (CACREP, 2024, p. 27-28).

**Teacher**

The teacher role includes the following areas of training: (a) roles and responsibilities of faculty, (b) andragogy and adult learning theories, (c) applicable teaching methods, (d) curriculum design and instructional delivery, (e) integration of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice principles and practices in the counselor education curriculum, (f) attentiveness to students’ learning with consideration of individual differences in learning, (g) screening, remediation, and gatekeeping functions relevant to teaching, (h) assessment of student learning and professional dispositions, (i) understanding of legal and ethical issues and responsibilities, (j) culturally sustaining strategies for counselor education, and (k) the role of mentoring in counselor education (CACREP, 2024, p. 28).

**Researcher and Scholar**

The role of researcher and scholar include the following areas of training: (a) research designs appropriate to quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and action research questions or hypotheses, (b) models and methods of program evaluation, (c) formulation of research questions and hypotheses that meets the standards for professional research and publication, (d) professional writing for peer-reviewed journal publication, (e) conference proposal related to the professional tasks, (f) grant proposals and other sources of funding, (g) consideration of culturally competent research, and (h) strategies for conducting an ethical research (CACREP, 2024, p. 28-29).
Leader and Advocate

The role of leader and advocate involves gaining knowledge and practice in the following areas: (a) theories, models, and skills of leadership, (b) process of accreditation standards and program accreditation, (c) operation in various entities such as agencies, organization, and other institutions, (d) ability to respond to crises and disasters, (e) advocacy related to the professional roles of counselor and counselor educator, (f) advocacy on behalf of clients at the individual, system, and policy levels, (g) ongoing strategies of leadership related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice issues, (h) continuous integration of culturally sustaining leadership and advocacy practices, (i) consideration for ethics, and (n) importance of self-care (CACREP, 2024, p. 29).

These descriptions of roles highlight the rigorous training and high level of responsibility that doctoral students bear as future counselor educators. Counseling departments and faculty place significant trust in doctoral students, as they serve as mentors to CITs and play a crucial role in shaping their development of a counselor identity. Thus, as future counselor educators, doctoral students require support and mentorship during their own training from faculty and peers (Dollarhide et al., 2013).

Faculty Standards for Counselor Educators

In order to provide examples of the training that doctoral students receive, the expertise they are expected to acquire, and the nature of potential tasks across various roles, this section describes the faculty standards outlined by CACREP (2024). According to CACREP (2024), these standards mandate that faculty members should possess the following qualifications and characteristics: (a) hold an earned doctoral degree in counselor education or a related field, (b) actively engage in professional activities, scholarly pursuits, and service to the profession, (c)
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identify with a specialized area of practice, (d) be responsible for developing program curricula and establishing policies and procedures for the program, (e) possess experience and practical knowledge in the content they teach, (f) demonstrate leadership skills, and (g) serve as supervisors (p. 6-7). These standards also require consistent evidence of involvement in professional associations, maintenance of relevant counseling professional credentials, and active participation in professional advocacy, counseling practice, or research (CACREP, 2024).

In addition to faculty qualifications and characteristics, CACREP (2024) standards include a dedicated section on “academic quality” that outlines the responsibility of counselor education program faculty to continually assess students’ demonstration of knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions. This task necessitates that faculty members evaluate whether students are exhibiting the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to practice as counselors and counselor educators. Moreover, through ongoing assessments, faculty are expected to monitor the effectiveness of the program and identify areas for improvement (CACREP, 2024). The “Individual Student Assessment” section in the CACREP (2024) standards explicitly states that “counselor education program faculty continuously and systematically assess how students individually demonstrate progress toward and mastery of the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions required for program graduates” (p. 9). In essence, faculty are mandated to act as evaluators and potential “gatekeepers” responsible for evaluating the progress of each student, with specific attention to the program’s curricular areas and professional roles. This general approach highlights a gap in the standards, as it overlooks the distinct roles and professional objectives of master’s-level and doctoral-level students. This lack of differentiation underscores the necessity for tailored assessment strategies that cater specifically to the unique developmental trajectories and professional goals of doctoral students.
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Summary of Distinct Doctoral Roles

During their training, doctoral students manage multiple roles, which can be overwhelming. The levels of responsibility and mentorship inherent in the five professional roles of counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy underscore the necessity for ongoing support and guidance from experienced faculty. If CES programs lack standardized procedures or systems for evaluating doctoral students’ progress, doctoral students may be susceptible to developing problems of professional competence (PPC). Consequently, gaining a deeper understanding of the intricacies of PPC would benefit both faculty and doctoral students in devising a system for addressing professional concerns and establishing a framework for obtaining the necessary support to meet instructional standards and prepare for active participation in the five primary professional roles.

Problems of Professional Competence (PPC)

Understanding the complexity of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) is a hefty task for both students and faculty. The complexity of evaluating PPC in students is rooted in the subjective nature and various ways of making interpretations about a problem (Shuermann et al., 2018). The other side of this complicated task is the requirement that faculty continuously evaluate and measure students’ progress in key knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions per the CACREP standards (2024). Additionally, the absence of a clear definition of PPC that distinctly defines PPC and offers specific examples to the five primary professional roles of doctoral students adds more complexity to this important task. Without a clear definition and concrete language around PPC, faculty and doctoral students potentially can be confused by vague language and definitions. Therefore, this section will cover (a) relevant definitions, (b)
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types of PPC, (c) PPC’s impact on students, doctoral peers, profession, and CES programs, followed by a section on the gatekeeping process.

**Relevant Definitions**

The first step in attending to the complicated task of evaluating problems of professional competence (PPC) among students is to clarify the existing definitions and language involving professional dispositions, professional competence, and PPC. These definitions connect to the evaluation of students’ characteristics in academic and nonacademic categories, and inform strategies to develop professional competence and address potential emerging PPC if issues are not resolved.

**Professional Dispositions.** Newly updated CACREP standards (2024) define professional dispositions as “the commitments, characteristics, values, beliefs, and behaviors that influence the counselor’s professional growth and interactions with clients, faculty, supervisors, and peers, including working in a diverse, multicultural, and global society with marginalized populations” (p. 35). In a 2020 quantitative study, Miller et. al. defined and measured professional dispositions in counseling students. As a result of this study, the authors proposed the following definition:

Counselor dispositions are aspects of personal and professional functioning that subsume intellective factors personality characteristics, relational proficiencies, and values orientations accounted for by nine correlated, but independent, factors: cognitive, ethical/legal, interpersonal, personal wellness, personal-professional boundaries, professionalism, responsiveness, self-control, and suitability for the profession. Counselor dispositions influence and are influenced by cognitive, affective, and behavioral development in a manner consistent with the advancement of clinical
proficiency. As such, dispositions are both critical prerequisites to and predictors of professional competence. (Miller et al., 2020, p. 127).

In contrast to CACREP’s definition, Miller and colleagues (2020) provide a more specific definition of professional dispositions among counseling students. Although both definitions pertain to professional dispositions in counseling students and counselors, and thereby address the counselor role of doctoral students, they present challenges when applied to the remaining roles that doctoral students undertake in teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy. Notably, while professional dispositions are not the central focus of this study, they play a crucial role in shaping the process of evaluating professional competence and identifying potential areas of problems of professional competence (PPC).

**Professional Competence.** As previously mentioned, understanding dispositions as predictors of professional competence is vital in counseling programs. In a 2021 qualitative study, Krinke (2021) explored the lived experiences of counselor educators gatekeeping doctoral students and referenced this definition of professional competence, provided by McAdams et al. (2007): “the regular demonstration of a combination of ethical and effective academic skills and professional dispositions necessary for the practice of clinical counseling or counselor education” (p. 11). While this definition offers some insight into professional competence, it remains somewhat broad and vague. This vagueness may lead to confusion among doctoral students about how their professional roles are evaluated.

Additional studies have deliberated on the operational definition of competencies, asserting that competencies serve as indicators of students’ ability to perform their roles in a work setting (Homrich, 2009). Specifically, Homrich (2009) posited that competencies “are the observable and measurable behaviors that demonstrate acquired knowledge, skills, abilities, and
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personal attributes that are critical to successful job performance” (p. 6). Kaslow et al. (2007) expanded upon Homrich’s (2009) definition of professional competence, contending that competencies encompass complex and interactive clusters of (a) attitudes, beliefs, and values, (b) dispositions and personal characteristics, (c) self-perceptions, and (d) motivations, establishing a connection to the “whole person” (p. 480). Kaslow et al. (2007) underscored the importance of ongoing reevaluation and redefinition of professional competences. Through evaluation, faculty can discern areas that exhibit a lack of professional competence, problematic behaviors, and recurring patterns of mistakes, leading to problems of professional competence, or PPC.

**Problems of Professional Competence (PPC).** When faculty engage in evaluating students, including assessing and measuring professional dispositions and professional competence, they can potentially identify problematic behavior, or, in other words, a PPC. Recent language shifts involve using words such as “problematic” instead of “impairment” or “incompetence” to distance themselves from discriminatory language and diagnostic terms sometimes used in disability legislation, like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA; Elman & Forrest, 2007; Goodrich & Shin, 2013; Homrich, 2009; Kaslow et al., 2007). These changes in terminology and definition require careful consideration to mitigate legal risks (Homrich, 2009).

Consequently, recommended terminology involves the word “problematic” to focus on behaviors exhibited by students that impact their professional training and academic performance, necessitating additional involvement through some form of remediation process. In a quantitative study by Brown-Rice and Furr (2019), researchers examined PPC and the types of PPC among counseling doctoral students. The authors of this study provided a definition of PPC also included in the earlier-mentioned qualitative study by Krinke (2021), encompassing two specific categories: (1) classroom performance and (2) dispositional problems. Examples of
classroom performance encompass academic and clinical skills, while examples of dispositional problems include, but are not limited to, personality, psychological, and interpersonal issues (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019).

Kaslow et al., (2007) have another definition that includes more detail and offers specific examples in the field of psychology:

Problems of professional competence may be exhibited when individuals do not have adequate training, education, or experience opportunities; are unable to acquire an accepted level of competence; are unable or unwilling to acquire professional standards and integrate them into a repertoire of professional behavior; fail to respond to feedback; do not continuously grow or make specific progress; lack self-awareness with regard to weakness; have problems with professionalism and/or interpersonal interactions; exhibit prejudicial attitudes; lack high levels of integrity; and/or have personal problems, emotional reactions, or distress (e.g., substance use, mental health difficulties, personality disorders, cognitive challenges) that they are unable to control and that affect their professional functioning (p. 481).

Other colleagues in the field of psychology offer a similar definition that addresses similar factors of PPC. Homrich (2009) referenced an older definition of problematic behavior by Lamb and colleagues (1987):

(a) an inability and/or unwillingness to acquire and integrate professional standards into one’s repertoire of professional behavior, (b) an inability to acquire professional skills in order to reach an acceptable level of competency, and (c) an inability to control personal stress, psychological dysfunction, and/or excessive emotional reactions that interfere with professional functioning (p. 5).
In summary, the definitions of professional dispositions, professional competence, and PPC provide a general understanding of what counseling students are expected to achieve during their training. Particularly, the field of psychology offers more examples and specificity in defining and describing PPC compared to counseling (Homrich, 2009; Kaslow et al., 2007; Lamb et al., 1987). While counseling and psychology trainees clearly comprehend PPC, doctoral students might still be confused about their additional primary professional roles in teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy. This lack of clarity can lead to further misunderstanding and a lack of awareness of potential PPC not only among doctoral students, but across doctoral programs.

Types of PPC

The existing research predominantly focuses on various types of PPC among master-level students, offering limited insights into PPC-related issues among doctoral students. This section provides an overview of PPC across three groups: master-level students (counselors-in-training; CITs), doctoral students, and faculty. It first describes the role of master-level students and their specific types of PPC. Then, it explores the types of PPC observed among doctoral students in CES programs. Finally, it addresses PPC among counselor educators (faculty), highlighting the unique challenges and implications within each context.

Master-Level Students. Master-level students are often referred to as counselors-in-training (CITs) during their program. Master-level students can pursue various specialties, such as addiction counseling, clinical mental health counseling, school counseling, marriage, couple, and family counseling and others. While master-level students have these options, the majority of counseling departments primarily offer programs in clinical mental health counseling and school counseling. This chapter will mainly focus on clinical mental health counseling. CACREP (2024) states that master-level students in a clinical mental health counseling program “will demonstrate the
knowledge and skills necessary to address a wide variety of circumstances within the context of clinical mental health counseling” (Section 5-C). CITs gain knowledge and skills in the following categories: (a) professional counseling orientation and ethical practice, (b) social and cultural diversity, (c) human growth and development, (d) career development, (e) counseling and helping relationships, (f) group counseling and group work, (g) assessment and testing, and (h) research and program evaluation (CACREP, 2024). CITs must follow the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014) to provide ethical care and develop the professional identity of a counselor.

CITs bear significant responsibilities in providing effective and ethical client care. Given these responsibilities, counseling departments employ dedicated tools to assess trainees’ competence, professional conduct, and specific counseling skills. An example of one such tool that evaluates not only counseling-specific skills but also professional dispositions and competence, is the Counselor Competencies Scale – Revised (CCS-R; Lambie et al., 2018). This assessment enables both counselor educators and doctoral students serving in supervisory roles to adhere to instructional standards for tracking and evaluating the progress of CITs.

Lambie and colleagues (2018) developed the CCS-R to comprehensively assess a CIT’s competence development in (a) specific counseling skills and therapeutic conditions, and (b) counseling dispositions and behaviors, as well as provide (c) narrative feedback on areas of strengths and improvements. The second area encompasses 12 items that specifically address counseling dispositions and behaviors including professional ethics, professional conduct, personal and professional boundaries, emotional stability, self-control, and receptivity to feedback (Lambie et al., 2018). Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with a score of “1” indicating a “harmful” demonstration of skills, knowledge, and dispositions by the CIT, and a
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score of “5” signifying “exceeds expectations/demonstrates competencies,” indicating a strong application of these attributes (Lambie et al., 2018). Additionally, the written section of the evaluation allows counselor educators and supervisors to provide narrative feedback regarding strengths or areas needing improvement that are not covered by the scale items.

CIT role, its responsibilities, and evaluation process are straightforward and clear for master-level students. Additionally, researchers have dedicated a lot of attention to the gatekeeping process of master-level students, offering a tremendous amount of helpful information to both faculty and CITs themselves (Brown, 2013; Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013, 2016; Bryant et al., 2013; Freeman et al., 2019; Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Glance et al., 2012; Goodrich & Shin, 2013; Lamb et al., 1987; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Oliver et al., 2004; Shen-Miller et al., 2015; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014; Shuermann et al., 2018).

This section provides a clear identification of the counselor’s role, including specific responsibilities and ethical obligations that master-level students must adhere to. CACREP standards (2024) distinctly outline that master-level students must receive sufficient training to work with individuals from diverse communities, safeguarding people’s well-being. Therefore, most counseling departments employ a concrete evaluation process that uses tools to directly assess counseling skills, professional dispositions, and potential PPCs for CITs.

PPC Among CITs. The available literature overwhelmingly focuses on expectations for CITs, particularly PPC (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013, 2016; Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Lamb et al., 1987; Mears & Allen, 1991; Oliver et al., 2004; Shen-Miller et al., 2015). Examples of PPC among CITs include inadequate academic and clinical skills, which faculty find easier to assess in terms of meeting coursework expectations and practicing specific clinical skills (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013). On the other hand, counselor educators face more challenges in assessing non-
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academic aspects related to personality and psychological suitability. Common problems associated with PPC may be linked to personality disorders, depressive symptoms, adjustment disorders, anxiety symptoms, and alcohol use (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013; Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Oliver et al., 2004).

Additional concerns encompass issues such as dishonesty, manipulation, authority dismissal, and abusive behavior towards others (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013). Another set of examples includes breaches of confidentiality, academic dishonesty, and dual relationships (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013; Mearns & Allen, 1991). Identifying these types of PPC among CITs contributes to a clearer understanding of the consequences involved in a gatekeeping process (Brown, 2013; Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013; Bryant et al., 2013; Freeman et al., 2019; Glance et al., 2012; Goodrich & Shin, 2013; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014; Shuermann et al., 2018). As noted, current research furnishes detailed information on one primary role of CITs, making the gatekeeping process more specific in comparison to the doctoral trainees who simultaneously hold five roles. Therefore, directing more attention and research toward how faculty evaluate PPC across the five roles of doctoral students would offer clarity, examples, and guidance to current and future counselor educators.

PPC Among Counselor Educators (Faculty). The earlier section discussed the role of counselor educators or faculty in detail, covering standards, expectations, tasks, and specific responsibilities. Lamb and colleagues (1987) broadly addressed performance concerns in the context of counselor educators, including a lack of ability to (a) follow instructional standards in their professional behaviors, (b) attain professional skills, (c) manage emotional reactions, distress, and psychological concerns, and (d) maintain ethical behavior (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2015; Falender et al., 2009). Researchers in their studies identified and described PPC among
counselor educators, including but not limited to emotional regulation, unprofessional behavior, mental health concerns, substance use, dual relationships, inadequate preparation to teach a class, and more (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2015; Kress & Dixon, 2007; Lamb et al., 1987; Nigro, 2004).

Failing to address PPC effectively during doctoral training means that some doctoral students may continue to struggle with these issues post-graduation as faculty members. This perpetuation of PPC poses risks or harm to students under their guidance. By not addressing PPC adequately during doctoral training, CES programs risk extending these issues into the professional realm, where counselor educators may continue to exhibit PPC that impacts their ability to provide quality education and supervision. This underscores the need for rigorous and systematic PPC evaluation and intervention strategies at the doctoral level to prevent future problems within the faculty ranks.

**PPC Among Doctoral Students.** Only a few studies examine the types of PPC displayed by doctoral students (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019) and how PPC can result in a gatekeeping process as a consequence (Krinke, 2021). Brown-Rice and Furr (2019) were the first researchers to extensively investigate PPC among doctoral students. In their quantitative study, they explored the types of PPC exhibited by doctoral students, the impact of PPC on their doctoral peers, and whether doctoral students knew how to address PPC in doctoral programs. The researchers identified two types of PPC: academic and nonacademic. Academic PPC included engagement in unprofessional behavior such as academic dishonesty, class absences, tardiness, and lying. Nonacademic PPC included (a) an inability to regulate emotions, (b) inadequate clinical skills, (c) psychological concerns such as suicidal ideation or attempts, mood disorders, and anxiety symptoms, (d) unethical behavior such as confidentiality issues and boundaries, (e) personality disorders, and (f) substance use issues (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019, p. 39).
In the same study, researchers examined how PPC impacted doctoral peers and found that the learning environment was significantly disrupted. Doctoral peers expressed frustration and resentment towards their fellow doctoral students because the presentation of PPC led to an increased workload for other doctoral students. Naturally, doctoral students experienced additional stress and voiced their concerns about a doctoral peer’s fitness for the profession of counselor educator. However, Brown-Rice and Furr (2019) found that doctoral students were not aware of how exactly to address and respond to PPC displayed by their peers. Furthermore, doctoral peers expressed uncertainty and confusion about whether their concerns were addressed by the faculty, leading to anxiety when reporting PPC. Brown-Rice and Furr (2019) highlighted the tension arising from the lack of knowledge about the faculty’s process for addressing PPC among doctoral students, thereby impacting the experiences of doctoral peers in CES programs. In essence, this conflict between confidentiality and transparency underscores the need for further research to unveil counselor educators’ process of attending to and addressing PPC in CES programs.

In conclusion, the five primary professional roles of doctoral students intersect with mentoring master-level students, sharing a learning environment with doctoral peers, entering the counselor educator profession, and representing the quality of CES programs. PPC may impact each of these professional roles. Therefore, the next section will discuss how PPC among doctoral students impact master-level students, doctoral peers, the counselor educator profession, and CES doctoral programs.

**Impact of PPC**

In the previously mentioned study, Brown-Rice and Furr (2019) specifically investigated how doctoral students’ PPC influenced their doctoral peers. Doctoral peers reported that their
peers’ PPC disrupted their learning environment, caused feelings of resentment and additional stress, and increased their workload. Doctoral students questioned their doctoral peers’ fitness for the profession, the permission granted by faculty for peers with PPC to continue in their doctoral program, and the overall quality of the counselor educator profession, given the allowance. A smaller number of doctoral students reported that their doctoral peers’ PPC interfered with their effectiveness as professionals.

In a different study, Brown-Rice and Furr (2015), explored PPC among counselor educators and its impact on their colleagues. The findings paralleled those from the study involving doctoral students, as counselor educators reported that their colleagues’ PPC significantly hindered their ability to work effectively, resulting in increased stress, workload, and feelings of resentment. Faculty expressed frustration that the tenure process allowed the employment of colleagues with PPC by the university without addressing the PPC issue. Counselor educators also believed that having a colleague with PPC impacted students’ ability to receive proper training, risked their emotional well-being, and conveyed mixed messages about gatekeeping and ethical responsibilities related to professional standards. While there is currently no specific research on the impact of doctoral students with PPC on master-level students, the reported findings from Brown-Rice and Furr’s (2015) research can help draw conclusions about the potential impact of doctoral PPC on master-level students in teaching, supervision, and mentorship.

Like researchers in the counseling field, scholars in psychology have investigated how PPC affects psychology trainees. Psychology researchers reported that students’ PPC directly impact the closeness and conflict within relationships, as well as feelings of responsibility and avoidance (Shen-Miller et al., 2015). Participants reported that their conversations with peers
who displayed PPC focused on passive dissatisfaction and annoyance, leading to a reduction in contact with peers with PPC. Participants also reported direct conflicts with peers, frustration regarding indirect communication, and the dispersal of responsibilities due to their peer’s PPC. Participants reported feeling responsible when obligated to take on additional workloads due to their peers’ PPC.

Participants described avoiding the discussion of additional issues or concerns with faculty or trainers due to the dismissal of students’ concerns and a lack of responsibility in addressing the PPC in peers (Shen-Miller et al., 2015). However, participants reported that their experiences and reactions were due to not being informed about any actions taken by the faculty, leaving students in the dark. In summary, students with PPC influenced other students to (a) avoid interactions with peers, (b) worry about potential conflict and repercussions, (c) experience dread, anxiety, and discomfort when interacting with peers, (d) doubt faculty’s ability to evaluate PPC in peers, (e) experience frustration due to extra work, and (f) worry about negative evaluations when reporting a concern (Shen-Miller et al., 2015).

Summary

Collectively, the results from the two Brown-Rice and Furr studies (2015 & 2019) and the Shen-Miller et al. (2015) study addressed the primary issue of PPC and the impact that PPC can have on other students, colleagues, the profession, and CES doctoral programs in general. Consistently, researchers addressed the consequences of PPC in doctoral programs and the potential harm that PPC can cause to others if not addressed. While these studies are not directly related to how faculty address PPC among doctoral-level students, the results demonstrate the need to further examine and attend to addressing PPC among doctoral students. Because
addressing PPC often involves a formalized gatekeeping process, this process warrants further discussion.

**Gatekeeping Process**

CACREP (2024) mandates that all counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs undertake the complex yet essential task of gatekeeping. The gatekeeping process constitutes an ethical responsibility of counselor educators, necessitating the monitoring of student progress and the assessment of potential problems of professional competence (PPC). PPC relates directly to the gatekeeping process in two ways: (1) evaluating and addressing PPC enables faculty to ensure a student’s fitness for the profession, and conversely, (2) failing to evaluate and address PPC holds the potential to graduate an unsuitable professional that could pose harm or risk to the public (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2024). When assessing for PPC, the gatekeeping process involves four chronological steps: (1) program admission, (2) ongoing evaluation, (3) remediation (if necessary), and (4) potential dismissal (Bryant et al., 2013).

**Relevant Definitions**

Most counseling departments incorporate essential definitions and gatekeeping procedures into their student handbooks or manuals. In the existing literature, researchers stress the need to have clear, formal, and written expectations, standards, and procedures concerning gatekeeping processes (Shuermann et al., 2018). The intricate nature of the gatekeeping process and the importance of addressing PPC demand clear definitions of key terms.

**Gatekeeping.** The ACA Code of Ethics (2014) defines gatekeeping as “the initial and ongoing academic, skill, and dispositional assessment of students’ competency for professional practice, including remediation and termination as appropriate” (p. 20). In addition to following
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the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) and CACREP (2024) standards, counseling programs must follow the procedures and protocols established by the university.

**Program Admission.** The admission process involves a thorough review of an applicant’s academic records, such as transcripts, personal statements, and letters of recommendation. Counselor educators also assess applicants’ academic abilities and interpersonal interaction skills (Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). This initial step serves as the first “active gate” in the screening of potential candidates (Bryant et al., 2013). During this process, faculty evaluate applicants’ academic qualifications based on their undergraduate GPA, standardized test scores, transcripts, letters of recommendation, and personal statements. Additionally, interviews provide an opportunity for faculty to assess interpersonal skills through various questions and informal discussions (Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010).

**Gateslapping.** Gateslapping refers to a student who is demonstrating lack of suitability for a profession by displaying potential gatekeeping issues and yet is allowed to enter a program and continue progressing in their program without some type of intervention or remediation (Charnley, 2021; Krinke, 2021).

**Assessment.** CACREP (2024) defines student assessment as “the systematic gathering of information for decision-making about individuals, groups, programs, or processes. Assessment is the measurement of an individual student’s level of attainment of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Student assessment is distinct from program evaluation that includes aggregating the individual student data into the overall student assessment data used in the process of program evaluation” (p. 36).

**Evaluation.** CACREP (2024) defines program evaluation as the “the review and interpretation of information that has been gathered from and about individuals, programs, or
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processes that lead to decisions and future actions. Evaluation refers to the method and process of determining and judging overall program effectiveness using the assessment and other data that has been gathered to review the program and implement improvements based on the results.” (p. 35).

**Formative and Summative Evaluations.** CACREP (2024) defines formative evaluation as examining “… the development of professional competencies with a focus on identifying strengths and deficiencies and corresponding learning interventions” (p. 34). CACREP (2024) states that summative evaluation “focuses on outcomes and is used to assess whether desired learning goals are achieved consistently with a professional standard” (p. 34).

**Remediation.** Remediation involves addressing and documenting noticeable deficiencies in a student’s performance and creating a specific plan to address these deficiencies (Charnley, 2021). The aim of remediation is to develop targeted strategies that help a student achieve professional competence (Freeman et al., 2018). Common areas for remediation include self-awareness, personal reflection, openness to feedback, counseling skills and knowledge, and professional boundaries. Remediation is central to the gatekeeping process, where faculty typically intervene by formulating a professional development or remediation plan to monitor a student’s progress and improvements.

**Dismissal.** Dismissal represents the final stage of the gatekeeping process, culminating in the termination of a student from the program. Removing student counselors from their course of study is a significant responsibility tied to the ethical requirements of gatekeeping (Bryant et al., 2013). Typically, dismissal follows an unsuccessful remediation process where the student fails to achieve the set goals or improvement plans. According to DeCino et al. (2020), dismissal is the most challenging step, often complicated by concerns over potential legal repercussions.
Salient Findings in Gatekeeping Research

The literature includes various studies on gatekeeping processes that primarily focus on master-level students. While current research lacks studies centered around doctoral students, the findings from the available studies provide information on the general process of gatekeeping that offers further considerations and justification for more research at a doctoral level. In this section, the research findings from three studies and one conceptual article capture the nuances of gatekeeping, offering an overview of the general process, and consequently addressing the current gap in the research on addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) and the gatekeeping process among doctoral students.

In their qualitative study examining the gatekeeping process in master-level counseling programs, Ziomek-Daigle and Christensen (2010) identified four distinct phases of the gatekeeping process: The first phase, preadmission screening, involves evaluating academic aptitude criteria, including grade point average, standardized test scores, recommendation letters, personal statements, additional education, and prior work experience. They highlighted interpersonal interactions during interviews as an important gatekeeping component in this phase. The second phase, postadmission screening, involves continuous monitoring of academic aptitude, focusing on grades, the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination, and the Praxis Series Tests. During this phase, interpersonal interactions reveal both favorable and unfavorable personality characteristics of counseling students. During the third phase, remediation, faculty apply specific requirements for students who do not meet expectations and professional standards. Remediation plans typically include intensified supervision and personal development measures. In the fourth phase, outcomes of remediation are categorized as successful, unsuccessful, or indifferent, indicating varying degrees of success resulting from the
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remediation process. The study offers valuable insights into the gatekeeping procedures employed by faculty in counseling programs. Furthermore, research findings outline specific moments and methods for faculty to detect PPC issues in students, giving them clear timeframes to observe, address, intervene, and respond to such concerns effectively (Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010).

Henderson and Dufrene (2017) investigated the remedial interventions employed by counseling graduate programs to address issues among master-level students. They identified three frequently utilized interventions: (1) participating in personal counseling, (2) imposing limitations or restrictions on course registration, and (3) completing assignments along with attending follow-up meetings with faculty. These interventions ultimately influenced the student’s status in the program, resulting in either maintaining an active student status or being placed on probation/withdrawing status. These findings provide valuable insights into the remediation strategies implemented in counseling graduate programs (Henderson & Dufrene, 2017).

In their 2018 qualitative study, Freeman and colleagues explored counselor educators’ perspectives on dispositions and gatekeeping among master-level students. They categorized dispositional behaviors into three descriptors. The first descriptor, “pliable,” denoted behaviors that faculty could effectively teach. For instance, behaviors such as conscientiousness, coping, self-care, and ethical conduct were considered more pliable and amenable to change through faculty intervention (Freeman et al., 2018, p. 216). The second descriptor, “malleable,” referred to behaviors that were less responsive to change compared to pliable behaviors, such as openness to change and cooperativeness. Counselor educators suggested that these behaviors could be modified with sufficient time and student investment in the remediation process (Freeman et al.,
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2018, p. 217). The third descriptor, “tenacious,” encompassed behaviors with less successful remediation outcomes. Examples of tenacious dispositions included moral reasoning, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and emotional stability. These tenacious dispositions were identified as prerequisites for effecting actual changes in personal and professional behaviors, posing the greatest challenges for faculty when applying remedial interventions in the gatekeeping process (Freeman et al., 2018).

Goodrich and Shin (2013) advocate that counselor educators involved in the gatekeeping process should integrate culturally responsive interventions to address problems of professional competence (PPC) among master-level students. They emphasize the importance for counselor education programs establishing standards that evaluate trainee behaviors through a culturally appropriate lens, rather than automatically labeling them as problematic due to differences. Faculty are encouraged to take into account the experiences of underrecognized and marginalized master-level students when assessing their professional dispositions and PPC (Goodrich and Shin, 2013).

Additionally, studies point to the importance of counselor educators affording students opportunities to express their own perspectives. This includes being receptive to feedback regarding student experiences such as microaggression or discrimination, and acknowledging their (counselor educators’) own power, privilege, and positionality when interacting with students from underrecognized backgrounds. For example, counselor educators or supervisors might be more reluctant to offer corrective feedback to Black supervisees due to differences in racial identities and a desire to avoid creating power imbalances or being perceived as overly critical. This behavior can be construed as microaggression against Black students (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Counselor educators should also assess their personal reactions, feelings,
thoughts, and biases when appraising the professional dispositions and PPC of counseling students. Given their positions of authority, Goodrich and Shin (2013) underscored the importance of faculty offering feedback to foster the professional development and growth of underrecognized students.

**Master-Level Students’ Perceptions of Gatekeeping**

Although no available studies examine the perceptions of doctoral-level students regarding gatekeeping, Foster and colleagues (2014) conducted a study examining the perceptions of ten master-level students concerning gatekeeping. All participants emphasized the necessity and importance of gatekeeping, and expressed the need for clear policies about the gatekeeping process that should be accessible to students. The participants unanimously stressed that faculty have an obligation to engage in gatekeeping and even to dismiss students who exhibit behaviors such as “substance abuse, ethical violations, legal issues, violation of school policies, boundary issues, closed-mindedness, disruptive behavior, and an inability to connect or be empathetic with others” (Foster et al., 2014, p. 196). The students went on to identify important components of gatekeeping, including (a) in-depth and comprehensive admission interviews, (b) the communication of concrete and clear parameters to students, and (c) the presence of a frequent feedback and remediation process (Foster et al., 2014).

Notably, all ten participants in this study were aware of students in their programs who displayed problems of professional competence (PPC). They all questioned the suitability of these students for the counseling profession and expressed concerns about the characteristics and qualities of some of their classmates. These characteristics were related to PPC and encompassed behaviors such as “giving advice, emotional disconnect, unresolved personal issues, judgmental attitude, unwillingness to accept feedback, negative attitude, self-absorption, lack of emotional
stability, lack of interpersonal skills, and substance use or abuse” (Foster et al., 2014, p. 197). In closing, counseling students affirmed the necessity of gatekeeping and expressed the need for clear parameters, ongoing feedback, and direct communication about the gatekeeping process from faculty. Based on the needs expressed by master-level students, doctoral students may similarly require clear standards, ongoing feedback, and transparent communication, underscoring the importance of standardized procedures and explicit gatekeeping policies for doctoral students.

**Faculty’s Experiences and Perceptions of Gatekeeping**

Counselor educators or faculty hold the role of gatekeeper in both master-level and doctoral-level programs. Faculty are responsible for detecting problems of professional competence (PPC) and addressing those in a timely manner to prevent any potential harm to clients, students, and the overall program experience (Rapp et al., 2018). While faculty follow the same CACREP standards (2024) and ACA Code of Ethics (2014), the literature review indicates that faculty experiences with the gatekeeping process vary between master-level and doctoral students.

**Gatekeeping Master-Level Students.** In their qualitative research, Shuermann and colleagues (2018) examined the perspectives of nine counselor educators regarding gatekeeping. All participants stressed the importance of upholding a professional obligation to gatekeep master-level students or CITs as a means of safeguarding clients from potential harm. They highlighted the necessity of implementing a structured approach to gatekeeping that includes the use of remediation plans, gatekeeping models, formal assessments, clear policies and procedures, and collaboration with students. Four study participants specifically underscored the significance
of using formalized assessments and evaluations to monitor the personal and professional development of CITs (Shuermann et al., 2018).

In their study, Shuermann et al. (2018) found that many faculty participants struggled to address the interpersonal or personal aspects of the gatekeeping process due to the subjective nature of evaluating CITs’ personal characteristics. Faculty identified common concerns related to CIT self-awareness, openness to feedback, willingness to engage in personal reflection, interpersonal interactions with clients and peers, and sensitivity to diverse needs (Shuermann et al., 2018, p. 59). Furthermore, faculty expressed difficulties in determining the appropriate course of action when such concerns arose, as differences in opinions, interpretations, and perspectives among faculty members can lead to varying assessments of the seriousness of a particular issue. In contrast, faculty did not encounter any difficulties when it came to identifying severe issues such as predatory behavior, breaches of confidentiality, substance abuse, intentional ethical violations, sexual harassment, and deliberate cheating that warranted immediate dismissal (Shuermann et al., 2018).

Finally, the researchers stressed their salient finding that centered on the importance of maintaining ongoing communication about the gatekeeping process. Participants highlighted the significance of initiating conversations about gatekeeping from the outset, starting with the admission interviews and extending through discussions about classroom expectations. Four participants underscored the necessity of fostering a climate of transparency surrounding the gatekeeping process and promoting open dialogues about its various steps (Shuermann et al., 2018).

In another qualitative study, DeCino and colleagues (2020) examined counselor educators’ emotionally intense experiences of gatekeeping CITs. The researchers found that their
participants primarily experienced emotions of anger, surprise, sadness, and despair when identifying students’ poor choices, poor boundaries, and poor professional behaviors. An important finding highlighted the faculty’s emotional experiences with legal proceedings, with the majority of the participants describing their involvement in legal procedures as “physically and emotionally taxing, confusing, and disruptive on personal and professional levels” (DeCino et al., 2020, p. 554). Study participants also reflected on ways that they changed their approaches to gatekeeping due to these emotionally intense experiences with the gatekeeping process, identifying the following takeaways: (a) commitment to ethics, program standards, transparency, and fairness, (b) engagement in clear and proactive gatekeeping processes, (c) management of personal beliefs, emotions, and opinions of students, (d) change in the program and department such as writing clear syllabi for all courses, (e) importance of a supportive team of colleagues and clear faculty roles, (f) collaborative work with administrators such as deans, human resource representatives, university lawyers, provosts, and presidents, and (g) preparation of doctoral students and new faculty to be gatekeepers.

**Gatekeeping Doctoral-Level Students.** In contrast to multiple studies addressing experiences of faculty gatekeeping master-level students, only one available study has directly examined gatekeeping of doctoral-level students. Krinke (2021) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study that directly explored the experiences of five counselor educators involved in gatekeeping doctoral students. From this study, Krinke (2021) identified three prominent themes: (1) ambiguity in gatekeeping and nurturing future faculty, (2) distinct aspects of corrective remediation in doctoral programs, and (3) forging a doctoral gatekeeper identity.

In the first theme, all five participants highlighted their responsibility in preparing qualified future counselor educators (Krinke, 2021). Nevertheless, they encountered challenges
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in assessing the primary professional roles of doctoral students that encompass counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy. The participants emphasized the distinctiveness of evaluating these five roles simultaneously and stressed the significance of gatekeeping processes in the pre-admission stage, particularly through interviews. Post-admission gates involved the assessment of professional dispositions and academic challenges. Collectively, the participants identified professional issues at the doctoral level, including expectations of professionalism, leadership, ethical conduct, effective communication, openness to feedback, and respectful interactions with peers, master-level students, and faculty. Academic challenges encompassed issues with writing, plagiarism, grade point average, and time management (Krinke, 2021).

The second theme delved into participants’ experiences and comprehension of remediating doctoral-level students (Krinke, 2021). They presented varying experiences with remediation, with some faculty members advocating for corrective remediation plans, while others reported less frequent engagement in remediation with doctoral students compared to master-level students. However, all participants agreed on the complexity of remediation at the doctoral level, highlighting vague descriptions of professional dispositions, inadequate training in remediation, and the substantial emotional burden it carries. Three out of five counselor educators expressed their struggles in defining, evaluating, and measuring professional dispositions due to a lack of clarity and established policies. Moreover, participants collectively described feelings of fear, stress, overwhelm, and trauma associated with the remediation process. Their perspectives on gateslipping were somewhat contradictory, with some indicating it caused less harm due to their counseling training and confidence in receiving evaluation as new
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faculty, while others emphasized its harmful implications due to their responsibilities in working with students, clients, and universities (Krinke, 2021).

The third theme centered around participants’ experiences in developing an identity as gatekeepers of doctoral students (Krinke, 2021). Although their approaches to the gatekeeping process differed, they all shared a common goal of safeguarding the counselor educator profession. Most participants discussed their continuous evaluation of doctoral students and their emphasis on engaging in conversations when issues related to problems of professional competence (PPC) arose. One participant highlighted the gravity of gatekeeping responsibilities and the financial consequences it might impose on doctoral students. They stressed the importance of early interventions to mitigate these financial repercussions.

In summary, the five counselor educators in Krinke’s (2021) study offered valuable insights into their experiences with gatekeeping at the doctoral level. Despite lacking formal training in gatekeeping as counselor educator professionals or during their own doctoral education, they acquired valuable lessons from their personal gatekeeping experiences. Krinke’s (2021) findings suggest gatekeeping at the doctoral level is more complex and overwhelming compared to the master-level, given the multifaceted roles that demand ongoing evaluation and attention. This underscores the necessity for further research into how faculty address PPC among doctoral students, especially considering the level of responsibility that doctoral students bear in their training, interactions with master-level students and faculty, their profession, and potential future employment at a university.

Summary

Gatekeeping is a process that faculty must actively attend to and for which they bear responsibility. Faculty have the task of monitoring students’ progress in training, along with an
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ethical obligation to graduate new professionals who are competent and suitable for their profession. Researchers have identified specific steps in the gatekeeping process, offered essential considerations, such as cultural sensitivity and a multicultural lens, and discussed the impact of the gatekeeping process on both faculty and students. Many scholars have recognized the tension in the evaluation and remediation processes, particularly concerning interpersonal interactions and personality characteristics that are challenging to define, measure, and address (Brown-rice & Furr, 2019; Krinke, 2021; Shuermann et al., 2018). While these scholars have made significant contributions to the current literature, especially in the supervision and gatekeeping of master-level students, researchers need to direct their attention to doctoral students who hold multiple roles and consequently carry more responsibility in the field. This situation requires more specificity, concreteness, and structure in the gatekeeping process, especially when addressing PPC.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigates how counselor educators in CES programs experience and address PPC among doctoral students, expanding on the current literature that primarily focuses on PPC among master-level students, and offering insights into how faculty handle PPC in the context of doctoral education.

The study’s central question is: What is the experience and process of counselor educators in addressing PPC among doctoral students in CES programs? By examining the experiences and processes of counselor educators in CES programs, this study sheds light on the complexities of gatekeeping and offers greater clarity, specificity, and considerations for addressing PPC among doctoral students. In exploring this question, this research aims to
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improve the evaluation of PPC in aspiring counselor educators, thereby enhancing the understanding of gatekeeping practices within the field.
CHAPTER 2: Methodology

The importance of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC), particularly in CACREP-accredited programs (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019; CACREP, 2024), is underscored in the available research. While the literature has extensively discussed PPC among master-level students (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013, 2016; Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Lamb et al., 1987; Mearns & Allen, 1991; Oliver et al., 2004; Shen-Miller et al., 2015), limited knowledge exists regarding PPC among doctoral students in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs. The few existing studies primarily focus on the types of PPC that doctoral students may exhibit (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019) and the experiences of faculty involved in gatekeeping doctoral students (Krinke, 2021).

Given the complexity of PPC, further research is needed to capture the actual experiences and processes of how counselor educators address PPC with doctoral students and to understand the actions faculty take when encountering PPC. To address this gap, I conducted qualitative research using a constructivist grounded theory to uncover the processes counselor educators employ when addressing PPC in CES doctoral students.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative designs represent the two major methodological approaches for collecting and measuring data. Qualitative research provides rich and in-depth data, in contrast to quantitative research that generates large datasets (Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative research encompasses various approaches that enable researchers to delve deeply into their subject matter (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The choice of approach should be guided by the intention and purpose of the study, as well as the research questions and study’s objectives. In
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essence, it involves answering questions such as “what” the study is about, “why” it is significant, and “how” the research will be conducted.

Grounded theory, in addition to other qualitative approaches, follows steps of perceiving data authentically, setting aside any pre-existing beliefs, ideas, or biases about a phenomenon, thereby creating ample room for discoveries (Mills et al., 2006). Unlike other approaches, grounded theory systematically collects and analyzes data to formulate a theory about individuals’ behaviors instead of applying an existing theory to data (Cutcliffe, 2000; Engward, 2013). Grounded theory is particularly beneficial for researchers studying minimally researched phenomena (Engward, 2013). Thus, this qualitative approach closely aligns with this study’s research question: What is the experience and process of counselor educators in addressing PPC among doctoral students in CES programs? This question and grounded theory approach aimed to simultaneously understand the experience and process, develop a theory applicable to addressing the issue, and fill the current gap in the literature.

**Grounded Theory and Constructivism**

Grounded theory emerged through collaboration between two sociologists, Barney Glasser and Anselm Strauss, who emphasized the development of theory from available qualitative data (1967), rather than requiring the deduction of testable hypotheses from pre-existing theories (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory is the appropriate choice when there is no existing theory to explain or understand a process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, grounded theory is suitable when a theory about a phenomenon is incomplete or when essential factors are missing from research, necessitating the creation of a general framework originating from grounded theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since I aimed to uncover the steps of a particular process, action, or experience, grounded theory was the most fitting approach. With this research
method, I addressed questions such as “what was the experience and process?” and “how did the experience and process unfold?” This approach allowed me, the researcher, to delve deeper into forming a general explanation or theory shaped by various viewpoints and perspectives from diverse individuals.

For this research study, I followed Charmaz’s (2014) constructivist grounded theory to engage in a comprehensive research process that can lead to the development of a theory applicable to topics not yet addressed in counselor education and supervision (CES). Kathy Charmaz, a student of Glaser and Strauss, introduced and proposed the term “constructivist” to recognize subjectivity and the active role of the researcher in shaping and interpreting the data (2000, 2006, 2014). According to Mills et al. (2006), Charmaz argues that grounded theory elicits multiple meanings and encourages researchers to “go beyond the surface in seeking meaning in the data, searching for and questioning tacit meanings about values, beliefs, and ideologies” (p. 31).

In constructivist grounded theory, researchers assume the role of a “co-producer” or “co-creator,” involving reflection not only on the data but also on the entire process of participating in an interview, including interactions, descriptions, and emotional experiences with participants, all of which contribute to the overall meaning (Mills et al., 2006). The objective of constructivist grounded theory is to gain interpretative insights into the meanings held by participants (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009). Researchers employing constructivist grounded theory immerse themselves in the data to understand how participants perceive and construct meaning related to the studied phenomenon, while striving to maintain the presence of participants’ voices in the final results (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009; Mills et al., 2006). In essence, researchers are responsible not only for comprehending the data but also for creating an accurate understanding
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of how participants construct their reality by including “raw” data in their theoretical memos (Mills et al., 2006).

The most significant distinction of constructivist grounded theory, when compared to other qualitative methodologies and especially quantitative studies, is the establishment of a reciprocal and reflective relationship between participants and researchers (Hewitt, 2007; Mills et al., 2006). Being reciprocal and reflective entails that as a researcher, I engaged in a dynamic, mutually beneficial relationship in which both my participants and I collaboratively constructed meaning during the research process. More specifically, I reflected on the ways in which I related (or did not relate) to my participants, maintained a non-judgmental stance, and strived for an equitable power balance in the researcher-participant relationship. I continuously reflected on my personal values and avoided imposing them on participants’ responses (Hewitt, 2007). Finally, I created a research dynamic in which participants had a say in scheduling interviews and could guide the conversation in their preferred direction, resulting in a non-hierarchical relationship (Mills et al., 2006).

**Interpretative Framework – Constructivism**

In qualitative research, an interpretative framework or paradigm guides researchers in applying frameworks and beliefs, enabling them to comprehend how individuals perceive a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, I used constructivism as the interpretative framework. Constructivism adopts a research perspective that focuses on how individuals construct their understanding of reality and the world through interactions and personal involvement (Duffy & Chenail, 2008; Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009). The constructivist approach underscores that data and analysis are generated from shared experiences and the development of researcher-participant relationships, while also facilitating the incorporation of additional sources.
of data, as needed (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009). Within constructivism, knowledge and understanding are cultivated through the social and cultural lenses that shape people’s use of language, meanings, and realities. The interpretative framework for this study, based on constructivism, translated specific philosophical assumptions into practical application throughout the research process.

**Philosophical Assumptions.** Counseling and other human science research are structured in a diversity of ways. One such method of structuring is the perspectival approach, which involves classifying research methods based on their philosophical assumptions and methodological foundations (Duffy & Chenail, 2008). This approach reveals the underlying or core values that influence research. Throughout the research process, I identified the principles of constructivist philosophy and core values through the concepts of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology.

**Ontology.** Ontology involves recognizing the nature of reality. In constructivism, reality consists of numerous “mental or cognitive maps that provide a basis for meaning” (Duffy & Chenail, 2008, p. 29). In this context, multiple truths can coexist because reality is constructed through various interactions within the social world and the use of language. Language also enables the co-construction of knowledge (Duffy & Chenail, 2008). By using a constructivist lens in this study, I aimed to explore and understand the distinct processes and individualized meanings that participants experienced when addressing PPC in doctoral students. This approach involved examining how language facilitates the construction of knowledge, meaning, and reality, thereby offering insights into how individuals’ experiences are shaped and how they navigate the world. This methodology allowed for the exploration of diverse viewpoints shaped by social, environmental, and historical factors.
Epistemology. Epistemology refers to what is recognized as knowledge. Constructivism posits that knowledge is not a distinct entity but rather a prototype for transformation and flow throughout the world (Duffy & Chenail, 2008). Similar to ontology, where multiple truths can coexist, epistemology suggests that knowledge can vary depending on the number of cognitive maps existing in communities. In constructivism, knowledge “also provides maps of meaning that individuals graft onto their experiential worlds” (Duffy & Chenail, 2008, p. 29). In this research process, knowledge was acquired and co-constructed through interactions between the researcher and the participants. As the researcher, I focused on comprehending the participants’ insights on the research topic through the questions and discussions during the interviews. This underscored the significance of language as a means to access the participants’ knowledge, comprehension, and interpretation of their experiences in addressing PPC. Consequently, the data collected through language, specifically the words employed by the participants, enabled me as the researcher to develop an understanding of the information gathered from the participants. This acquired knowledge was evident in the data collection, the data analysis processes, and the processes of establishing trustworthiness, ultimately leading to the development of a theory firmly grounded in the final findings.

Axiology. Axiology refers to the role of “values.” Constructivism emphasizes that everything is ethical, encouraging researchers to continuously reflect on their position and their values, and including these in the final research report (Duffy & Chenail, 2008). I was actively aware of my own set of values through the research process, values that may have influenced the co-construction of knowledge and meaning with the participants. Therefore, I relied on reflexivity throughout the research process to maintain my self-awareness. Self-awareness also included examining my positionality, including my salient identities, shaped experiences, and
beliefs. Throughout the research process, I acknowledged my positionality, which influenced both the data analysis and the establishment of trustworthiness. This approach ensured that data analysis was a collaborative co-construction of meaning rather than a solitary interpretation.

**Methodology.** Methodology encompasses the research process, which, in constructivism, is exploratory and interactive (Duffy & Chenail, 2008) and therefore in alignment with the grounded theory approach. Specifically, the “researcher’s focus is on how people make sense of their experiences and how they generate meanings about their own lives and their world” (Duffy & Chenail, 2008, p. 29). This co-construction of meaning and knowledge feeds into the iterative process underlying the methodology of grounded theory used in this study. The iterative approach refers to the cyclical process of data collection, analysis, and theory development. Charmaz (2014) emphasized that researchers continuously move back and forth between these stages, allowing for ongoing refinement and revision of emerging concepts and theories based on new insights gained from the data. The iterative nature of grounded theory enables researchers to deepen their understanding of the phenomenon under study and develop more robust theoretical frameworks.

**Constructivist Grounded Theory Process**

I followed specific steps in the research process to formulate a theory and generate a final report of findings. Charmaz (2014) emphasizes that constructivist grounded theory is a flexible approach where researchers may gain insight or spontaneous understanding of analytic connections at any point in the research process. Because of this, I continuously engaged in memo-writing throughout the entire research process (Charmaz, 2014). In memo-writing, researchers analyze their data and codes early in the research process, allowing them to reflect on their thoughts, comparisons, and strengthen their questions. By engaging in memo-writing, I
created time and a reflective space for my questions, thoughts, ideas, and assumptions to formulate a direction for steps in the research process and recognize new discoveries (Charmaz, 2014). In short, I actively engaged in understanding the research process and participated in reflexivity.

The constructivist grounded theory process begins with formulating a research question. Qualitative researchers frame their study around what they want to explore and learn from the participants. The central research question (What is counselor educators’ experience and process of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students in CES programs?) guided the methodology used in the study, indicating whether it aims to examine interactions or processes.

The next step involved recruiting and sampling participants. For grounded theory, Creswell and Poth (2018) broadly recommend conducting anywhere from 20 to 60 individual interviews. Other scholars specify a minimum of 25 interviews (Gentles et al., 2015). Charmaz (2014) suggests conducting as many interviews as necessary to gather enough data and reach saturation. Thus, based on these recommendations, I recruited eight participants and conducted two rounds of interviews to achieve data saturation, resulting in 16 planned interviews. To start the process of data saturation, I looked for as many “incidents, events, or activities as possible to provide support for the categories” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 318). Saturation occurred when I had gathered enough data so that I was no longer uncovering new information to contribute to a deeper comprehension of the categories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I followed specific interview protocols regarding structure and the questions posed to participants (Charmaz, 2014). In the context of constructivist grounded theory, I paid special attention to my interactions and exchanges with participants, facilitating a co-constructed meaning from these interactions.
Next, I initiated data collection and coding, commencing with initial coding, transitioning to focused coding, and concluding with categorization (Charmaz, 2014). Following a grounded research approach, the iterative process of data collection involved continuous comparison between the data gathered from the interviews with the participants and the evolving theory. This process involved a back-and-forth approach between the participants, acquiring new interviews, and returning to the developing theory to address gaps and provide more detailed insight into its functioning (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout the coding process, I continuously wrote memos and engaged in constant comparisons. Following the coding phase, the subsequent steps involved theory development and ultimately composing the results and disseminating the findings (Charmaz, 2014).

**Method**

Constructivism enabled me to develop a deep and comprehensive understanding of how counselor educators construct meaning and reality from their experiences, particularly in relation to addressing PPC among doctoral students. The philosophical principles of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology inherent to constructivism guided this research. By utilizing the constructivist grounded theory approach, I fully engaged in the research process alongside the participants, functioning as a co-producer of knowledge (Mills et al., 2006). It was my responsibility, as the researcher, to ensure that the final theory accurately represented the participants’ voices, processes, and meanings.

**Research Question**

My qualitative study employed a constructivist grounded theory framework to address the central research question of this study: What are counselor educators’ experience and process of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students in
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CEM programs? The purpose of this research was to uncover the experience, processes, and steps followed by counselor educators when addressing PPC among doctoral students in CES programs. The primary objective was to move beyond comprehending the lived experiences of counselor educators mentoring doctoral students and, instead, to specifically reveal the actions and strategies employed by counselor educators in response to PPC occurrences within doctoral programs. Additionally, this research aimed to develop a theory that could be applied to CES programs, thus bridging a significant gap in the current literature within the counseling field.

To explore the central research question, I incorporated specific sub-questions into the interview protocol. Given that constructivist grounded theory offers flexibility within its framework and underscores the significance of co-constructing meaning with participants, I used the following sub-questions as guides throughout the first round of data analysis:

1. Tell me about your experiences with problems of professional competence (PPC) among your doctoral students?
2. What are some of the ways you identified PPC? What happened after these concerns were identified?
3. Where have you encountered external and internal barriers (thoughts, emotions, etc.) in the PPC process?
4. How did you know you reached a resolution? Are there times you didn’t reach a resolution? What significant moments stand out to you about these processes?
5. Could you tell me about how your management of PPC has changed since these encounters?
6. After having these experiences, what advice or suggestion would you give to other counselor educators mentoring doctoral students and doctoral students themselves?
7. How does identity intersect with PPC for both faculty and doctoral students?

8. What information do we need from counselor educators to inform how we gatekeep doctoral students?

These questions adhered to Charmaz’s (2014) guidelines for crafting grounded theory interview questions, encompassing initial open-ended questions, intermediate questions, and closing questions. They collectively aimed to reveal the processes, steps, and interactions of counselor educators throughout the journey of addressing PPC among doctoral students, commencing from their initial encounter with PPC and culminating in the resolution of such issues.

Importantly, while specific sub-questions were developed for the interviews to provide some structure, these questions were not rigid and allowed for a flexible conversational flow, incorporating additional prompts as needed. I was attentive to how participants shared information, what remained unshared, and the language employed during the interviews (Charmaz, 2014). Furthermore, the interview served as a dynamic “site of exploration, emergent understandings, legitimation of identity, and validation of experience” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 91).

Consequently, I sought a review of the formulated questions from my dissertation chair and selected committee members. After the initial coding and data analysis of the first round of interviews, I developed additional questions. Based on the emerging results from the initial data analysis, I created interview questions for the second round to bridge gaps in the research. I utilized the following sub-questions as guides throughout the second round of data analysis:

1. How does mentorship and guidance or lack of it influence your gatekeeping process or process of addressing PPC? (mentorship and guidance for faculty).

2. Tell me about a time you weren’t able to address PPC concerns?
3. How do you navigate power dynamics when addressing PPC with doctoral students and when consulting on PPC concerns with your colleagues?

4. In the first interview, we discussed the internal and external barriers when addressing PPC issues. Can you describe what happened after you encountered these barriers with PPC, both external and internal?

5. How do you handle unresolved PPC issues?

Similar to the first round of data analysis, I asked follow-up questions and incorporated additional prompts as needed.

**Procedures for Participant Selection**

Before commencing the research, I sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Montana. Upon obtaining IRB approval, I proceeded to select participants utilizing the maximum variation approach (Maxwell, 2013). Maximum variation served as a method for establishing sampling criteria. The criteria for maximum variation encompassed variations in counselor educators’ age, gender, race, years of work experience, university position (e.g., assistant professor, professor, chair), and program format (in-person vs. remote). Table 1 presents the maximum variation criteria.

**Table 1**

*Estimates of maximum variation*

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<tr>
<th>Maximum Variation Criteria</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
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<th>P6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least 2 identify as non-White/BIPOC</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least 2 identify as male</td>
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In accordance with constructivist grounded theory, Charmaz (2014) suggests that researchers consider increasing the number of interviews in situations involving a controversial topic, the anticipation or discovery of surprising results, the construction of complex conceptual analyses, reliance on interviews as the sole data source, and the pursuit of professional credibility (p. 108). As this research study addressed a topic that has not been extensively explored, after the initial round of interviews, I conducted a second round of interviews focused on emerging themes and questions to ensure data saturation (Charmaz, 2014).

**Recruitment**

Once I obtained IRB approval, I initiated participant recruitment through several channels, including the Counselor Education and Supervision Network (CESNET), a professional listserv for counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors. I also reached out to CES program administrative staff and faculty via email, inviting them to participate in the study and distribute information about it. Furthermore, I employed a “snowball” recruitment method by asking faculty members to share information about the study with other counselor educators. I provided recruitment materials, such as a recruitment letter and flyers, through these communication methods.
The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: a) over the age of 18, b) identify as counselor educators in a CACREP-accredited CES doctoral program, c) must have worked at least one year as a faculty member in a CES program, and d) should have encountered an event or experience related to addressing PPC either personally or through a report from another student. The main exclusion criterion pertained to CES doctoral programs that are not CACREP-accredited. This exclusion was primarily based on the fact that CACREP’s instructional standards (2024) and the ethical obligations outlined in the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) require counselor educators to engage in an ongoing evaluation of doctoral students’ progress and suitability for the profession. CES doctoral programs that lack CACREP accreditation do not adhere to these same instructional standards.

To manage and track the selection criteria, specifically focusing on maximum variation, I used an anonymous Qualtrics survey. This survey gathered the necessary information for identifying potential participants. I included the survey link in all recruitment communications, and participants had direct access to me as the primary contact person for any research-related inquiries. To acknowledge and show appreciation for their participation and contribution to the study, participants could elect to receive a $25 gift card.

**Methods for Gathering Data**

I took on the roles of data collector and interpreter. The primary method of data collection involved conducting semi-structured individual participant interviews. Scheduling interviews constituted the second step in the process, following the collection of demographic information on participants who met the selection criteria. I sent a secure Qualtrics link via email to the participants, allowing them to review and electronically sign the informed consent form. This consent form provided details on confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, fair treatment, protection
from discomfort and harm, and self-determination. In addition to obtaining written agreement from interested participants, I also requested verbal consent to record both video and audio during the interviews. I offered participants a copy of the informed consent.

**Individual Interviews.** Interviews hold a pivotal position in data collection within the context of grounded theory. Thus, I extended invitations to participants, inviting them to take part in a 60-minute interview to discuss their experiences and processes in addressing PPC among doctoral students. I conducted all interviews via Zoom, a secure online server that meets the requirements of HIPAA. Prior to the interview, I communicated about the importance of choosing a private, quiet, and distraction-free space for the duration of the interviews. I took time to go over the informed consent form, anonymity, and questions or concerns. Additionally, I sought participants’ permission to contact them after the interviews for any follow-up questions or additional clarifications if needed including a member-check. Member check involved reaching out to research participants to obtain feedback on the emerging data and conclusions I drew, helping prevent potential misinterpretations or misunderstanding (Maxwell, 2013).

Since this study explored a relatively under-researched phenomenon, conducting a second round of interviews following the initial data analysis became necessary. This step addressed any emerging questions or bridged gaps that arose during the coding and initial data analysis phase (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). I engaged in memo-writing about my thoughts, reactions, observations, and impressions after each interview.

**Transcription.** To prepare for data analysis, I used the human transcription service called Rev. Rev’s services ensured privacy and confidentiality of individuals’ audio recordings. To ensure transcription accuracy and avoid inconsistencies, I reviewed the transcripts by cross-referencing them with the original recordings. I ensured the removal of identifiable information
from the transcripts to protect participants’ confidentiality and privacy. To keep track of
transcriptions, I assigned participant numbers (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3 and
so on) to the data. All information regarding transcription, recordings, and the research were
securely stored on the online, HIPAA-compliant, confidential server called The University of
Montana (UM) Box. I plan to retain the research data for a duration of five years following the
ethical guidelines of the ACA (2014).

Methods for Analysis

Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes two phases of coding, initial coding and
focused coding. In addition to these two phases, Charmaz (2014) references axial and theoretical
coding. During the first round of interviews, I organized and structured the findings from the
initial codes into the qualitative data analysis software called *AtlasTi*. By engaging in coding, I
participated in the process of defining what the data was about (Charmaz, 2014). “Coding means
categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarized and accounts
for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 111). Codes demonstrated how I, as a researcher,
selected, separated, and sorted data which initiated an analytical accounting of them.

Constant comparative methods occurred throughout the data analysis process and served
to “establish analytic distinction – and thus make comparisons at each level of analytic work”
(Charmaz, 2014, p. 132). The goal was to compare data with earlier and later interviews as well
as my observations about the process, actions, and beliefs. By using a constant comparative
method during initial and focused coding, I viewed the situation through the eyes of participants
reaching a better understanding and gaining new insights (Charmaz, 2014).

Initial Coding. In the initial coding phase, I first performed line-by-line coding. This
involved assigning names to each line of the written data or in other words, creating codes for
every concept, idea, or theme that emerged (Charmaz, 2014). By conducting initial coding, I accumulated credible data that contributed to the research topic and enhanced the foundation of the research study. Initial codes aided in the process of categorizing the data and commencing the journey of understanding the experience and uncovering the underlying process. These codes then guided the collection of additional data. Throughout the coding process, Charmaz (2014) recommends a step-by-step analysis approach, avoiding premature “theoretical flights of fancy” (p. 125). Following this approach, I created codes derived directly from the participants’ own language allowing the codes to stay closely connected to the participants’ perspectives and experiences.

**Focused Coding.** The next crucial step in data analysis involves focused coding. Focused coding is the process of determining how initial codes create analytical significance, contributing to the development of a deeper analysis (Charmaz, 2014). After obtaining analytical insights from the initial coding, focused coding consolidates, evaluates, and conceptualizes “larger segments of data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 138). Throughout the focused coding phase, I acted as an analytical tool, continuously comparing the codes and interpreting their meanings. One of the primary objectives of focused coding is to validate the sufficiency and conceptual robustness of the initial codes (Charmaz, 2014). To facilitate this process, Charmaz (2014) suggests considering a few questions for identifying codes suitable for focused coding: “What do you find when you compare your initial codes with data? Have you elevated these codes to focused codes? Do your focused codes expose gaps in the data?” (p. 141). Addressing these questions enhanced my confidence in the emerging concepts. Focused codes played a pivotal role in data organization and the development of the analysis.
**Axial and Theoretical Coding.** In addition to initial and focused codes, Charmaz (2014) makes reference to axial coding, originally introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). This form of coding aims to sort, synthesize, and organize large volumes of data, reconfiguring them in novel ways subsequent to open coding (Charmaz, 2014, p. 147). In essence, axial coding delves into specific questions such as when, how, why, who, where, and with what consequences, enabling a researcher to thoroughly explore an experience. However, Charmaz’s (2014) approach diverges from the axial coding method described by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), characterizing the analytical strategies as emergent rather than procedural. As a constructivist grounded theorist, Charmaz (2014) emphasizes that subsequent categories, subcategories, and connections illuminate how a researcher derives meaning from the data. In other words, following the axial coding, I sought to establish relationships and connections between categories. I aimed to understand how various concepts related to each other and to identify patterns or themes that may emerge (Charmaz, 2014).

After axial coding comes theoretical coding that focuses on integrating categories into a coherent and explanatory framework. The application of theoretical coding demands careful consideration. Currently, there is some ambiguity regarding whether theoretical coding is an applied or emergent process, and this issue still requires resolution (Charmaz, 2014). In the applied process, researchers apply pre-existing theoretical concepts or ideas to the data drawing upon prior knowledge and concepts from literature that appear relevant to the emerging data (Charmaz, 2014). Conversely, the emerging process entails letting new theoretical ideas arise directly from the data. Researchers approach the data with a more open-minded perspective, fostering the development of novel theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2014). For this research
study, I strived to adhere to the emerging process guided by the nature of the research question, existing literature, and philosophical orientation of the study.

If used thoughtfully, theoretical coding can assist a researcher in understanding and specifying potential relationships between categories developed during focused coding. This form of coding allows for a rational and comprehensible analysis. Conversely, a careless application of theoretical coding could render the analysis unclear and indistinct (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) cautions that “when your analysis suggests it, use theoretical codes to help clarify and refine your analysis, but avoid imposing a rigid framework on it” (p. 155). Thus, I engaged in reflexivity and memo-ing to establish connections between categories and contemplate how the emerging theory was taking shape. Through theoretical coding, I pinpointed the core categories that encapsulated essential concepts or phenomenon within the data, constructing a substantive theory grounded in the data.

**Procedures for Establishing Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) trustworthiness or “standards of goodness” is assessed in four criterion areas: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Morrow, 2005). Each criterion warrants a detailed discussion.

**Credibility.** Morrow (2005) referred to Gasson (2004), who described credibility as the process of ensuring rigor in the research and effectively communicating this rigor to others. Achieving high credibility involves several activities, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation in the field, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and researcher reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005).

In this research study, I established credibility by actively engaging in activities such as prolonged engagement and persistent observation that increased my involvement and interaction
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with participants, resulting in additional observations and confirmation of inferences (Maxwell, 2013). Specifically, prolonged engagement encompassed the first and second rounds of interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. A crucial aspect of this process involved building strong relationships with both participants and those involved in the research. These researcher-participant relationships not only yielded trustworthy data but also faithfully represented the voices of those participating in the research. I approached the research process with curiosity and a willingness to receive feedback about participants’ experiences, interpretations, and my conclusions. This approach aligned with the process of member checking, which aimed to prevent misinterpretation and misrepresentation of participants’ processes and meanings (Maxwell, 2013). Consequently, continuous interactions with participants provided me with an extended period of involvement with the data.

During the process of prolonged engagement with participants, I faced challenges in establishing rapport with one individual. In our initial interview, Participant Five demonstrated limited engagement, evident through behaviors such as eating, taking phone calls, and checking emails. Despite these distractions, I maintained focus on conducting the interview, setting aside personal reactions. Participant Five struggled to provide comprehensive responses, prompting me to seek guidance from my dissertation chair and committee members. Following consultations, I attempted to arrange a second interview to gain further insights, but logistical issues prevented its completion, as Participant Five lacked a suitable, confidential space for the interview. Ultimately, Participant Five chose not to follow through with the interview, resulting in its incompleteness. Due to Participant Five’s decision not to proceed with the second round of interviews, I needed to recruit another participant to ensure comprehensive data collection and data saturation. During the initial recruitment process, I received interest from an individual who
expressed willingness to contribute but had limited availability at that time. I reached out to this individual and offered alternative dates for later availability. Participant Nine met the study’s inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the second round of interviews.

Transferability. Transferability is often associated with rich or thick data (Maxwell, 2013; Morrow, 2005). This richness or thickness implies that the descriptions encompass the “multiple layers of culture and context in which the experiences are embedded” (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). To achieve this level of richness and thickness, I presented the data with depth and transparency, ensuring that participants’ voices are accurately and fully represented. When reporting the results, I included all necessary details to ensure that it is not just my voice being heard but also the active and present voices of the participants. This enables readers to determine their own sense of transferability.

I had to seek consultation on how to effectively represent the depth and transparency of the data provided by Participant Five, given the limited nature of her responses to the interview questions. In the first three categories, Participant Five’s responses during the initial interviews are considered a “negative case” due to her inability to provide comprehensive answers compared to other participants. In the last two categories, Participant Five’s insights are regarded as a “single case” or “unique case” as they primarily focus on her individual experiences, beliefs, and meanings. Despite being different from other participants, these insights were deemed significant for showcasing a distinct viewpoint on PPC among doctoral students in her CES program.

Dependability. Gasson (2004), as cited in Morrow’s (2005) article, provided this definition of dependability: “the way in which a study is conducted should be consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques” (p. 94). To ensure dependability, I maintained an
audit trail and documented the evolving research design by recording the chronological sequence of research activities and processes, their impact on data collection and analysis, emerging themes, and analytic memos (Morrow, 2005). Simply put, I documented how I arrived at my final findings. Furthermore, I made my audit trail available for examination by my dissertation chair and colleagues in the field. I used memos as a tool for various types of writing and documentation throughout the research process, aiding my comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Maxwell, 2013).

**Confirmability.** Confirmability involves recognizing that research is not an entirely objective process (Maxwell, 2013). It was my duty to establish a clear connection between the data, analytic processes, and findings in a way that accurately reflected the final results. To accomplish this, I incorporated the audit trail, member checking, reflexivity, and inquiry auditing. For this study, my dissertation chair, Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano, served as the inquiry auditor. Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano has been serving as an evaluator, mentor, advisor, and gatekeeper for both master-level and doctoral-level students in the CACREP-accredited program. With a wealth of knowledge and experience in navigating PPC in counseling programs, she participated in the review of data coding and the analysis of emerging themes and meanings. I received guidance from my chair at each step of this research process. Furthermore, I proactively sought guidance from committee members and colleagues in the field, particularly regarding my interview interactions with Participant Five.

**Reflexivity.** The overarching umbrella of trustworthiness, encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, involves the process of reflexivity. Reflexivity is an ongoing process of self-awareness and self-reflection (Morrow, 2005). I practiced reflexivity by maintaining a reflexive journal to document my experiences and emerging
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awareness of any assumptions or biases, as well as my feelings and concerns throughout the entire research process. Additionally, I engaged in reflexivity by seeking input from my dissertation chair, members of the dissertation committee, and other colleagues regarding the research process. The goal was to receive feedback, consider different perspectives, and challenge my own assumptions, biases, and interpretations (Morrow, 2005).

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

As mentioned earlier, constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the notion that multiple realities can be constructed among individuals. As a researcher, I was not exempt from this phenomenon, as I hold my own set of beliefs, meanings, and realities that have been shaped by various experiences and other influential factors (Hewitt, 2007). Therefore, it was essential for me to consider the factors that might impact the researcher-participant relationship, emphasizing the importance of ethics, responsibility, and multicultural awareness. These influential factors encompass elements such as age, appearance, social class, culture, disparities in knowledge and power, environment, and gender (Hewitt, 2007). As the lead researcher in this research study, I needed to be aware of and address personal shaping experiences, biases, interests, and assumptions. Being aware of such factors is crucial in a qualitative study to promote trustworthiness.

As the primary researcher, my salient identities include being a 30-year-old, multiracial, heterosexual, cisgender female. I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree in a CACREP-accredited Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program. Additionally, I am an international doctoral candidate identifying as a BIPOC individual. I come from a small, developing country in Central Asia and English is my second language. In addition to being a
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doctoral candidate, I am a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC) offering mental health services to diverse populations.

My interest in this topic stemmed from my own observation of how CES programs lack specificity in defining PPC in the five primary professional roles. Additionally, I observed a lack of effective means to evaluate PPC in doctoral students and a lack of structure and strategies in gatekeeping processes specifically for doctoral students. These gaps in research within the field of counselor education reinforced my intention to study this complex and important topic, with the aim of developing specific strategies applicable for counselor educators and informative for doctoral students. Ensuring suitability and fitness for the counselor education profession is my primary concern as a future counselor educator. My commitment to my future profession comes from my personal journey, including the challenging experience of coming to the United States to pursue quality education and striving for excellence in all of my academic and professional roles.

In conclusion, throughout this qualitative research experience, I have continuously reflected on my assumptions, personal experiences, and biases, and have employed constant reflexivity and memo-writing, which is particularly important when applying constructivist grounded theory. I also consulted consistently with my dissertation chair and committee members, and sought additional outside support to share my struggles, concerns, and experiences with the research process.

Summary

This overview of grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory provided a detailed description of how this research methodology can be used to examine and explore human behaviors. Constructivist grounded theory involves active participation throughout the research
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process while also emphasizing the need for authenticity, richness, and the construction of meaning. Based on the information presented, constructivist grounded theory aimed to reach final results in the most truthful and reflective manner, setting aside personal agendas and biases. With the application of constructivist grounded theory, I not only utilized myself as an analytical tool but also actively involved the participants themselves, highlighting the beauty of co-constructing meanings and realities collaboratively.

Therefore, I applied constructivist grounded theory in my research study to uncover the experience and explore the processes of counselor educators addressing PPC among doctoral students. Through this application, I collected data that led to the formulation of a theory grounded in the final results and achieved the research objective of gaining an understanding of the experience and process of counselor educators recognizing and addressing PPC in doctoral students.
CHAPTER 3: First Round Analysis

Chapter Three focuses on the participants’ emerging experiences addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs. This chapter includes information on the analysis after the first round of interviews. I describe the participants, the analysis process, and present the first round of findings.

Description of Participants

I interviewed eight counselor educators (faculty) from CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs. I conducted all my interviews via Zoom. Each interview lasted between 30-50 minutes. To protect participants’ identities and maintain confidentiality, participants’ names were removed from the transcripts, and they were numbered one to eight. Additionally, participants provided self-reported demographic information, including their self-identified gender and racial identities, years of work experience, position rank, age range, and program formats. Table 2 provides an overview of participant demographics.

Table 2

Overview of the Participants’ Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant number</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Racial identity</th>
<th>CES program format</th>
<th>Years of CES experience</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>NCACES(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>NCACES(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>Cis female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>RMACES(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Biracial, Asian</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>WACES(^c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>SACES(^d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>NCACES(^a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant One is a white female Associate Professor and Associate Department Chair in an in-person CES program with seven years of work experience. Participant Two is a White male Associate Professor and Program Coordinator in an in-person CES program with eight years of work experience. Participant Three is a White cis-female Assistant Professor in a remote program with three years of work experience. She also identified as bisexual, low socioeconomic status upbringing, and first-generation student. Participant Four is a biracial Asian female full Professor in a remote program with 21 years of work experience. She also identified as bisexual, first-generation college student, and neurodivergent. Participant Five is an African American female Assistant Professor in a remote program with 15 years of work experience. Participant Six is a White male Assistant Professor with eight years of work experience in an in-person program. Participant Seven is a Black/African American female Affiliate Faculty and Assistant Dean with five years of work experience in an in-person program. She also identified as Black and bisexual. Participant Eight is a white male Professor with 12 years of work experience in an in-person program.

Emerging Participant Experiences

During the first round of interviews, five categories of participant experiences with addressing problems of PPC among doctoral students emerged: (1) complexities of PPC, (2) cultural awareness and PPC, (3) faculty’s response to PPC, (4) improving management of PPC, and (5) understanding doctoral experience. Each of these categories describes a specific
experience and holds subcategories, properties, and dimensions under the categories. These categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions are denoted in the depicted fonts and shown in Figure 1, a conceptual map of first-round analysis.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Map of First-Round Analysis*

Complexities of PPC

The first category, complexities of PPC, refers to faculty’s experiences and processes in identifying, evaluating, and trying to resolve PPC issues. This category comprises three subcategories: types of PPC, methods for addressing PPC, and outcomes of PPC. These
types of PPC subcategories describe faculty’s experience in navigating the complexities of PPC at the doctoral level.

Types of PPC

The first subcategory that emerged from the faculty’s experience with complexities of PPC was types of PPC. The types of PPC subcategory encompasses the diverse array of PPC concerns encountered by faculty members within CES doctoral programs. These concerns span various domains, ranging from academic issues to identifying major violations that lead to dismissal from the program. Four specific properties within this subcategory, academic PPC, dispositional PPC, clinical PPC, and major PPC, serve as descriptors of the PPC types addressed by faculty. For instance, Participant Two’s experience with a doctoral student failing their comprehensive exam prompted faculty reflection on the student’s professionalism.

Participant 2: So, we had one student that at comps [comprehensive exam] did not do well. And then we were reflecting on, well, their lack of response, their lack of professionalism, their lack of communication with us, is reflective of a more serious issue.

Academic PPC. The first property of types of PPC, academic PPC, encompasses a range of issues including plagiarism, insufficient knowledge of APA format, late submissions, inadequate academic paper writing at the doctoral level, failure to pass comprehensive exams, and difficulties in completing the dissertation. Participant Eight illustrated academic types of PPC by recounting an experience with an advisee who failed both written and oral examinations at the doctoral level.

Participant 8: A good example of this was… I had an advisee that failed their written comprehensive examination and their oral examination. We put this person on a
professional development plan over a six-month period. But I remember, in my office, the person was heartbroken.

Furthermore, Participant Eight recounted another incident where he and the faculty identified academic PPC in a doctoral student.

Participant 8: ... I’ll give kind of a real-life example. A couple of years ago, one of our faculty found that a doctoral student had plagiarized something on a final paper for a class. … you know, but they were doing pretty well in most of their classes, but this instance of plagiarism was a huge part of, you know, it’s a very violation of kinda the student code of ethics or the student code of conduct, I should say.

Participant Four shared her experience of identifying academic PPC in a doctoral student who faced challenges in meeting academic deadlines. This student ultimately completed the dissertation during this faculty member’s leave, a circumstance Participant Four deemed inappropriate for passing.

Participant 4: One instance was a student of mine who sort of consistently did not meet the academic deadlines we set up together about writing things… Graduated, very quickly… it was an almost impossible amount of work that they did while I was on sabbatical, apparently. The product was what I didn’t consider passing.

Participant Six encountered similar concerns regarding students’ academic PPC at the doctoral level, particularly concerning the dissertation work.

Participant 6: One student… it was kind of that they had just sort of dropped off during their dissertation phase, and just weren’t really following through, weren’t doing the work.

**Dispositional PPC.** The second property of types of PPC, dispositional PPC, refers to challenges stemming from doctoral students’ behavioral tendencies and interpersonal interactions
within professional contexts. These challenges may include deficits in clinical skills, forming coalitions against faculty, boundary crossing, interpersonal conflicts, failure to fulfill doctoral responsibilities, lack of responsiveness, inadequate communication, resistance to feedback, concerns related to mental health, and differential treatment of faculty based on race.

Participant Seven shared her experience in identifying various types of PPC, which included instances of lack of professionalism, inadequate communication, defensiveness, and differential treatment by doctoral students due to her race.

Participant 7: I think there have been times in my career where I have had time to kind of like, go back and forth with a student and coach them, and say, “Hey, I’ve seen the way that you respond to other faculty members. And I see that way that you’re responding to me. And I’m seeing a discrepancy here.” If even after they’ve been corrected, they kind of, they try to go like, above my head... And those types of pieces of... How do we professionally communicate via email with your professor, even when you don’t agree with what they’re saying? How do you professionally communicate over the phone, even when you’re frustrated?

Furthermore, Participant Seven also identified and addressed doctoral students’ reactions to receiving feedback from faculty. Specifically, she noted instances of defensiveness observed in some of the doctoral students’ responses.

Participant 7: Yeah… so most of those non-academic concerns stem from responses to feedback. So, how well students incorporate feedback, if they become extremely defensive to feedback…when the feedback is provided to them… And so, most of kind of the professional disposition components come into “how do we accept feedback?” And then,
“how do we engage with like, this academic system when we’re upset or frustrated or don’t agree with the outcome?”

Participant Three, drawing from her experiences, identified dispositional PPC related to students forming coalitions against faculty and displaying interpersonal issues. She recounted encounters with doctoral students whom she described as “critical thinkers,” noting that they frequently utilized their critical thinking abilities to resist procedures, policies, and assignments.

Participant 3: So, when we’re talking about the non-academic [PPC], the interpersonal challenges…I think that’s usually when we have our biggest red flags, dispositional concerns or interpersonal challenges.

Participant 3: I think the fear is most doc students are well articulated in that meaning in the sense of they’re critical thinkers in great ways sometimes. And sometimes they’re just gonna find loopholes between whatever a policy is, what a procedure [is], and trying to make up what you did wrong…Try to use that against you to try to get whatever their need met is. So, they’re a lot more strategic in an inappropriate way at times.

Participant Eight experienced dispositional types of PPC related to boundary issues and the manner in which doctoral students fulfilled their responsibilities when working with master-level counseling students. He shared his observations regarding how loose or rigid boundaries influenced the behavior of doctoral students within counseling departments and the potential ramifications of their PPC concerns on others.

Participant 8: So, sometimes, you know, we see this behavior of professionalism popping up in supervision, in their classes, how they’re interacting in the department of master’s students or with faculty, and then also within their cohort too.
Participant 8: And, you know, we’ve had some problems with that where, you know, having relationships…doctoral students being too friendly or maybe hanging out with masters students outside of the classroom experience or things like that. I think, we’ve also had some students who are, I mean (laughs)…doctoral students go to the opposite end sometimes... they go really hard, and they get really like not aggressive, but they get very dominant, and like, “You’ll listen to me,” and then they kind of malign these master’s students, because they kinda feel like… “Oh, my gosh, I don’t feel like I know what I’m doing” ... and if this master’s student questions my competency that could reveal…that could lift up the sheet and then they’ll realize like, “I’m still a learner here.”

Clinical PPC. The third property of types of PPC, clinical PPC, encompasses faculty members identifying concerns related to clinical PPC by observing and evaluating doctoral students’ pre-existing identity as counselors in professional settings such as doctoral practicum and internship classes. During supervision of doctoral students in these classes, faculty identified specific problematic behaviors, including poor utilization of counseling skills, inadequate client conceptualization, personalization in sessions, and ethical dilemmas such as providing advice.

Participant Six highlighted the frequency with which practicing counselors in the field fail to proactively seek feedback about their performance and their fulfillment of their counselor roles, indicating that some PPC issues may go unnoticed or unaddressed.

Participant 6: …And sometimes bad habits in their [doctoral students’] counseling skills, and, you know, I think some of it even speaks to the fact that there’s not always a lot of accountability or feedback when you’re a counselor out in the field unless you’re intentionally seeking that out.
Furthermore, Participant Six also provided a specific example where he expressed concern about a doctoral student’s clinical skills as a counselor.

Participant 6: So much of what he [doctoral student] has been doing is sort of like giving advice to clients or just kind of like being a little bit more in this friendship mode.

Participant One voiced parallel concerns about a doctoral student’s clinical skills during practicum, where doctoral students engage with clients while under faculty supervision. Additionally, she expressed apprehension about a doctoral student’s capacity to supervise master-level students in a clinical setting.

Participant 1: … and so again, it is also connected that if you are struggling with, you know, to complete your notes in the 48 hours required in our clinic as a doctoral student when you’re in doctoral practicum, then I have real concerns about your ability to do that for your three supervisees when you’re in supervision.

Participant 1: I do think that we try to make sure that there is a broad range of clinical experiences because we want them to be able to be counselor educators for students from a variety of professional backgrounds. So, sometimes that we have people who have been school counselors who were asking to see adult clients in our clinic to like grow those skills, but there are other times, and not all, but the few that I’m thinking about that have really been problematic and a few that have even been like kind of dismissed or encouraged out of the program. There were from the very beginning, some professional clinical skill concerns, which I think related to conceptualization concerns and related to like lack self-awareness concerns.

**Major PPC.** The fourth property of types of PPC, major PPC, encompasses significant issues that contravene academic standards, such as failing to pass comprehensive exams,
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neglecting graduate assistantship responsibilities, and engaging in academic dishonesty. *Major PPC* may involve *academic PPC* or *clinical PPC*, raising ethical concerns and require intervention or remediation, often as part of a gatekeeping process within academic or professional settings. *Major PPC* may also include *dispositional PPC*, such as lack of responsiveness, failure to follow through, and lack of autonomy.

Participant Two described *major PPC* as involving multiple parties and resulting in some form of gatekeeping. Additionally, Participant Two recounted an incident where a doctoral student’s failure to pass the comprehensive exam led to cessation of communication with him and other faculty members.

Participant 2: After spending approximately two years with them [doctoral student] a lot in various experiences and training and coursework and all that other stuff. And then we [faculty] never heard from them [doctoral student] again and so then we dismissed them [doctoral student]. And then, the irony is this person then maybe about a year later was applying for a job and listed me as a reference. So, this agency reached out to me and asked me to provide feedback on the quality of this applicant.

Participant One shared her experiencing addressing a *major PPC*, which resulted in the termination of a doctoral student’s assistantship and a recommendation for the student to withdraw from the doctoral program.

Participant 1: Yeah, that one student that I had been talking about that we had to kinda move out, she also had a graduate assistantship. And so, this kinda gets into like academic, but I still think it’s around professionalism. So, she had a graduate assistantship, and she was assigned, she was split across like two faculty for her 20 hours. And I got to the point where I wouldn’t even give her tasks to do because she could not follow through and do it.
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Like, there was no like autonomy or kinda independence, everything needed to be spelled out in a way that was making it... It was just easier to do it myself. ...And so, you know, she ended up not getting refunded, and that also then led to us saying, “We’re not recommending you for an assistantship,” was kind of a strong message that we were trying to send in saying, “This is not really... This is just not a place where you’re gonna be successful going forward.”

Participant Four described her involvement in aiding a doctoral student with a scholarship application, during which she was requested to provide false information. She discussed navigating cultural differences while grappling with a major PPC issue of dishonesty.

Participant 4: Um, and that’s a mentoring issue, too. I mean, an example is I was once asked by a student who came from a very different culture…in the process of, filling out scholarship information, to lie on the scholarship form. And it really took me aback...

And this particular student had other issues and did not complete the program. It was one where it probably would have started rising to a gatekeeping thing.

In summary, the examination of types of PPC within CES doctoral programs encompassed a comprehensive analysis of academic, dispositional, clinical, and major PPC concerns. These issues not only reflected challenges within individual doctoral experiences but also contributed to the broader context of PPC among doctoral students. Academic PPC, exemplified by instances such as plagiarism and deficiencies in dissertation progress, underscored the imperative of upholding scholarly integrity and meeting program requirements. Dispositional PPC, including behavioral tendencies and interpersonal challenges, highlighted the importance of professionalism and effective communication within academic settings. Clinical PPC, observed in deficiencies in counseling skills and ethical dilemmas, underscored the
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necessity of maintaining high standards in clinical practice and supervision. Major PPC, involving significant violations of academic and professional standards, necessitated intervention and remediation, serving as a crucial aspect of gatekeeping processes within doctoral programs. Through these insights, faculty members gained a nuanced understanding of the diverse array of PPC concerns, guiding efforts to promote competence, professionalism, and ethical conduct among doctoral students while addressing broader systemic issues within doctoral education.

*Methods for Addressing PPC*

The second *subcategory* identified within the *complexities of PPC* was *methods for addressing PPC*. *Methods for addressing PPC* involve the strategies and procedures employed by faculty to identify, assess, and intervene in instances of PPC among doctoral students. These methods encompass both formal and informal procedures, including *encounter, feedback, evaluation, and remediation*. Through these methods, faculty aimed to effectively address PPC concerns and support the professional development of doctoral students within the program.

**Encounter.** The first *property of methods for addressing PPC, encounter*, is the faculty member’s direct experience or observation of PPC concerns in doctoral students, which prompts them to take action or intervene accordingly. Participant Two discussed the process of internally recognizing PPC concerns, and the need to then do something in response.

Participant 2: Like my experiences where I would notice something or something would be brought to my attention. And I think that’s probably the biggest key for me, which is, you know, it is that internal recognition. And then, so taking in that sensory feedback, taking in that sensory information, and then automatically recognizing I now need to do something about it.
Participant Four described a particular incident where she encountered PPC concerns in a doctoral student, prompting her to become increasingly concerned about the quality of work the student was submitting.

Participant 4: You know, it became obvious that the things that we were observing were actual problems that manifested out in the field once they left the program. One instance was a student of mine who sort of consistently did not meet the academic deadlines we set up together about writing things and having them done. And just would consistently kind of like, “Oh, I didn’t do it,” and just consistently sort of like avoiding deadlines and sort of having a lot of different excuses. Really pushing the boundaries of my own benchmarks that we set them together, and then sort of finding reasons not to do those things. And then, at a certain point in time, making a very big decision about their program that felt very internally like it was an issue of personal fit, where I was going on sabbatical and the person decided that they needed to finish their dissertation during my sabbatical. So, they switched to an internal advisor who was known to be very, very lenient. I didn’t go on sabbatical for very long. I only went for 11 weeks, so...and I just got a feeling of, “Oh, this person is trying to get away with something,” you know?

Participant Six discussed some of the patterns that he encountered among doctoral students regarding academic writing at a doctoral level, including struggles to integrate feedback and appropriate responses to encountering normal academic challenges.

Participant 6: I think it’s been patterns with students that I’ve seen about things that are concerning that don’t necessarily get to the point of being a review board referral or being something more serious. You know, in teaching like the qualitative research classes, I definitely see students that really kind of struggle with that and struggle with
academic writing, and I think that’s pretty normal for doc students, in a way, but then there’s sometimes they don’t, even after getting some feedback, they really have a tough time and it takes a lot of support, maybe, for them to be able to get there, but often they are able to.

**Feedback.** The second *property of methods for addressing PPC, feedback,* is defined as direct communication between faculty and doctoral students, aimed at conveying observations and evaluations of PPC issues, with the goal of fostering positive change or improvement in behavior and skills. Participant Two outlined his approach to providing feedback, aiming to observe positive changes in the doctoral student’s behavior to support their progression in their doctoral program.

Participant 2: It usually starts with that direct conversation about what I’m seeing, and this is why we want what you are doing to change. So, this is why we hope to see you doing what you do, you know, doing this differently moving forward.

Participant Three echoed a similar sentiment, emphasizing the importance of providing clarity and rationale behind expectations while holding space for doctoral students to express their concerns.

Participant 3: So, on the student side, if usually it’s a smaller level where you just have a conversation, you hear their voice, now we’re gonna validate in that whatever that way is. But then also share our expectation of them and why. Usually, doc students want rational and not just like a top-down mentality. So, you usually need to share rationale to why we do things the way we do. Doesn’t have to be long, but just enough to say, this is why it’s an expectation.
Participant Seven adopted a counselor-first approach, employing her counseling skills to provide clear feedback while understanding the doctoral student’s perspective.

Participant 7: I mean, often, I lead very counselor first. (laughs) So, often the feedback starts with like, “I can tell from your email that you’re really frustrated with me. So, I wanna give you a moment to collect yourself before I respond to this and make sure that this is really how you want to be speaking to me or speaking about this issue. I’m gonna hold off from responding to the content of your email, and I’m gonna give you a chance to send me an email tomorrow once you’ve had some time to think about this.

Participant One underscored the necessity of direct feedback, particularly due to the potential impact of PPC issues on other students.

Participant 1: And so, we stopped that student from moving into our supervision sequence, because we said, “You’re not ready. With what you’re demonstrating right now, you are not ready to be supervising other master’s students. You need to go to counseling, and you need to see more clients during this time before you start supervision.”

Participant Eight emphasized a strengths-based approach to feedback, focusing on skill development rather than deficits.

Participant 8: …let’s say they’re [doctoral students] having kind of emotional regulation problems and they’re not being very mindful of their interactions with their cohorts and peers, and students … like, “How can we help you increase those skills?” So, spending too much time talking about your [doctoral student’s] deficits, and what you’re doing wrong, the student is already gonna be thinking about that a lot. So, I think, if you can spend more time focusing on like, “This is the skill,” like more, “This is the skills that we want you to focus on.”
Evaluation. The third property of methods for addressing PPC, evaluation, is defined as the systematic assessment conducted by faculty to measure doctoral students’ progress across various domains during their training. This process involves ongoing monitoring of academic and dispositional aspects of student performance, as well as identification and assessment of major PPC issues. Participant Two described the continuous evaluative process, noting the importance of both formative and summative assessments.

Participant 2: Well, I guess the ways that I identify PPC are kind of, you know, I’m always evaluating their [doctoral students’] academic and professional disposition. You know, at those moments, like when there was a bigger PPC issue with a doc student or any other student for that matter, we [faculty] would discuss and staff that issue as a group. And so, it was kind of like this ongoing, formative and summative evaluation component that was ongoing. And, sometimes, like at the end of the semester, it would result in a doc student receiving a developmental designation [professional development plan].

Participant Seven emphasized that evaluation involves assessing students’ proficiency in all domains and roles they undertake during their training.

Participant 7: And then also, trying to assess all the different domains of how proficient is the student in supervision, in research, in service, in teaching. In addition to just like, can the student do the basic kind of like, nuts and bolts of the work here? Can they do the academic components of it?

Participants Four and Six described the evaluation process in their departments as a means to address PPC among doctoral students. They outlined a structured approach to evaluation and its role in formalizing methods for addressing PPC.
Participant 4: Like, right now, we have our disposition evaluation. It happens at regular times. It also happens when people have a particular concern. If somebody has a concern on the evaluation, it has to come with a plan within it. And then the student is notified of the issue. They have a discussion about the issue with their advisor and some layer of administration.

Participant 6: So, we have both self-evaluations that the students do, but also faculty evaluations of dispositions in our doc program, and those happen at regular intervals throughout the program. I think, I don’t know, six to eight different courses, something like that. And so that’s one way, and a lot of that’s through CACREP that we use to track it, but also, it’s really helpful that when we see ... I forget the exact policy, but we have like a one to three rating scale, and if we see like multiple ones, then it’s an automatic referral to the advisor or review board. I think that is one way that really helps us monitor it [PPC concerns]. Also, within like supervision, we have narratives that we write up in terms of their teaching internships, we have those narratives as well the rating sheets. I think just those regular meetings where we review every doc student in our program is really helpful…it’s kind of a good ways that we can all say, “This is what we’re noticing about this student.”

**Remediation.** The fourth property of *methods for addressing PPC*, remediation, involves intervening with doctoral students who exhibit PPC issues as part of gatekeeping measures. It includes offering interventions such as a professional development plan, specific changes, or, in severe cases, dismissal from the program. The aim is to provide suggestions or recommendations from faculty to demonstrate behavioral changes needed in doctoral students. Participant Two recounted an experience where *remediation* led to dismissal.
Participant 2: These are the options that are available to you [doctoral student]. You can choose to pursue this remediation route, or you can choose something else which will most likely look like you will no longer continue in the program. Those kinds of things.

Participant Three discussed a distinct remediation experience that incorporated a targeted intervention.

Participant 3: So usually, it’s like retaking of a class. So those are easier to kind of remediate on, like writing a paper related to ethics or whatever.

Both Participants Eight and Six discussed instituting a formal remediation process within their departments. They stressed the importance of providing doctoral students with faculty suggestions or recommendations to facilitate behavioral changes.

Participant 8: There’s been, I think, unfortunately, when we’ve had to remediate with a student, and we call it a “professional development plan.” They’re [professional plans] named all sorts of different things obviously, but the gist is like, “This is a formal plan that is established from the school out of the department and this is clearly outlining what the issue is, and then more specifically how this issue potentially misaligns with some of our core competencies, and our professional dispositions, or core dispositions.” Then, these are the steps that the student needs to take to receive proper remediation for these.

Participant 6: We usually think through if a review board referral is warranted, and what steps we’ve kind of taken so far. And if they’re not working well enough, it seems like that would be appropriate, and then with … when a student is referred to the review board, then they usually meet with the review board, and then that’s like three of our
counseling program faculty and we kind of just talk through that with the student and strategize…

In summary, the exploration of methods for addressing PPC within CES doctoral programs revealed a multifaceted approach encompassing encounter, feedback, evaluation, and remediation. Faculty members actively engaged in identifying, assessing, and intervening in instances of PPC among doctoral students, utilizing both formal and informal procedures to support their professional development. Through direct encounters with PPC concerns, faculty members promptly initiated appropriate actions and interventions, as exemplified by Participant Two’s proactive approach to recognizing and addressing issues. Feedback played a pivotal role in fostering positive change and improvement, with faculty members employing various communication strategies to convey expectations and support doctoral students’ progression. Evaluation, conducted through systematic assessment, provided a structured framework for monitoring student progress across academic and dispositional domains, enabling faculty to identify and address PPC issues effectively. Finally, remediation served as a vital component of gatekeeping measures, offering targeted interventions and recommendations to facilitate behavioral changes in doctoral students, as demonstrated by Participants Eight’s and Six’s formal remediation processes within their departments. Together, these methods underscored the commitment of faculty members to address PPC concerns comprehensively, ensuring the maintenance of high standards of competence and professionalism among doctoral students while contributing to the broader discourse on PPC within doctoral education.

Outcomes of PPC

The third subcategory within the complexities of PPC was outcomes of PPC. The outcomes of PPC subcategory encompasses the various results that emerge from faculty and
doctoral students addressing specific instances of PPC. These outcomes were contingent upon the **types of PPC** encountered and the methods employed to address them. They include **assessment of change/improvement**, **resolution**, **decision to leave the program**, **lack of resolution**, **impact on others**, and **dismissal**. Participants described the outcomes as existing on a continuum from **favorable** to **unfavorable**, highlighting the varying characteristics of each PPC outcome.

**Assessment of Change/Improvement.** The first **outcome of PPC**, **assessment of change/improvement**, involves measuring shifts in a doctoral student’s behavior regarding PPC issues following **feedback**, and monitoring signs of overall improvement. It entails proactively observing PPC issues, establishing measurable goals, and facilitating behavioral changes to promote growth-oriented learning and autonomy. Participant Eight emphasized the impact of observation on behavioral change.

Participant 8: I really do believe is when people are observed more or even just believe that they’re being observed more, they tend to change their behavior.

Participant Eight also highlighted the importance of creating meaningful plans to foster autonomous and growth-oriented behavioral changes.

Participant 8: …and, you know, I think what we’re setting them [doctoral students] up for is like, how do they kinda create this plan, and take value of it, and take meaning of it to actually enact good behavioral change that’s within reason? So that’s when they are unobserved, when they are more autonomous, they’re gonna make those better decisions? They gonna learn from the experience, and have it be growth-oriented.

Participant Three employed a comprehensive approach to **assess change/improvement** by monitoring doctoral students’ overall functioning and presentation in classes.
Participant 3: So, I think the ways I try to do that though is if it’s interpersonal related things or if it’s mental health related things outside of the program, those type of things, like checking in on how they’re doing. You can just usually tell, generally, their overall wellness just doing better in class. Are they more attentive, engaged, and present or do they seem still distressed every time they’re coming? Like you can see natural, small changes of a healthy person compared to someone who is very much struggling each day.

**Resolution.** The second outcome of PPC, resolution, refers to achieving a positive outcome or addressing PPC issues effectively through feedback, intervention, or acknowledgment, resulting in a favorable change or improvement in behavior or the situation.

Participant Two recounted reaching resolution through delivering feedback to a doctoral student.

Participant 2: So, sometimes it would be talking to a doc student and asking them to do things differently, and then immediately seeing that change, right?

Both Participants One and Seven shared instances where they attained resolution by expressing concerns to doctoral students, who in turn acknowledged these concerns.

Participant 1: You know, I think sometimes resolution is we needing to kinda say our piece about the concerns.

Participant 7: I think other times there have been most of the resolutions with students have been kind of, I don’t know, just an understanding of where I’m coming from.

Participant Four shared a different type of resolution involving offering more support to a doctoral student displaying PPC issues.

Participant 4: And the successful outcome was, “This person just needed more support.” A lot more support and a lot more focused, like, what do they actually end up being able to do? And finding a way to get there. And it worked.
**Decision to Leave a Program.** The third *outcome of PPC, decision to leave a program,* refers to the voluntary departure of doctoral students from a CES program, sometimes with faculty recommendation, as a result of recognizing their struggles or a mismatch between their competence and program requirements. Three participants shared instances where a doctoral student’s choice to leave the program was viewed as a successful or favorable *outcome of PPC.*

Participant One shared an instance where faculty recommended a different pathway to a struggling doctoral student, and the student agreed to leave the program.

Participant 1: And so that was our recommendation to them [doctoral student]. It was not at a point of saying like, “You’re out,” (laughs) but it was our recommendation that you find another pathway and they agreed with that. That was where things ended there. There have been some others that... I can think of one doctoral student that we have dismissed, but I can think of maybe 10 others in the past seven years that they have exited themselves sometimes with our encouragement of and just that feedback of like, “You’re struggling with this.” Or just, you know, some stop turning in their work (laughs) and then they’re gonna fail…out.

Participant Four reflected on the success of a doctoral student recognizing their own deficits in professional competence and deciding to leave the program.

Participant 4: I think another successful piece is… a successful outcome of dealing with that [PPC] is cases where... And I think it’s rare where sort of like deficits in professional competence are kind of immovable things that the person that isn’t willing or isn’t able to deal with and the system is not able to address, and the person ends up deciding, on their own, that this is not a fit, like that’s a success, I think.
Participant Six described how some students chose to leave the program after recognizing their frustrations and misalignment with the program.

Participant 6: Well, I think like going back to those three cases I talked about, you know, one of them, the student decided to leave the program and pursue another master’s program. The other one, again, the student decided to leave the program because they were frustrated with it. I mean, those feel like kind of a little bit more clean-cut resolutions.

**Lack of Resolution.** The fourth *outcome of PPC*, *lack of resolution*, refers to the inability to achieve a satisfactory conclusion or resolution regarding a doctoral student’s PPC despite efforts by faculty to address these issues through intervention and feedback. This term is used when faculty members are unable to effectively resolve or mitigate the PPC issues exhibited by the student, often resulting in ongoing concerns or challenges within the academic program. In numerous instances, participants recounted scenarios where their feedback was disregarded by doctoral students who chose not to engage in the remediation process and opted to remain in the program.

Participant Seven shared instances where a resolution was not reached, leaving the student still on the department’s radar. She highlighted the process of handing off unresolved issues to the next faculty.

Participant 7: So, there have definitely been times where I haven’t reached a resolution in where kind of the student stays on the department radar. Where it’s like, “Hey, we did not receive a resolution on this. The student still seems to not quite understand the feedback that I’m giving to them.” And then it’s kind of a warm handoff to the next instructor that they’re gonna have of like, “Please make sure you’re reiterating what they should be working on.”
 Participant Eight discussed a trend where students refused to sign or engage with professional development plans, thereby not accepting the feedback or remediation process.

Participant 8: We have actually had a trend where there’s been a few people that we’ve been wanting to put on a professional development plan that actually refuse to sign the plan. They refuse to engage it. They kind of like, “I’m not owning that I did this. I’m actually disputing that fact, and I think, you have me wrong, and I don’t wanna submit to this remediation process.”

Participant Six reflected on an ongoing lack of clear resolution with a student who had issues with self-reflection and counseling skills. Despite showing some improvement, the issues were not fully resolved.

Participant 6: …the one with the student who is my advisee, who kinda had more of those problems of self-reflection and counseling skills, it doesn’t seem like there’s been a real clear resolution, necessarily. It does seem like we’ve had been giving him intentional support with supervision and watching his tapes, and that there has been improvement in a way that we felt like he could kind of move on and continue on in the program. But it was by no means like all the issues had been fixed. There was still a lot of room for growth with that, and so to me it feels like there’s still gotta be this continual level of sort of remediation and support with that we don’t just kind of say, “All right, well, everything’s good now.”

**Impact on Others.** The fifth outcome of PPC, impact on others, refers to the consequences experienced by individuals such as doctoral peers, master-level counseling students, and future students due to the PPC issues of doctoral students. These consequences may
manifest as negative, distressing, or harmful outcomes resulting from the actions or behaviors of doctoral students with PPC issues.

Participant Two highlighted the potential harm that can arise when doctoral students graduate and fail to fulfill their responsibilities as educators or supervisors.

Participant 2: And then somebody goes out and actually does something that’s hurtful…

A doc student graduates with their degree and then they don’t do what they’re supposed to as an educator or a supervisor, and that potentially causes harm.

Participant Eight discussed how doctoral students’ competence issues can impact master-level students due to the nature of their interactions and responsibilities in the program.

Participant 8: …you know, [doctoral students] expected to then do, not just learn, but also translate that learning to activeness with master’s students. It’s not just a silo, “Oh, you’re learning this information.” You’re translating it in the classroom. You’re translating it in supervision. You’re translating it with your interactions with them [master-level students] throughout the halls and stuff like that. I think that translation also is where we tend to see a lot of these issues of competency come up.

Participant Four shared an instance where a former doctoral student, after graduating, faced sanctions from a licensing board due to boundary violations in counselor education.

Participant 4: And then after they got out of the program, they [doctoral student] within a year or two were sanctioned by the state licensing board for a boundary violation in counselor education. So, they went into a counselor education program and had about a fairly large boundary violation. And... I don’t know the sum of the story was, I think it was almost like paying attention to boundary slippage in all aspects.
**Dismissal.** The sixth *outcome of PPC*, *dismissal*, refers to the faculty’s decision to expel a doctoral student from a CES program due to *major PPC* issues, thereby preventing the student from completing their Ph.D. degree. Four participants recalled instances where they had to make such decisions, often stemming from a lack of improvement in behavior despite interventions or the severity of the PPC issues.

Participant Two explained that the decision to dismiss a student often comes after significant or major issues have not been addressed.

Participant 2: …where it elevated to a more serious PPC issue was that the student never really responded. So, we were left wondering like, what does this mean? And then we never heard from them again and so then we dismissed them.

Participant Three clarified that a remediation plan can also result in the student leaving the program.

Participant 3: Sometimes that [addressing PPC issues] also means letting them [doctoral students] go of the program for that very reason. So, a remediation plan doesn’t mean that they’re staying in the program. Remediation can mean you’re leaving the program, just to clarify.

Participant One reflected on cases where professional clinical skill concerns or *clinical PPC* led to dismissal.

Participant 1: … other times…I’m thinking about that have really been problematic and a few that have even been dismissed or encouraged out of the program, there were from the very beginning some professional clinical skill concerns, which I think related to conceptualization concerns and related to lack of self-awareness concerns.

Participant Eight discussed the severity of some violations that necessitate immediate dismissal.
Participant 8: Sometimes, there’s kind of two different tracks for this, is that, sometimes the degree of violation of competency is so significant, it just results in immediate dismissal. And that could be something like an inappropriate boundary with a master’s student, something along those lines, doing something wildly unethical or again that is unsafe in the department.

**Favorable and Unfavorable.** Faculty categorized the six examples or properties of the subcategory outcomes of PPC as either favorable or unfavorable. This dimension of favorable and unfavorable represents the characteristics of each PPC outcome along a continuum. Favorable outcomes to PPC issues denote situations where some form of resolution was achieved, such as observing changes in doctoral students’ behavior, their decision to leave the program, or their dismissal. On the other hand, unfavorable outcomes indicate scenarios where a doctoral student did not benefit from a remediation plan, became fatigued or weary from that experience, or perceived faculty decisions regarding remediation or dismissal unfavorably.

Participant Two shared an example where a doctoral student may have viewed the outcomes as unfavorable, but the faculty believed it was the right decision for the profession.

Participant 2: And then, I wouldn’t say that that was necessarily an unfavorable outcome. I think that they [doctoral student] may say it was unfavorable, but at the same time like they clearly didn’t show that they wanted to return and correct their behaviors and try again. So, it’s kind of a hard way of saying it was favorable. I don’t think this person should have joined the profession.

Participant Four highlighted the balance between faculty and student fatigue, indicating mixed feelings about the outcome.
Participant 4: …it seems like a balance of faculty becoming tired or the student becoming tired. So, it’s kind of a success and kind of not, just like, “Okay, we’re a system that can’t accommodate you.” The field is maybe not a fit for you, and then you [doctoral student] decide to leave.

Participant Eight reflected on the varied outcomes he has experienced, acknowledging both favorable and unfavorable results.

Participant 8: Being through it [addressing PPC] several times, I understand it so much more and I’ve seen all of the ups and downs of it. I’ve seen when it’s gone our way. I’ve seen when it turned sour.

In summary, the examination of outcomes of PPC within CES doctoral programs revealed a spectrum of results contingent upon the nature of PPC encountered and the efficacy of interventions employed. Assessment of change/improvement involved proactive monitoring of doctoral students’ behavior and facilitating growth-oriented learning, as evidenced by Participant Eight’s emphasis on behavioral shifts and autonomy. Resolution, characterized by achieving positive outcomes through feedback and acknowledgment, showcased instances of successful intervention and behavioral change, as exemplified by Participant Two’s proactive approach and Participant Five’s provision of additional support. Conversely, the decision to leave a program represented voluntary departures prompted by recognition of mismatched competence or struggles, as evident in Participant One’s acknowledgment of students’ limitations and subsequent recommendations. Lack of resolution reflected ongoing challenges in addressing PPC issues despite faculty efforts, leading to unresolved concerns or ongoing monitoring, as highlighted by Participant Seven and Eights’ accounts of persistent feedback disregard. Impact on others delineated the repercussions experienced by individuals due to doctoral students’ PPC
issues, emphasizing the broader ramifications beyond individual struggles, as articulated by Participants Two and Eight. *Dismissal*, as the faculty’s ultimate recourse, signified the expulsion of doctoral students from CES programs due to *major PPC* issues, underscoring the severity and non-negotiable nature of certain violations, as discussed by Participants Three and Eight. The characterization of these outcomes as either *favorable* or *unfavorable* delineated the nuanced nature of PPC resolution, acknowledging the complexities and varying degrees of success or challenge encountered in addressing PPC within doctoral education.

To conclude, the first **category, complexities of PPC** shed light on participants’ experiences in identifying and addressing PPC concerns among doctoral students. Participants’ accounts revealed that effectively addressing doctoral PPC issues necessitated the ability to recognize the **types of PPC** displayed by students, often leading to challenges in interpreting and tackling *dispositional PPC*. Additionally, participants shared their diverse experiences in addressing PPC, underscoring the non-linear and ambiguous nature of the process, which requires faculty to develop their own approaches involving *encounter, feedback, evaluation, and remediation*. Depending on the chosen approach and the **type of PPC**, participants identified various outcomes, including *assessment of change/improvement, resolution, decision to leave the program, lack of resolution, impact on others,* and *dismissal*. These outcomes ranged from *favorable* to *unfavorable*, shaping the trajectory of doctoral students’ academic and professional development.

**Cultural Awareness and PPC**

The second **category** that emerged during the first round of analysis was **cultural awareness and PPC**. **Cultural awareness and PPC** encompass the recognition and consideration of the diverse backgrounds of doctoral students and faculty members during
discussions, evaluations, and interventions related to PPC. This involves being sensitive to the intersectionality of identities and acknowledging power dynamics within academia. These subcategories of diversity and marginalization and power dynamics in academia offer insights into how counselor educators attend to cultural awareness when issues of PPC arise within the educational system.

Diversity and Marginalization

The first subcategory of the cultural awareness and PPC category, diversity and marginalization, encompasses the recognition and consideration of the various intersecting aspects of individuals’ identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, particularly within academic and PPC contexts. It involves understanding how these multiple identities intersect and influence experiences, perspectives, and opportunities, while also acknowledging the marginalization experienced by certain identity groups. Faculty members build awareness of (1) how diverse and marginalized identities impact doctoral students’ experiences in the program and PPC issues, (2) how faculty’s own diverse and marginalized identities influence their methods for addressing and resolving PPC issues, and (3) how these diverse and marginalized identities play a role in the student-faculty interactions when handling PPC issues.

Participant Seven discussed her own cultural awareness of diversity and marginalization. She observed instances where students of color struggled to succeed within academic systems and personally experienced discrimination as a Black counselor educator, experiences that could influence the development of academic and dispositional PPC.

Participant 7: The professionalism can be weaponized in a lot of different ways, especially towards people of color. And so, we need to make sure that we are being
equitable in how we’re saying, “what are these professional dispositions, what are the grounds of student getting in trouble even if they get all the right grades? Like, how do we actually remediate these pieces?”

Participant 7: I also think for my students of color, especially first gen students not having clearly defined policies and definitions is often to their detriment. Because if there’s clear defined policies and definitions, most of the time, those students will read them and will adhere to them. So, I’ve seen students of color and marginalized students really, really struggle in academic systems that have too much flexibility built into them.

Furthermore, Participant Seven shared her own experiences as a Black counselor educator navigating different treatment from doctoral students because of her own racial identity.

Participant 7: So, I think that for some of my students, me being a Black woman makes it harder for them to accept feedback from me. I think that for some of them, I am the first Black woman that they have ever had as an instructor in their entire lives. I think that in some ways, it’s hard for them to kind of conceptualize, and view me as having the same amount of power as my colleagues do. So, I think that for some students that makes it a little bit easier for them to pushback when I give feedback. So, I think that there’s that component.

Participant Eight brought up an example of working with a doctoral student of color who encountered heightened challenges due to the everyday experiences of racism within academia. Specifically, when students hold various intersecting identities, their experiences within academia may include additional personal stressors and experiences that may influence the development of PPC issues. This example from Participant Eight illustrated the crucial need for
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Cultural awareness specifically considering diversity and marginalization when assessing PPC issues in a program.

Participant 8: We have a lot of students of color who come to [institution] as doctoral students, or international students that come. A lot of times, you have to look at each of them having these very unique, individual experiences, but also coming into a very monocultured area. They sometimes have very limited support networks, because they have moved from their home base, and are relocating... to a white monocultured [town, state]. It is really difficult. I think, for a lot of these students, and...you have to look inside of like...they are kind of getting exhausted, getting run-down. There is this kind of constant...when I worked with students of color, it was doctoral students, there was, “It’s like I [doctoral student] come up here, and it’s sometimes I feel like I’m on display. Sometimes I feel like I’m being criticized. There’s amount of microaggressions I get towards me is just really hard. I’m getting worn down.” Sometimes our students of color would be like, “I’m struggling. I’m struggling academically. I’m struggling to keep up, because I’m not just waging this other journey of being an academic. I’m also kind of potentially in this hostile environment where I never feel fully like I can be myself and recharge.”

Like Participant Seven, Participant Eight shared his experience with diversity and marginalization of both doctoral students and faculty of color. He observed that universities often want to recruit diverse students and faculty but are not well-equipped to create an inclusive, equitable, and supportive environment that helps address specific challenges for these diverse individuals, including issues of PPC.
Participant 8: A lot of programs want to bring in diverse students and a lot of, honestly, universities want to bring on diverse educators to be on staff. But then they [universities] do this process where they bring them in, and it represents this kind of effort at diversity, but then these individuals tend to dropout. They tend to leave, or they tend to struggle all the way through, and then they’re like, “My doc experience was really tough, like it was exhausting towards me.” And then also, folks in higher ed, they tend to leave. And so we have to bring in more people, and it’s like, you’re meeting these diversity criteria that you’re assessing for, but you’re doing so at the cost of these applicants, and of these candidates, and these doctoral students.

Participant Four shared a specific example of working with doctoral students where it was important to understand their cultural backgrounds and what issues constitute ethical violations.

Participant 4: … I think culture can affect the way a person interacts with higher education, whether that’s culture of origin, race, ethnicity, social identity. Sometimes I’ve noticed when folks have multiple marginalized identities that their communication with the program will be less, because there’s less trust. You know, particularly if they’re first generation and [have] multiple across identities. Sometimes I have seen students engage in things that I would consider ethical violations, in their culture of origin [they are] not ethical violations.

Similarly to Participants Seven and Eight, Participant Four discussed diversity and marginalization related to her own experiences as a faculty of color, drawing attention to the fundamental purpose of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Participant 4: In terms of actual DEI - diversity, equity, inclusion; like we draw a line somewhere in there, we want to be equitable and inclusive, but we don’t actually have
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the resources to do that sometimes. And I think that’s another thing, like I am BIPOC
counselor educator with multiple marginalizations and I function very well, so people
don’t notice that. But I’m also the person that ends up doing those things [DEI]
oftimes or advocating for that [DEI]. And that becomes a problem in of itself.

Participant Six considered how marginalized students might experience symptoms of imposter
syndrome due to lack of representation and not fitting in with other doctoral students.

Participant 6: So, I think for some marginalized students in our program, I think they can
experience elements of imposter syndrome, or not seeing as many people that look like
them, or feeling like they don’t belong. I am thinking that some of those feelings about
what the review board is maybe are kind of related to that too.

Similarly to other participants, Participant Six offered his experiences and thoughts about higher
rates of referral to the review board of graduate students of color, highlighting the connection
between diversity and marginalization and PPC issues.

Participant 6: Often, we’re [faculty] kind of really focused on the cases and the students,
but there certainly are lots of systems in our institution and higher ed in general, and U.S.
culture that really can serve as barriers and make an impact. I know when I first got here
[institution], my first year, we had our review board… our leader at the time brought in
data about which student identities were most often being referred [to the review board].
It was students of color really disproportionately that were being referred overall, that
was for master’s and doc level. We had some conversations around that, but I feel like, I
don’t know… We’re so task focused. It’s oftentimes (laughs) in our program that maybe
we don’t think about how could we change some of these bigger systems, or what needs
to change?
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In summary, the *diversity and marginalization subcategory* revealed how faculty and doctoral students navigate the intricate intersectionality of identities and experiences. This subcategory delved into how individuals’ identities, including race, ethnicity, or immigration status intersect within academic and PPC contexts. Discussions highlighted how marginalized students, particularly those of color, face systemic challenges and personal experiences of discrimination within academic environments. Moreover, this *subcategory* emphasized the critical need for *cultural awareness* and inclusive institutional practices to effectively address these challenges. Additionally, participants underscored the importance of understanding cultural backgrounds in assessing ethical violations and advocating for DEI initiatives despite resource constraints. Participants also emphasized the prevalence of imposter syndrome among marginalized students and the disproportionate referral rates to review boards, highlighting systemic barriers within higher education. Collectively, these narratives underscore the imperative for CES programs to adopt proactive measures to foster an inclusive and equitable environment, dismantle systemic barriers, and address the complex intersectionality of identities to mitigate PPC issues effectively.

**Power Dynamics in Academia**

The second *subcategory* of *cultural awareness and PPC category, power dynamics in academia*, encompasses the recognition of power differentials among doctoral students and faculty within programs. Specifically, it refers to the influence wielded by individuals in positions of authority and how this affects the management of PPC and the overall program experience. This includes instances where tenured faculty members or those in positions of authority exert influence within academic settings. Participant Three, for instance, shared her
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experience of identifying **power dynamics in academia**, particularly among tenured faculty members or those in a position of authority.

Participant 3: And I would also say, depending on who you’re consulting with, there’s also an unsaid or set expectation that you’re following actually at the end of the day what they [tenured faculty] want you to do. Because it could be a tenured faculty, it could be the program director or the assistant director, etcetera. So sometimes, it is tricky as an [assistant] tenure track faculty to be able to make the decisions if there’s a set expectation or pressure to follow someone else’s recommendation… So sometimes, it really is necessary that you use experienced faculty ‘cause they have more stability in their job. They have more reputation, they have more experience.

Participant Seven shared an example of **power dynamics in academia** from her experience of navigating discussions with her colleagues around doctoral students questioning her identity and power.

Participant 7: And I think it’s an important conversation with my colleagues also that there will be some students in the systems that are gonna look for times when my colleagues contradict me as a way to prove that I’m wrong. And so, every place that I’ve worked, that’s been a really important conversation with my colleagues of like, “Hey, I just wanna let you know, in case you have not had a Black woman as a colleague before, that in these predominantly white systems there are gonna be students that are gonna be actively seeking for spots where they can contradict me, or where they can kind of catch me, and they can push against me, or they can prove that I don’t have as much power as my colleagues. And so, it’s really important that we have a unified front. And if there’s something you don’t agree with me on, that’s totally fine. But my strong preference
would be that we have kind of a colleague-to-colleague conversation about it, and that we’re not having a conversation in front of students about it.”

Furthermore, Participant Seven discussed a specific example of power dynamics in academia, highlighting how doctoral students treat her differently compared to her colleagues.

Participant 7: I think my colleagues have been surprised sometimes in the ways that students have talked to me, or responded to me, or sent messages to me. I think for some of them they have never had a student challenge them. They don’t understand how anxiety provoking sometimes it can be for faculty members of color to remediate students or to give some of the critical feedback. And many of them have responded and said, “I’ve never had a student talk to me in that way.”

Participant Eight highlighted how faculty members often wield more power over doctoral students, leading to doctoral students feeling hesitant to reach out for support when needed. This observation underscores the significant influence that faculty members hold within academic settings and the potential impact it can have on the support-seeking behavior of doctoral students.

Participant 8: Another thing is that not all doc students are really comfortable with that power differential, and sometimes they’re like, “I don’t wanna bother them. I don’t want to. I don’t know if I should reach out to them, like they’re in this position over me. I should be really respectful and just listen for whatever they tell me to do.” They’re [doctoral students] not gonna be reaching out because they see it as kind of disrespectful, or like that’s a little bit too… they just haven’t been trained to do that.

Lastly, Participant Two offered a unique perspective on power dynamics in academia, emphasizing the importance of utilizing the authority inherent in the counselor educator position
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to address PPC issues exhibited by doctoral students. His perspective sheds light on the role of faculty members in actively intervening and supporting doctoral students in navigating challenges related to PPC concerns.

Participant 2: I’m always mindful of especially that power dynamic. And yet with PPC, I have the ethical responsibility to when I see that something is occurring, do something about it. Because if I don’t, then potentially that means that somebody down the line could be hurt. And/or maybe that means that in some kind of like, philosophical way or just sort of educational way the student is being hurt. They’re kind of hurting themselves if they’re not doing what they need to be doing or thinking about their training in the various ways that they need to in order to be successful at this.

In summary, the power dynamics in academia subcategory shed light on the influence wielded by individuals in positions of authority. This subcategory emphasized the recognition of power differentials among faculty and doctoral students. Participants discussed instances where tenured faculty or those in positions of authority exerted influence, impacting decision-making processes within academic settings. Examples included the pressure felt by assistant or associate faculty to adhere to the recommendations of tenured colleagues and the challenges faced by faculty members of color in navigating student perceptions of their authority. The discussion underscored how power imbalances can affect the management of PPC and overall program experiences, with faculty often holding more power than doctoral students.

To conclude the second category, cultural awareness and PPC revealed two primary subcategories. The diversity and marginalization subcategory underscored the significance of recognizing and addressing the intersecting aspects of individuals identities within academic contexts. Participants shared insights on the challenges faced by marginalized identity groups,
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emphasizing the need for cultural awareness and inclusivity in addressing PPC issues. The power
dynamics in academia subcategory examined the influence of authority and rank on PPC
management, highlighting the ramification of power differentials within academic settings.
Participants discussed the importance of equitable power distribution and supportive
environments to mitigate the adverse effects of power dynamics on PPC and well-being of
faculty members as well as students.

Faculty’s Response to PPC

During the initial round of analysis, the third category that emerged was faculty’s
response to PPC. Faculty’s response to PPC delves into how faculty members navigate and
respond to PPC issues observed in doctoral students. It encompasses the challenges they face
internally and externally while addressing these issues, prompting personal introspection and
seeking assistance from colleagues within the department. Within this category, three
subcategories emerged: 1) barriers, 2) collaboration and support, and 3) self-reflection.

Barriers

The first subcategory in the faculty’s response to PPC category was barriers. Barriers
encompass the internal and external challenges that hinder the effective management of PPC
issues among doctoral students. These barriers impede faculty members’ roles as educators,
affecting their ability to address and resolve PPC concerns. Internal barriers include assumptions
about students’ competence levels, resistance from students, self-doubt such as imposter
syndrome, emotional strain, and the development of individual teaching styles. External barriers
encompass institutional structures (e.g., graduate school, department culture), administrative
evaluations (e.g., faculty positions, adjunct roles), and cultural dynamics within the department
or among colleagues. This subcategory highlights specific challenges such as disparities in
addressing PPC, lack of standardized procedures, and systems issues within educational institutions. Participants highlighted seven examples or properties of this subcategory: assumptions of competency, differences in addressing PPC, gateslipping, lack of standardized procedures, internal barriers, reports of PPC from external sources, and institutional structural barriers.

**Assumptions of Competency.** The first property of barriers, assumptions of competency, refers to the tendency among CES faculty to presume that doctoral students have already undergone sufficient evaluation and possess the requisite professionalism or experience from their master’s-level education to excel in their doctoral roles. This assumption may lead faculty to expect students to comprehend programmatic expectations, exhibit professionalism, and adhere to specific codes of conduct without explicit guidance. Three participants highlighted that enrollment in a doctoral program does not automatically signify the absence of PPC issues and underscored the necessity of not assuming that doctoral students inherently possess all essential competencies without explicit instruction and support.

Participant Seven emphasized that faculty often operate on assumptions regarding students’ ability to seek help and understand expectations without explicit instructions.

Participant 7: *We’re often going off of assumptions of how our students are gonna ask for help, assumptions that they understand the expectations, assumptions that they’re gonna be responsive or have a certain like, know kind of a certain code of conduct without us actually spelling it out.*

Participant Four highlighted that the mere presence of students in a doctoral program does not eliminate the possibility of pre-existing PPC issues from their master’s programs.
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Participant 4: ... just because somebody’s got in a doctoral program doesn’t mean they didn’t graduate from a master’s program with some PPC issues.

Participant Four further noted the general assumption in doctoral-level counselor education that prior problems have already been resolved, which may not always be the case.

Participant 4: There’s an assumption with doctoral level counselor education that people have already dealt with the problems, you know? Like there’s a little of like, “Oh, they’re already a professional, so we’re not going to attend to some of these things.”

Participant Six reiterated the necessity to avoid assumptions about doctoral students’ competence, stressing the need for continual support and guidance.

Participant 6: …and I think something we shouldn’t be like, “Oh, they’re doc students, they must know what they’re doing.”

**Differences in Addressing PPC.** The second property of *barriers, differences in addressing PPC*, is defined as the differences observed among faculty members and tenured track faculty in their approaches to managing PPC issues. These differences may manifest in various ways, such as adhering to the instructions and expectations set by tenured track faculty and administrative staff or holding differing views on PPC compared to colleagues. Faculty members often find themselves navigating these differences, which can lead to discussions and at times disagreements. As examples of the *differences in addressing PPC*, participants shared insights into the varied perspectives and approaches among faculty members and tenured track faculty.

Participant Six highlighted the discord among faculty members when it came to addressing PPC, noting instances where some faculty felt isolated due to differing opinions.
Participant 6: And we were able to kinda like hash it out, but often it would be like one faculty member that was sort of like left out and being like, “I don’t support this. What are we doing?” (laughs)

Participant Eight discussed the necessity of trusting colleagues’ perspectives, even when personal opinions about a student differ from those of other faculty members.

Participant 8: If all of your colleagues are like, “No, this student is doing something, and that they’re not up to snuff,” and you’ll be like, “I like this student. I think that they’re really trying.” You gotta trust your colleagues to let you see different perspectives.

Participant Three described how differing recommendations on how to address PPC issues can highlight divides among faculty members.

Participant 3: Now, how we recommend and address it, what we wanna do with that information is different. And that’s where you sometimes look at the divide and what I think you should do compared to what they want you to do. And so, I would say that would be one of the potential barriers.

**Gateslipping.** The third property of *barriers, gateslipping,* refers to the phenomenon where faculty members recognize opportunities to address PPC directly or intervene in the gatekeeping process but fail to do so at the time, resulting in missed opportunities to manage PPC concerns effectively when they arise. Participants reflected on this issue, expressing concerns about the potential implications of overlooking PPC issues and the tendency for some faculty to not implement the necessary remediation efforts. One participant highlighted the common attitude of ‘someone else will deal with this’ during gatekeeping conversations, while another noted the risk of ignoring concerns to maintain enrollment numbers in master’s programs.
Participant Two emphasized the potential consequences of ignoring PPC issues.

Participant 2: Because if we recognize something and we see it and we understand that it is like a PPC issue, and we let it go. Then the potential implications and/or outcomes from letting that kind of thing go, or denying that it happened, or just saying, “oh, they won’t do it next time, or all of those kinds of excuses or whatever.”

Participant One noted the tendency to rely on others to address PPC concerns.

Participant 1: I mean, I know in the gatekeeping conversations, it’s always the gateslipping. You know, so that just kind of “someone else will deal with this” kind of attitude.

Participant Seven pointed out the pressures to keep enrollment numbers high, potentially leading to overlooked PPC issues.

Participant 7: And so, I do think that there’s a little bit of a kind of turning a blind eye to remediating doc students, so that you can keep your enrollment numbers high in your master’s program.

Participant Four recalled an instance where an external observation about a student was ignored.

Participant 4: ... the person had been outside practice, and they’ll say, “Look at this.” Sometimes it’s a person who is really observing something very real and I can think of a case where someone, during the application process, sent a letter like that and we discounted it.

Other participants also reflected on instances of gateslipping, which included ignoring opportunities to address PPC concerns raised by others and failing to seize these opportunities. Additionally, the structural processes of programs revealed instances of gateslipping, particularly among adjunct faculty. These faculty members, who may not hold the same responsibilities as
full-time faculty or may perceive PPC issues differently, often neglected to report issues requiring attention.

Participant Four observed that certain issues requiring attention are sometimes simply overlooked.

Participant 4: Sometimes there’s some, um... It’s not even gateslapping. Like, there are just things that need to be addressed and they aren’t addressed.

Participant Six highlighted how PPC concerns can slip through the cracks.

Participant 6: …we’ve certainly had lots of situations where students can kind of slip through the cracks because everyone’s noticing the same thing, but no one thinks it’s significant enough to bring it up.

Participant Six also noted the role of adjunct faculty in gateslapping.

Participant 6: ...with adjuncts it can often be that they’re not…they’re more focused on like, “Well, I’ll just let some of this behavior go. I’m not gonna report this.”

**Lack of Standardized Procedures.** The fourth property of barriers, lack of standardized procedures, reflects the difficulty encountered by faculty when assessing certain types of PPC issues, particularly dispositional ones, due to the absence of clear guidelines and standardized protocols. This lack of clarity often results in subjective assessments and the potential for bias, as faculty may rely on personal discretion or favoritism in addressing these issues. Participants expressed frustration with the absence of clear guidelines and protocols for assessing dispositional PPC issues, highlighting the potential for subjectivity and bias in faculty decision-making processes.

Participant Three discussed the hesitation faculty often feel when addressing personal dispositions due to the lack of clear guidelines.
Participant 3: Anything related to personal dispositions we’re a lot more hesitant to even try to address those things.

Participant One highlighted the absence of literature on doctoral dispositions, reflecting the need for clearer guidelines and protocols.

Participant 1: Like, we’ve been kind of re-looking at those [professional dispositions] as faculty right now about, you know, what does it, what it…I’m not aware of like literature on doctoral dispositions. Um, I don’t think there is any.

Participant One also emphasized the difficulty of relying on tools when dealing with individual student dispositions.

Participant 1: ‘Cause I think even when I go to workshop sessions sometimes it’s like, “These are the tools that we’re using,” but it’s like, “Yeah, tools can be helpful, but you’re also dealing with people and that’s hard.”

Participant Seven expressed the challenge of assessing professional dispositions, referring to them as “softer, fluffy things.”

Participant 7: Yeah, absolutely. And I think that’s so, so hard ‘cause I think, yeah, they’re kinda trying to capture like, assessing those, kind of professional dispositions like, those, kind of softer, fluffy things.

Participant Seven also pointed out the risk of personal bias in the absence of standardized procedures, which allows for discretion and potential favoritism.

Participant 7: We want to have the flexibility to have discretion for specific situations. Which I think gives a ton of space for personal bias to be into this process, because the students who are going to have more leniency are gonna be the students that are the favorites, or gonna be the students that the faculty actually know really well, or gonna be
the students that the faculty happen to have the time and the space to advocate for when
the problem comes up.

Participant Eight addressed the challenge of factoring in personality, which complicated the
assessment process.

Participant 8: ... and then, there’s other instances where, you know, you see the person,
but sometimes you have to factor in personality, and this is why, I think, [it] really gets
hard.

Participant Four noted the emerging awareness and challenges faculty face in dealing with new
and unclear issues within the profession.

Participant 4: And I think…also, it’s unclear to faculty how to deal with it because I think
some of these things are like emerging issues in our profession, emerging awareness of
how people can be affected in the process and as we try to be more inclusive and provide
equitable education, that the faculty is often uncertain about, what do we do in this
instance? Like, you know, I don’t want to shame somebody for something…And
sometimes I think we don’t even know what the acceptable outcome is and [what] we
may get, and this is cultural, too.

**Internal Barriers.** The fifth property of barriers, internal barriers, can be characterized
as the personal challenges and emotional obstacles that faculty members face when addressing
and managing PPC among doctoral students. These barriers encompass a range of internal
experiences, including feelings of self-doubt, imposter syndrome, ethical dilemmas, fear of legal
repercussions, and the emotional strain of remediation efforts. Additionally, faculty may grapple
with concerns about managing workload, institutional pressures, and the impact of their actions
on students and the department. These internal barriers highlight the complex interplay between
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personal emotions, professional responsibilities, and institutional contexts in the management of PPC issues.

As evidenced by participants’ reflections, these internal barriers manifest in various personal experiences and emotional challenges encountered by faculty members when addressing PPC issues. The following voices provide insights into the diverse range of internal barriers faced by faculty in their roles as counselor educators and gatekeepers. Participant Three acknowledged the fear of not following policy or procedures correctly.

Participant 3: But that being said as well, there’s always that slight amount of fear if you’re not gonna follow a policy or procedure in the ways that you should.

Participant One reflected on the feelings of imposter syndrome and doubt in her early experiences when addressing PPC.

Participant 1: But I know that for me there was a lot of imposter syndrome and doubt in those early experiences with this.

Participant One also noted the concern about potential legal repercussions and the importance of documentation.

Participant 1: And not that I’m not dismissing because, you know, because I’m afraid of being sued, even though we have those conversations pretty regularly around like, “if we’re sued, what is the documentation we have for this?”

Participant Seven discussed the significant time and emotional energy required to engage in dialogue with students.

Participant 7: That type of dialogue takes a considerate amount of time and emotional energy for me. Um, and just realistically, sometimes I do not have the time or the space to do that with a student.
Participant Seven also highlighted the resource-intensive nature of remediation and the impact of enrollment pressures.

Participant 7: We don’t want to rock too many boats because remediation takes a lot of time, takes a lot of faculty resources…and so, I do, I think that it’s, and I wonder if you’ll hear something along those lines from other folks. Maybe I’m in kind of a partially administrative position right now also, so I think a lot about enrollment and a lot about how that enrollment pressure impacts PhD students and faculty members and our students.

Participant Eight emphasized the emotional toll the PPC process can take on faculty.

Participant 8: Yeah. It’s a very emotional process, and, you know, oftentimes it’s a really emotional process for the faculty.

Participant Four talked about the empathy for students’ life circumstances and the context from which their issues arise.

Participant 4: Yeah, that’s a hard one, like the empathy people. I mean, and I suffer from it, too, the empathy I have for all students and their life circumstances because, a lot of times, you know, it comes out of a certain context and...

Participant Four also mentioned her discomfort in advocating for students needs and the challenge of identifying those needs accurately.

Participant 4: But I’m also the person that ends up doing those things, oftentimes, or advocating for that. I get a little uncomfortable though because... I think we weren’t always this good at identifying, like, what the student needed.

Participant Six described the feelings of imposter syndrome and people-pleasing tendencies that can interfere with addressing PPC.
Participant 6: I felt some imposter syndrome, and felt like, “Well, they’re just really almost on the same level that I am,” or maybe ways you have people-pleasing tendencies that might play out even more with doc students, and just really thinking about how might those be getting in the way, and, you know, potentially doing your own work in counseling, or just kind of reflecting in journals or with colleagues on that.

Participant Five talked about the need for clear boundaries and the importance of counseling for personal development.

Participant 5: Um, burned my boundaries. Now this is like I will work with you, but we’re not able to just, you know, if I gave you something in February, you turned in in April, like that’s not what this is gonna be. Um, and I just make sure that I dot all my I’s and cross all my T’s, and I reiterate. But we leave each week, “okay, hey, um, just a reminder that this is due, and this is the day that it is due…” I think everybody needs to go to therapy to unpack some of the things that have occurred within their childhood, because I think that impacts the person that they are currently.

**Reports of PPC from External Sources.** The sixth *property* of *barriers, reports of PPC from external sources* to a program, encompasses instances where faculty receive information about PPC concerning doctoral students from doctoral peers, students, and community members. Faculty often receive informal reports, which include verbal complaints or concerns, as well as informal letters about a potential program applicant. While such reports provide valuable external feedback on PPC issues observed in doctoral students, they also present challenges for faculty members. Confidentiality considerations, professional protocols, and differing perspectives between external sources can complicate the navigation of these reports. Faculty members may find themselves in situations where they receive late-night calls from doctoral
students expressing frustrations about their peers’ behaviors. However, due to confidentiality constraints, such as Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), faculty members may be unable to disclose information about these specific cases to reporting individuals seeking immediate resolution or response to the potential PPC issues they raised.

Moreover, reports from external sources may be one-sided, or lack the perspective of the doctoral students experiencing PPC, adding an extra layer of complexity for faculty managing and addressing PPC. In some cases, faculty may discount or overlook these reports due to institutional structural barriers, pressure to maintain the number of doctoral students, or gateslipping, even though they contain valuable information from external observers. This property, exemplified by the below quotes, highlights the challenges faced by faculty members in managing reports of PPC from external sources, and emphasizes the importance of balancing confidentiality requirements with the need to address PPC effectively within academic settings.

Participant One discussed an instance where a doctoral student reached out to her late at night with concerns about another student, highlighting the challenges faculty face when dealing with such reports and the frustration of students seeking immediate solutions.

Participant 1: Yeah, I can think of [one] doc student, and this was a couple years back. I mean, called my cell phone. And it was like late at night, I was driving home from work, and, you know we ended up talking for like an hour that night (laughs) from like 9:00 to 10:00 PM. You know, just about like the concerns they were having about a student and feeling really frustrated… Yeah, I think that is, that is challenging for us, and then especially when the other students are kinda coming to you like, “Fix it. Stop it,” right?
Participant Eight highlighted the difficulty in addressing concerns raised by other students about their peers, emphasizing the constraints faculty face due to confidentiality and the frustration experienced by students requesting immediate resolution.

Participant 8: So, you have other students coming to you, but like, “This student is still doing all of this,” and you can’t talk about that case, and you’re saying, “I hear you. I think you need to focus on yourself.” And, you know, they get really...equally frustrated, and, you know, they want an immediate result sometimes.

**Institutional Structural Barriers.** The seventh property of barriers, *institutional structural barriers*, refers to structural and organizational challenges that hinder faculty members’ ability to effectively address and manage PPC issues within their academic programs. These challenges may include pressures from higher administration to prioritize student enrollment over student quality, limited institutional support for gatekeeping processes, inadequate faculty resources and workload considerations, reliance on adjunct faculty, and structural flaws in program delivery that impact the quality of education and student outcomes.

Faculty members often encounter challenges communicating with administrative staff within educational institutions. In expressing the intricacies of PPC to higher authorities, Participant Two frequently encountered the need to advocate for his decisions and actions.

Participant 2: I think my barriers come from once I leave the, you know, immediate support of my colleagues. So sometimes it’s explaining things to my chair and/or stakeholders above that, such as the dean. Such as, you know the appointed person, the appointed spokesperson through the graduate school or the provost office. Like, you know, it is explaining this is who we are, this is who we are as a profession. These are the
expectations that we have… Advocating, articulating and explaining why we are doing what we are doing as it relates to PPC stuff.

The pressure to increase student enrollment within academic institutions can often conflict with the duties of faculty members, complicating the enforcement of gatekeeping practices, as suggested by Participants One, Seven, and Four. Participant One highlighted the pressure exerted by higher education administration, emphasizing how it impacts faculty members.

Participant 1: Like they, higher ed is saying, “We need higher student enrollment. Bring in more students. Like, bring in, bring in, bring in. You know, you’re gonna lose your jobs.” Like, so I think that there are certainly, you know, at university, like that messaging around enrollment (scoffs).

Participant Seven expressed similar concerns, pointing out the relationship between enrollment pressures and the comfort level of faculty in performing gatekeeping duties.

Participant 7: I think that enrollment at universities plays a really big role in how comfortable people feel actually enacting their gatekeeping duties.

Participant Four also pointed out this issue, highlighting the systemic pressures that faculty face.

Participant 4: I think that there’s some weird stuff happening in higher ed that really is putting pressure on faculty members to kind of keep students moving through your program, keep your enrollment numbers high.

Moreover, the combination of heavy faculty workload and insufficient support significantly hampers their ability to address PPC issues effectively. Participant Four elaborated on the workload challenges.

Participant 4: At the other level, it’s like, having adequate faculty positions so that people have time to address these things. You know, as soon as you identify a problem of
professional competence in a student, that automatically, like, becomes hours and hours of work, every week, until it’s fully addressed.

Participant Four further discussed the lack of institutional support.

Participant 4: When you don’t consider that in faculty workload, like where is that? Is that service? Is it just program work that you’re expected to do? If you’re already loaded to about 50 to 60 hours a week of work, between research service, teaching and advising, like where is that, you know, um... working with this marginal, the identified student, on either remediation or gatekeeping, where does that come in?

Structural flaws within counselor education programs can also contribute to the emergence and handling of PPC issues. Participant Five observed that the structure of the program significantly impacts the issues faced by students.

Participant 5: Some of the issues that we have from the students come from the structure of the program. I think it’s just around the structure of the program, because I think that impacts the delivery, and it impacts the quality of the work that’s, you know, received.

Participant Six noted the impact of adjunct faculty on program structure, emphasizing how it creates barriers.

Participant 6: Like they’re [adjunct faculty] a big disconnection from our program, and when we have so many courses being taught by adjuncts in our program, like that makes it that much more of a barrier.

Participant Seven added insights on how program size and support structures affect quality.

Participant 7: Um, so having, the only way that you can have like, a really large master’s program is by having either lots of adjuncts or a PhD program to help support that.
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In summary, faculty encountered internal and external challenges in addressing PPC among doctoral students. Internally, they grappled with assumptions about students’ readiness, imposter syndrome, and emotional strain, complicating PPC management. Externally, institutional pressures, lack of standardized procedures, and structural flaws within counselor educational programs hindered effective intervention. Faculty often struggled to advocate for their decisions to higher authorities and balance the pressure to increase student enrollment with gatekeeping responsibilities. Faculty identified the need to overcome these barriers, address workload issues, enhance institutional support to effectively manage PPC concerns among doctoral students.

Collaboration and Support

The second subcategory in the faculty’s response to PPC category was collaboration and support. Collaboration and support entail the cohesive efforts and mutual assistance among colleagues to address PPC issues encountered by faculty. This collaborative approach involves seeking consensus on recognizing and addressing PPC issues, consulting with colleagues for guidance and validation, and fostering a supportive environment conducive to effective remediation and gatekeeping processes.

In discussing challenges related to PPC, participants emphasized the importance of viewing colleagues as a support system. They highlighted how critical it is to reach a consensus among colleagues when addressing PPC and how working together fosters cohesion as a team. Participant Two emphasized this support system and the alignment within the team.

Participant 2: Like, so with my colleagues, I think of them as kind of like my micro system if you’re using the Bronfenbrenner model.
Participant 2: Like we’re almost always in very close agreement with how to address and well how to recognize and address those [PPC] things.

Participants underscored the importance of culture within their departments, emphasizing a shared value in seeking collaboration and mentorship to address PPC issues. Participant Three highlighted the role of collaboration.

Participant 3: And, seeking support from your colleagues in order to best support the student who might be struggling…I have to like consult before I even have certain types of conversations like that because I wanna make sure I’m doing those things accurately.

Participant Six emphasized the need for a supportive group.

Participant 6: Um, and they need to have, I don’t know, ideally, like a supportive group of colleagues that will be open to discussing and collaborating on that, and not that they always have to agree, but that they kind of all have the values that gatekeeping is important and what to work to identify students and support students and gatekeep if needed.

Additionally, Participant Three discussed the necessity of seeking support and consultation from colleagues to ensure accurate and effective interventions.

Participant 3: And then number two, at least in my particular department, culture is seeking collaboration and mentorship.

Faculty members emphasized the collective involvement in decision-making processes related to PPC concerns, indicating a team-oriented approach to remediation. Participant Eight noted the collective decision-making process.
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Participant 8: … Usually when we are handling [problems of] professional competency with our doctoral students, we’re all involved in the decision-making process. We’re all involved in the remediation.

Participant Three emphasized the need for cohesion.

Participant 3: Also, how do we address this so that we’re all cohesive and we’re all on the same page on how we’re going to address it.

Participant One highlighted the team effort.

Participant 1: And we know that we’re all on a team when there are concerns, because I really feel like we are… Most of us are on like a similar page of like what that gatekeeping looks like.

Participants discussed the importance of maintaining open communication channels among faculty members to ensure prompt awareness and collaborative action when issues arise.

Participant Four noted the importance of awareness.

Participant 4: And sometimes they’re [PPC issues] with my students, personally, and sometimes they’re with students within the general program. I think is a good way to deal with it… that if one person is having a problem with a doctoral student, everybody on the faculty becomes aware of it fairly quickly.

Participant Six described the collaborative review process.

Participant 6: Like we ... and we have usually numerous conversations, both as a review board and a counseling faculty when a student is referred.

Faculty members expressed gratitude for the shared approach within their program, noting its effectiveness in addressing PPC concerns. Participant Six expressed appreciation for the shared approach.
Participant 6: I feel fortunate that, generally, we’re really on the same page for the most part about how we approach this topic in our program, and I think that’s been a real asset for us.

In summary, faculty actively collaborated and supported each other in addressing PPC among doctoral students. This collaborative approach involved seeking consensus, consulting colleagues for guidance, and fostering a supportive environment conducive to effective remediation and gatekeeping processes. They viewed colleagues as a vital support system, emphasizing the shared value in seeking collaboration and mentorship to address PPC issues. Counselor educators collectively made decisions and engaged in remediation efforts, maintaining open communication channels to ensure prompt awareness and collaborative action. Their cohesive efforts and mutual assistance facilitated consistent and well-coordinated responses to student concerns, contributing to the effective management of PPC challenges.

**Self-Reflection**

The third subcategory in the faculty’s response to PPC category was self-reflection. Self-reflection can be defined as the deliberate and introspective process undertaken by faculty members to contemplate their roles as counselor educators when confronted with PPC issues. This involves drawing upon past experiences related to encountering such issues and reflecting on their own doctoral journey. Participants highlighted three examples or properties: counselor educator identity, reflection on past PPC experiences, and personal doctoral experience.

**Counselor Educator Identity.** The first property of self-reflection, counselor educator identity, refers to the multifaceted role embraced by faculty members within counselor education programs, encompassing educator, advocate, and mentor. It involves a deep commitment to upholding professional standards, advocating for the counseling profession, and ensuring the
well-being of both students and clients. This identity integrates aspects of teaching, supervision, gatekeeping, and clinical practice, reflecting a holistic understanding of the responsibilities inherent in training future counselors.

Participants emphasized the importance of strong clinical skills, adherence to ethical principles, and the integration of counseling values into all facets of counselor education. In discussing their roles, participants highlighted the complexity of their identity as counselor educators, blending various responsibilities and perspectives.

Participant 2: And so, on some levels I feel like, you know, I’m part educator and explaining things, part advocate for the profession because I am, you know, explaining things, but also protecting people, including the students sometimes, you know, and I’m also part salesperson.

Participant 2: So, I have to ebb and flow, give and take, you know, be sensitive, articulate, but also hold those values of our profession and expectations of our profession in place in order to follow all of that through.

Participants Three and One expressed the importance of maintaining high professional standards and ensuring that students meet the expectation of the counseling profession.

Participant 3: I think there’s that piece… do we even know what is expected of us and how are we implementing that... Like what is the lived experience, so how are we implementing those strategies within our programs, and how are we doing trainings to help faculty learn and grow related to gatekeeping?

Participant 1: … for me, the counselor identity is core. Like, you can’t be a counselor educator unless you are a strong counselor. Um, and so, you know, when we have students that have problems in doctoral practicum, like we spend a good bit of our time
gatekeeping there or just talking about what that looks like because we don’t think you should be teaching (laughs) if you’re not a good counselor. We don’t think you should be supervising our practicum students if you don’t know what it’s like to like have strong clinical skills.

Participants Four, Seven, and Six emphasized the integration of counseling values into all aspects of counselor education, highlighting the unique nature of counseling and counselor education compared to other disciplines.

Participant 4: and sort of like you’re [counselor educator] the connection between the values of the program and how you’re training students in the program.

Participant 7: I think that counseling and counselor education are unique from other academic disciplines, where we can have students that have straight A’s but are not fulfilling those professional dispositions and not pass through our programs.

Participant 6: That needs to be at the research level and the teaching level, because if you get this degree, like you could have a long career as a teacher or a researcher, and if you’re not doing that in a way that’s gonna be, you know, helpful or facilitate an effective counselor educator, then that’s not good.

Past PPC Experiences. The second property of self-reflection, past PPC experiences, refers to faculty members’ reflection on previous encounters with PPC and their strategies for addressing them. These experiences include instances of imposter syndrome, doubts, and involvement in processes such as review boards. Through exposure, experience, and critical reflection, faculty members enhance their efficiency, professionalism, and intervention skills when dealing with PPC issues. Participants’ experiences contributed to their ability to recognize, act upon, and effectively manage various challenges related to PPC.
Participant Three highlighted the value of gaining exposure and experience with PPC, emphasizing the importance of adhering to policies and procedures.

Participant 3: So now, I think… I get exposure and experience with working with PPC, it’s understanding at the core of [how] we are following those policies and procedures.

Participant One reflected on her initial experience with PPC, noting feelings of imposter syndrome and doubt.

Participant 1: But I know that for me there was a lot of…imposter syndrome and doubt in those early experiences with this [PPC].

Participant Six shared his involvement with a review board and the different experiences he had with doctoral students referred to the board.

Participant 6: …we have a review board in our program here that, um, students can be referred to, and I think we only have one … no, we’ve had two … no, three doctoral students during my time on the review board that have been referred to that I worked with there. Um, one of them is my advisee and one of them I worked pretty closely. I teach some of the qualitative research classes and worked with her. And so, I think, overall, each experience has been different, and in different parts of the program and based on different concerns.

Participant Two discussed the benefits of experience and critical reflection in improving his efficiency and professionalism in handling PPC issues.

Participant 2: I guess what I would say is, like with experience and then critical reflection I get more efficient and better. And I just think more and more professional at it. Like, I’m not saying I was unprofessional, but I’m just saying like sometimes, you know, with early experiences…When you’re first practicing something or learning something or
doing something, it’s not as smooth and seamless as you would like. And so that’s been my experience. And, you know, I’m just quicker to recognize things. I’m quicker to act on them. I’m more refined and tactful with my interventions. And then, you know, I’m certainly more focused and grounded with all kinds of possible experiences that come, you know, my way. Like, you stay in the game long enough and various things are just gonna happen, and so, you’re gonna be like, “Oh, that happened. Let’s deal with it.”

**Personal Doctoral Experiences.** The third property of *self-reflection, personal doctoral experiences*, involves faculty members recalling and critically examining their own journeys during doctoral studies, particularly in relation to encountering challenges related to professional competence. This reflection encompasses various aspects of their doctoral experiences, including exposure to modeling behavior from faculty, experiences with mentorship, evaluations based on professional dispositions, and the transition from doctoral student to counselor educator. It entails an introspective examination of how these experiences have shaped their understanding and approach to addressing PPC in their current roles as educators. Participant Two reflected on the modeling behavior he received during his doctoral studies, which helped him develop a keen awareness of professional behaviors upon becoming full-time faculty.

Participant 2: So like, I had really good modeling during my doctoral program about how to engage in, you know, professional behaviors and then how to model those things. So, I had a really good foundation. And I would say that when I hit the ground running as full-time faculty, you know, my internal radar was, I think, much more attuned or acute than, say, others.

Reflection on *personal doctoral experiences* also involved evaluating the effectiveness of mentorship received during that time. Participant Eight shared his experience of not feeling
adequately mentored during his doctoral program, which posed challenges upon transitioning to a faculty role.

Participant 8: … I think, I had to relearn a lot of it [doctoral advising], because my doctoral advising wasn’t the best. It was a very kind of aggressive situation. It was very like... the hungriest dog in the fight won, so you had to be kind of like demanding of their [faculty’s] time, or like, you had to kind of assume a lot of stuff. So, I didn’t feel very mentored in my doctoral program by my advisor…So, when I came to [name of university], I was at a total like... I was, this was like a vacuum of like, “Well, how do you do this well?”

Participant One discussed how she did not receive adequate mentorship on teaching at a doctoral level.

Participant 1: Um, and so just, you know, that kind of like…In my doc program, I wasn’t teaching doc students, and so like there is not really a preparation for doctoral preparation, um, until you become a faculty member.

Additionally, faculty members reflected on the evaluation processes they underwent during their doctoral studies. Participant Seven discussed how her doctoral program emphasized consistent feedback on professional dispositions, highlighting the importance of clarity and equity in evaluation practices.

Participant 7: And I think, I feel kind of lucky since I was trained at the [name of university]. They have a very strong professional disposition spelled out, like these are the five professional dispositions we’re looking for. They also, as a PhD student myself, like every single year, we were all rated on the professional dispositions regardless if we were exceeding them or not meeting them. And so, there was very consistent feedback
on not just our academics, but also our professional dispositions. And they made it very clear that just because you’re getting straight A’s in the classes, doesn’t mean that you cannot take care of these other components here…Um, and so, I was able to kind of carry that with me in the space I came later, to say like, “Oh, we need to actually have really clear understanding about what we’re looking for here.” The professionalism can we weaponized in a lot of different ways, especially towards people of color. And so, we need to make sure that we are kind of being equitable in how we’re saying what are these professional dispositions, what are the grounds of student getting in trouble even if they get all the right grades. Like, how do we actually remediate these pieces?

Another aspect of reflection involved considering the cultural and conceptual differences between past and current practices. Participant Four reflected on her shift in understanding of professionalism and the challenges of adapting to new contextual standards.

Participant 4: You know, like this is what professionalism was when I graduated. You know, this is how I was socialized to the profession. You know, I’m culturally different, and I just knew that I had to fit these standards and I fit them. And that’s just not current practice, like we look at things much more contextually now, but sometimes we don’t know what to do with the context and we don’t even understand in the new context, “what is an acceptable outcome?”

Finally, faculty members reflected on how their personal doctoral experiences inform their approaches to gatekeeping and shaping the next generation of counselor educators. Participant One drew upon her own experiences as a doctoral student to highlight her evolving perspective on gatekeeping now as a faculty member.
Participant 1: And, you know, and it’s not, I mean, I think sometimes… I can think of my own student experiences, like “why is this person still here? Get rid of them.” (laughs) Like, “they shouldn’t still be here.” Um, and from this side [faculty’s], it’s like, well, but it’s not just that cut and dry. Like, to dismiss someone you need a lot of documentation.

Participant Six emphasized that his experiences as a doctoral student, including feelings of imposter syndrome, shaped his understanding of the crucial role faculty play in guiding doctoral students, regardless of their career aspirations, to ensure the development of effective counselor educators.

Participant 6: So I think for counselor educators, one thing I would think, especially like for beginning counselor educators, when you’re just often so close to the doc program yourself, and I know like when I was at that place, I felt some imposter syndrome, and felt like, “Well, they’re just really almost on the same level that I am,” but, you know, gatekeeping is such an important role that we play for our doc students. I think it’s something we shouldn’t be like, “Oh, they’re doc students, they must know what they’re doing.” I feel like I hear kind of that mentality sometimes, but, you know, we still serve a really important role, and I think that needs to be across different areas. That needs to be at the research level and the teaching level, because if you get this degree, like you could have a long career as a teacher or a researcher, and if you’re not doing that in a way that’s gonna be, you know, helpful or facilitate, um, you know, an effective counselor educator, then that’s not good. And I sometimes hear people saying like, “Well, they’re not planning to be a counselor educator, so it’s okay that they’re not a good researcher,” but I don’t know.
In summary, faculty engaged in self-reflection as they addressed PPC among doctoral students, encompassing counselor educator identity, reflection on past PPC experiences, and personal doctoral experiences. They navigated their roles as educators, advocates, and mentors, integrating counseling values into their programs while upholding professional standards. Reflecting on past PPC experiences, including imposter syndrome and participation in review boards, faculty members refined their intervention skills and professionalism. Moreover, they critically examined their personal doctoral experiences, evaluating mentorship, feedback on professional dispositions, and shifts in understanding professionalism. These reflections highlighted the importance of gatekeeping and faculty guidance in shaping effective counselor educators, emphasizing clear standards, equitable evaluation practices, and mentorship for doctoral students’ professional development.

To conclude, the third category, faculty’s response to PPC underscored the recognition of barriers encountered in academic settings, the importance of collaboration and support, and the role of self-reflection in addressing PPC issues among doctoral students. These barriers pose significant obstacles for faculty members in effectively managing PPC concerns. Collaboration and support from colleagues can facilitate a unified approach to addressing these barriers related to PPC issues, enhancing cohesion and intervention effectiveness. Additionally, self-reflection allows faculty to draw on past experiences, evaluate their counselor educator identity, and refine their approach to PPC challenges.

Enhancing Management of Problems of Professional Competence (PPC)

During the initial round of analysis, the fourth category that emerged was enhancing management of PPC. Enhancing management of PPC involves the identification and rectification of deficiencies within CES programs and their handling of PPC issues. This process
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enables faculty members to refine their approaches to addressing PPC among doctoral students within their respective roles, enhance the evaluation processes for both students and programs, and advocate for the establishment of clear and specific standards and expectations for students. Within this category, three subcategories emerged: 1) addressing missing gaps, 2) improving PPC approaches, and 3) program evaluation.

Addressing Missing Gaps

The first subcategory in enhancing PPC management was addressing missing gaps. Addressing missing gaps involves faculty identifying and rectifying deficiencies within CES programs, particularly those that hinder effective support for faculty in managing PPC and conducting gatekeeping interventions with doctoral students. Within addressing missing gaps, participants identified four gaps or properties: ambiguous definitions, insufficient research, lack of specificity, and absence of standardized procedures.

Ambiguous Definitions. The first property of addressing missing gaps, ambiguous definitions, encompasses faculty navigating broad and vague language regarding professional dispositions, professional competence, and PPC. The lack of clarity in language leads to personal interpretations and uncertainty regarding the expectations of doctoral students in relation to PPC.

Participants expressed a need for clearer definitions of PPC during the interview process, indicating a desire for clarity and understanding of what encompasses PPC. This underscores the critical need for clear and operational definitions of PPC that can be uniformly applied across all CES programs, highlighting the importance of establishing a cohesive understanding within the field. Participants Three and Eight sought clarification and examples of PPC, prompting a discussion about the researcher’s definition and application of this concept.
Participant 3: Hmm… could you first share a couple of quick examples? When you say problems of professional competency, that’s not really a normal language that most of us use… if you can kind of clarify what you mean by that.

Participant 8: I think, I’d loved to kind of explore your definition of that [PPC], because I can see it in so many different ways, but I’ll get to that in a minute.

Participant 8: Um, and I might even ask kind of a follow-up, and for you, in that professional competency… do you look at this as just like, professional competency related to just like their ability to fulfill the role of a counselor educator, and do you often see kind of aspects of personal concerns coming into that as well? Or is it more like, deficits… in more the professional roles for you?

Additionally, Participants One and Seven emphasized the necessity of a uniform definition that both faculty members and doctoral students could rely on, highlighting the challenges posed by unclear expectations and inconsistent standards.

Participant 1: … more around like, again… what are the dispositions that need to be, you know, more clearly defined?

Participant 7: …and so, without a clear definition of like, behaviorally what we’re looking for clear expectations from adjunct professors to core faculty members, and what we from students in the classrooms… that can get really sticky too, if we have inconsistent expectations for them.

Insufficient Research. The second property of addressing missing gaps, insufficient research, refers to the inadequacy of scholarly inquiry and empirical investigations concerning PPC among doctoral students in CES programs. It denotes the limited availability of research literature, theoretical frameworks, or empirical studies specifically dedicated to understanding
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and addressing PPC issues at the doctoral level. The absence of comprehensive research in this area hampers the development of evidence-based interventions and standardized approaches, leaving faculty with little empirical guidance to effectively manage and support doctoral students experiencing PPC concerns.

Participant Two highlighted the disparity in research availability between master's level and doctoral level students.

Participant 2: Well, oh gosh. Well, there’s not much research on it [PPC among master-level students], right? So like, that’s one thing for sure, that’s an obvious, that’s kind of low, like the low hanging fruit. It’s shocking to me how like, how much, you know, research there is about master’s level and all that other stuff, but there’s not much at the doctoral level.

Participant Three highlighted the importance of studies like this one.

Participant 3: So, I do wanna make that comment of these are types of conversations that go unsaid very often, so it’s really nice to see a study coming out about some of these pieces so then we can gain the efficacy that we need as counselor educators to address problems of professional competency at the doctoral level.

Participant One emphasized the gap in literature.

Participant 1: Like, we’ve been kind of re-looking [professional dispositions] at those as faculty right now about, you know, what does it…I’m not aware of like literature on doctoral dispositions. I don’t think there is any.

Participant One also discussed the lack of standardized research.
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Participant 1: Um, but yeah, so other than just the examples, like there’s nothing really in
the research and there’s nothing that’s standardized across, um, and so I do think that is
definitely a gap.

**Lack of Specificity.** The third *property* of *addressing missing gaps, lack of specificity,*
refers to the absence or inadequacy of clear, detailed, and explicit guidelines, policies, or
expectations within CES programs regarding professional dispositions, competencies, and
procedures related to addressing PPC among doctoral students. It encompasses instances where
program documents, such as student handbooks or policies, lack precision and detailed guidance,
leading to ambiguity, interpretation gaps, and inconsistent application by faculty members.
Participants highlighted the need for more specific, concrete, and tailored guidance, including
case examples, behavioral expectations, and delineated standards, to effectively navigate and
address PPC concerns with clarity and consistency. Participant Three highlighted the need for
continued updates to program documents to ensure specificity and clarity, emphasizing the
importance of addressing this lack of specificity.

Participant 3: Sometimes it’s [student handbooks] vague as heck and sometimes there’s
nothing in there. So, then you have to also do continued updates to your [student
handbooks], as you’re working through these problems that you’re doing this with more
specificity to your student’s handbook for the following year that you’re adding in
information that maybe was missed this time that we now had to interpret ‘cause we
didn’t have a policy.

Echoing this sentiment, Participant One suggested that providing more case examples and
detailed scenarios could enhance understanding and guidance for faculty and doctoral students
alike.
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Participant 1: So, while we can’t just say like, “Come and see,” right? Because it is confidential [gatekeeping process], giving more maybe case examples or more like, you know, this broader time to like really kind of wrestle through what this [gatekeeping] looks like may be helpful for that.

Participants Seven and Four raised concerns about the inequitable application of policies stemming from the lack of clearly defined systems, emphasizing the importance of specificity in behavioral expectations and associated documentation.

Participant 7: And I think oftentimes for my colleagues, they don’t see that. They see the flexibility as advantageous for students, without an understanding that when we have these flexible systems, we’re often going off of, um, assumptions of how our students are gonna ask for help, assumptions that they understand the expectations, um, assumptions that they’re gonna be responsive or have a certain like, know kind of a certain code of conduct without us actually spelling it out. I also think when we don’t have clearly defined systems, we’re able to give benefit of the doubt to students, some students and not to others. And so, it creates a really inequitable way that we apply our policies.

Participant 7: …I have found that it is never helpful to talk in generalities (laughs) with students, especially when you’re talking about things that may potentially need to be remediated. We wanna be very specific about the behavioral changes that we wanna see in students. So, documentation is vitally important to be able to make sure you’re tracking that.

Participant 4: I sometimes think there is a little bit of lack of clarity and like what the actual outcomes are and that would solve a lot of problems.
Building on this, Participant Six advocated for tailored standards and competencies for doctoral students to address the nuanced nature of their roles within CES programs.

Participant 6: I think we’re still… We could still work on like kind of making things a little more specific to doctoral students, ‘cause right now it’s pretty general for both master’s and doctoral, but they do have different nuances… We do have separate dispositions for our doctoral students, though. They’re kind of like based on the master’s level, but also more expansive based on the more expansive role.

Participant 6: You know, in some sense you need flexibility with that, but it’s also like I feel like if we had more specific like competencies or standards, or you know, a sense of what does it look like for you to be in a review board or for these arenas.

**Absence of Standardized Procedures.** The fourth property of *addressing missing gaps*, *absence of standardized procedures*, refers to the lack of established and uniform protocols, guidelines, or processes within CES programs for addressing PPC among doctoral students. Participants highlighted the need for standardization in various program aspects, including assessment methods, milestones tracking, gatekeeping policies, and procedures for doctoral students. This absence of standardized procedures leads to inconsistency, ambiguity, and a lack of clear expectations, hindering the effective management and evaluation of PPC among doctoral students.

Participant Two emphasized the need for standardized processes, particularly at the doctoral level, where there appears to be a gap compared to the wealth of research-supported standardized procedures available for master’s level programs.

Participant 2: Yeah, I think with that research, right, we need to standardize our processes. So like, you know, we need to figure out more about what’s going on or
what’s not going on. Then act collectively as a whole like, we need to standardize those kinds of things at the doctoral level. I think there’s tons of work that’s been done, again, at the master’s level, and then you get to the doctoral level, and it’s kind of like this fertile field, like just full of potential discovery.

Participant Three highlighted the absence of formal assessments, rubrics, or milestones for doctoral students within her program, indicating a lack of standardized procedures compared to the master’s program.

Participant 3: The only add-ons I would say is there tends to not be like formal assessment or paper or rubrics that we use. We have that for the master’s program, but most of us don’t, and at least that I’m aware of, at least in this program, we don’t, we do not have actual, like, milestones that we’re filling these type of things out and doing that with …our doc students.

Participants Seven and Six emphasized the importance of maintaining rigorous standards and implementing clear policies and procedures, particularly regarding gatekeeping and appeals processes for doctoral students.

Participant 7: I think really solid policy recommendations, I think that ACES could probably have a stronger hand in helping to kind of standardize what our recommendations for gatekeeping policies and procedures for doctoral students.

Participant 6: I think it’s important for us to kind of hold a higher standard with that, and not just kinda let students through the program just because like, you know, they’re a good counselor, but really kind of try to hold up a higher level or a higher standard, and I would love to see our field move more towards that.
Participant 6: I think we need clear policies and procedures around gatekeeping, and what that looks like and how students can appeal. I think we need fairness and equity and, regular re-visitation and reflection about the policies and procedures, and looking at ways that systemic issues and social justice might be playing a role with that.

In summary, to **address missing gaps** in **enhancing PPC management**, faculty identified deficiencies within CES programs, hindering effective support for managing PPC and conducting gatekeeping interventions with doctoral students. These gaps included *ambiguous definitions, insufficient research, lack of specificity,* and *absence of standardized procedures*. *Ambiguous definitions* led to personal interpretations and uncertainty, while *insufficient research* hindered evidence-based interventions. *Lack of specificity* resulted in interpretation gaps and inconsistent application, and *absence of standardized procedures* led to inconsistency and ambiguity in managing PPC among doctoral students. Faculty made efforts to address these gaps, working towards improving PPC management within CES programs. These efforts aimed to contribute to the broader goal of upholding professional standards and ensuring the competence of future counselor educators.

**Improving PPC Approaches**

The second **subcategory** in **enhancing PPC management** was **improving PPC approaches**. **Improving PPC** encompasses specific recommendations or strategies aimed at enhancing PPC management within CES programs at the doctoral level. Participants identified seven strategies or properties: *improving documentation, being proactive, considering standards, updating policies, intervening earlier,* and *educating doctoral students about PPC expectations*. Additionally, these strategies or properties represent a continuum from *punitive* to *supportive*,
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where faculty aim to **improve their PPC approaches** by evolving their perspectives and methods regarding PPC and gatekeeping.

**Improving Documentation.** The first *property* of **improving PPC approaches**, *improving documentation*, involves implementing systematic methods for recording and tracking instances of PPC among doctoral students. This practice includes documenting patterns of behavior, maintaining records of discussions and interventions, and ensuring transparency and accountability in the evaluation process.

Participants emphasized the importance of formalizing documentation processes, such as using spreadsheets or files to track student progress over time and summarizing conversations with students in written form. Participants Three, One and Seven made suggestions to improve documentation practices to monitor student progress, identify recurring issues, and provide support or interventions when necessary. Participant Three discussed the importance of documenting patterns of behavior to identify continued problems.

Participant 3: So, for us it’s kind of more documenting the pattern of behavior. And if it happens, again, we have formal like more documentation of, this is a continued problem, and eventually could become a bigger issue. But, yeah.

Participant One highlighted the shift from informal conversations to structured documentation.

Participant 1: So I think that that’s a part of our practices too, and just making sure that we are... And I think before it was just like a conversation, and we weren’t writing it down. So now, like it’s on the spreadsheet. We can kinda go back and see from every meeting like what, what the progress has been. And then when they [doctoral students] graduate, we move them to the bottom and, (laughs) you know, of our graduates, like on
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that list, and so it’s kind of this running list that we’re seeing things across time, and I think that has been a helpful process too.

Participant Seven elaborated on the evolution of her documentation practices, emphasizing transparency and the importance of having records to support serious actions.

Participant 7: I think, I started by just kind of noting in like, a personal note kind of that I had a conversation with a student on this date. And these are the things we talked about. And then I think that evolved into more of a like me actually typing it out and starting a file for the students, so that I can track it more long-term. And then, in my current rendition, when I get done having a conversation with a student, I will send them an email summarizing everything that we talked about with some of kind of the resolution points at the bottom. And then I’ll just BCC myself on that, and then keep track of that. And so, I think over time it’s become a lot more formal. It’s become a lot more transparent. I think that there have been some instances where things have escalated to a point where we needed to take some serious action towards a student moving forward in the program, but we did not have the documentation to support that.

**Being Proactive.** The second property of improving PPC approaches, being proactive, involves actively anticipating and addressing issues related to PPC among doctoral students before they escalate. This approach emphasizes a commitment to continuous improvement and problem-solving, whereby faculty members engage in proactive reflective practices to identify areas for enhancement and implement strategies to mitigate potential challenges. Proactive approaches also entail revising policies and procedures, integrating gatekeeping conversations into curriculum, and promoting mentorship to support doctoral students’ professional development.
Participants highlighted the importance of proactively fostering a culture of collaboration and support within academic departments, where faculty members work together to address PPC concerns through intentional questioning, self-reflection, and system-level management.

Participant Two highlighted the commitment required to proactively address PPC concerns consistently and effectively.

Participant 2: So it’s like... You know, it’s not just like, “oh, here this is again.” It’s like, “okay, this thing has happened, let’s work with this, let’s address this. How next time can I try and do it a little bit better?” And so that’s the commitment every single time.

Participant Two further discussed the importance of understanding PPC dynamics and proactively addressing them at the doctoral level.

Participant 2: And, and I think all of that relationship dynamic and the way that those relationships exist at the doctoral level also means that we need to understand how PPC occurs at that doctoral level in those various ways and then how we address it.

Participant Three reflected on the departmental culture and the expectations regarding collaboration in addressing PPC concerns.

Participant 3: So, I think that’s a really good step. Ask yourself, “what is the culture within your department?” Is it an expectation that you figure it out for yourself using some type of ethical model out there? Or is it that you are expected to collaborate?

Participant One discussed the importance of revising interview processes and incorporating holistic gatekeeping conversations.

Participant 1: And us being intentional about asking about those things more, you know, we have kind of revamped some of our interview process and questions as we’ve seen
some of this… And so I think when I’ve had to shift that to be a little bit more direct or be more direct.

Participant 1: So, we’ve been talking about, we’re kinda shifting some things around with the change to the 2024 [CACREP] standards and having more of a professional identity class and like thinking about, right, “what do we, how do we build in some more kinda holistic gatekeeping conversations?”

Participant Four emphasized the importance of system-level management and participation in addressing PPC concerns. Furthermore, Participant Four discussed the potential benefits of reassessing assumptions and operationalizing comprehensive assessment practices.

Participant 4: I think so that is good, that’s like management on the system level and participating in that seriously.

Participant 4: I think if we drop that attitude, and kind of go, like, everybody gets assessed, like they’re starting from ground zero, like we need to pay attention to all of it, and sort of operationalize that in some ways…that would help. Like, just sort of losing the assumption…

**Considering Standards.** The third *property of improving PPC approaches, considering standards*, involves faculty members incorporating established professional guidelines, program requirements, and accreditation standards into their approaches for addressing PPC among doctoral students. This entails aligning interventions, assessments, and evaluations with recognized standards to ensure adherence to programmatic expectations and professional norms.

Participants highlighted the importance of *considering standards* in managing PPC among doctoral students. By integrating established guidelines and program requirements into their approaches, faculty can ensure alignment with professional expectations and accreditation
standards. Participant Two emphasized the significance of adhering to standards comparable to those applied to master’s level programs.

Participant 2: And so, we have these standards, like I think that everybody else does or should for their doctoral programs like they do their master’s students.

Participant One discussed tailoring inventions to students’ career aspirations while still adhering to professional standards.

Participant 1: Yeah, we talk about that a lot as faculty because we feel like this, you know, so this has been an interesting time with CACREP 2024 standards, and they got rid of doctoral practicum.

Participant 1: Even sometimes if my standards are up here [hand gestures going up] and they don’t quite make it, like there’s movement. Um, and I think for us, too, we are a program that maybe half of our graduates go on to be faculty. And so sometimes, too, I think that also shapes like what we are seeing when they’re not as strong with this area, but we also don’t expect them to do that area. Now, that doesn’t excuse it, because those are still the standards, but sometimes I think how we’re addressing it can be tailored at times to where they are headed professionally and like saying, “Okay, like, you know, your teaching scores are not as high. I know you’re telling me that you’re not planning to go into a teaching role, but you could still adjunct. Like, what does this look like for you to grow here, especially if you’re not gonna be doing it as much? Um, you know, and not that we’re failing you for this, but like you, you got some room to grow.”

Participant Six described the use of programmatic standards and rating scales to monitor students’ progress and identity areas for intervention.
Participant 6: And so that’s one way, and, you know, a lot of that’s through CACREP that we use to track it, but also it’s really helpful that when we see…I forget the exact policy, but we have like a one to three rating scale, and if we see like multiple ones, then it’s an automatic referral to the advisor or review board. And I think that is one way that really helps us monitor it. Also, within like supervision, we have narratives that we write up in terms of their teaching internships, we have those narratives as well, and rating sheets. Um, and I think just those regular meetings where we review every doc student in our program is really helpful. It’s kind of a good ways that we can all say, “This is what we’re noticing about this student…”

**Updating Policies.** The fourth *property* of *improving PPC approaches*, *updating policies*, involves reviewing, revising, and implementing changes to institutional guidelines, protocols, and operational frameworks to address PPC among doctoral students. This process aims to enhance clarity, consistency, and effectiveness in managing PPC issues by ensuring that policies align with current best practices, accreditation standards, and programmatic goals.

Faculty members recognized the importance of *updating policies* and procedures to effectively address PPC among doctoral students. By refining institutional guidelines and protocols, faculty can create a more robust framework for identifying, managing, and resolving PPC concerns. Participant Three highlighted the significance of establishing policies and procedures to address future occurrences of PPC-related incidents.

Participant 3: Um…so at the back end you’re making sure there’s policy, procedures, those type of things so in future, if something like that would happen again, you have that kind of stuff.
Participant One discussed the evolution of institutional policies over time, reflecting changes in faculty composition and programmatic needs.

Participant 1: Yeah, this is something we have been, you know, talking about as faculty (laughs) and like trying to get, you know…We got a lot of like change in who our faculty have been in the past six or seven years, and so I think we have kind of... We have some newer policies now than we did when I started.

Participant 1: Yeah. You know, one of the things that we really had to do was like, when we’re kinda trying to develop new forms for doctorate, we’d just like Google things. And there are some programs that have their handbooks online.

Participants Eight and Six emphasized the importance of clarity and consistency in policies and procedures to ensure transparency and equitable treatment of students.

Participant 8: …and how to make them more standard and uniform, and I think, that’s really a strength of ours, is that, you know, if someone to come through and audit our process, they’re saying, “You treat every student the same in this process.” And you treat them… like you go through the same steps, and then us having to figure out the steps, made it so that we can be transparent to the students. Now, that’s written through our doctoral handbook…. Like if you have a problem, of competency.

Participant 6: And I think we’ve kind of like clarified the policies and procedures (laughs) more in terms of what it looks like when kind of removing a student. I think, we didn’t have the dispositions when I first started here too. We’ve really integrated those.

**Intervening Earlier.** The fifth property of *improving PPC approaches*, *intervening earlier*, involves proactively identifying and addressing emerging PPC among doctoral students at an early stage of their academic journey. This approach emphasizes the importance of timely
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intervention to prevent PPC concerns from escalating, thereby promoting student success, faculty satisfaction, and efficient use of resources.

Recognizing the value of early intervention in managing PPC, faculty members emphasized the need to address emerging issues at the outset. *Intervening earlier* allows for timely support and guidance to doctoral students, fostering a proactive approach to PPC management. Participants One and Four highlighted the significance of addressing concerns early and consistently throughout the doctoral journey.

Participant 1: … I think I have seen even more the need for like saying it [PPC concerns] early and often.

Participant 4: I mean, I think now, we’re much more into regular evaluation and I think we could do a little bit more, but I think if we have, like regular, like the professional disposition evaluation, throughout dissertation process even.

Participant 4: I think, personally of a commitment to sort of bringing up issues earlier and more persistently, in a caring way, in a mentoring way.

Participant Eight underscored the benefits of *early intervention* in mitigating potential competency issues before they escalate.

Participant 8: …probably 90 percent of our potential competency issues with doctoral students can be helped and remediated with an ounce of prevention in that advising relationship.

Furthermore, Participants Eight and Six emphasized the importance of intervening at the initial signs of trouble to prevent situations from worsening.

Participant 8: I think that you could probably help kind [of] stop things early, because by the time they get to the professional development plan, most [of the] times the situation is
out of control. So, if you can intercede earlier, I think…the doctoral student will be happier, and I think, you as a faculty will be happier, and you’ll spend less time overall. Participant 6: I still think this is a growth area for us too, because I think it’s better to intervene sooner and allow students to get that feedback sooner, and I think that there could be still some room for growth with that.

**Educating Doctoral Students About PPC Expectations.** The sixth property of improving PPC approaches, educating doctoral students about PPC expectations, involves providing comprehensive guidance and information to doctoral students regarding professional competence standards, remediation processes, and ethical responsibilities within CES programs. These efforts foster a clearer understanding of program expectations and ethical principles, and aim to ensure that doctoral students are well-informed and prepared to meet the demands of their academic and professional endeavors.

In an effort to promote clarity and transparency, faculty members prioritize educating doctoral students about PPC expectations surrounding professional competence and gatekeeping within CES programs. By imparting essential knowledge and insights, faculty empower doctoral students to navigate their academic journey effectively. Participant One related the importance of sharing information with doctoral students regarding the remediation process.

Participant 1: So I think just sharing with the doc students like of what remediation looks like can be helpful.

Participant Seven highlighted the significance of reviewing program documents with doctoral students to ensure they fully understand program expectations.

Participant 7: I think kind of like, you referenced of like, reading the handbook. I know we tell students to do that all the time, but I really do think that it’s really great practice to
actually do that with your supervisees, do that with your doc students… Read through those documents to make sure that they are really informed about what they’re consenting to what expectations they’re consenting to in the program.

Furthermore, Participant Seven underscored the importance of explicit conversations to ensure mutual understanding of expectations and responsibilities. She also emphasized the need for transparency in gatekeeping processes to prevent surprises for doctoral students.

Participant 7: And that’s, I don’t think that should be an assumption. I think that should be an explicit conversation, so that everybody understands the expectations they’re being held to.

Participant 7: And then the second part of gatekeeping is that none of this should ever come as a surprise.

Participant Four advocated for utilizing the code of ethics as a tool for educating doctoral students about ethical responsibilities.

Participant 4: Just bust out the code of ethics, you know? Like, more and more, I just bust out the code of ethics, and like, “Let’s go through this and what does this mean,” in terms of what we’re talking about.

**Punitive and Supportive.** Faculty categorized the six examples or **properties of improving PPC approaches** as either **punitive** or **supportive**. This **dimension** encapsulates the dichotomy between **punitive** and **supportive** approaches observed in addressing PPC among doctoral students, as identified by faculty. A **punitive** approach, characterized by strict consequences and a focus on shortcomings, may hinder students’ ability to meet expectations and foster meaningful change, potentially leading to further challenges. In contrast, a **supportive** approach emphasizes students’ development, growth, and individual needs, aiming to provide
guidance, encouragement, and resources to facilitate positive outcomes and address PPC effectively.

Faculty members emphasized a shift away from punitive measures in addressing PPC as expressed by Participant Seven:

Participant 7: …I try not to come at it from a punitive perspective.

Participant Eight underscored the importance of destigmatizing professional development plans for doctoral students, advocating for a non-punitive approach and for a strength-based perspective.

Participant 8: …and I don’t know if we’ll ever reach this goal, but I think, I would love to see like professional development plans… to be…non-stigmatized.

Participant 8: We even have... like this is not to be punitive, this is to be strength based, and I think, it’s how you set the goals as well.

Participant Four emphasized the developmental aspect and avoidance of punitive measures in handling performance concerns.

Participant 4: You know, and it’s supposed to be developmental, like they shouldn’t feel punitive, especially at first, and probably should never feel punitive.

In considering the support provided to doctoral students, Participant Six emphasized the importance of creating a space for student participation and expression while balancing between doctoral students’ accountability and support.

Participant 6: Sometimes we want to have like, you know, we want to emphasize that (laughs) it’s gatekeeping and we’re holding students accountable, but I think that can ramp up the anxiety sometimes for our doctoral students. They can kind of be interpreting us as like not as much maybe like mentors, but more like these critical
evaluators of what they’re doing all the time. And so we’re kind of trying to think about how can we still be relational and sell it in a way that it’s a need, it’s a support system, and not just like, “Well, we might kick you out of the program. You better be watching yourself with what you’re doing.”

Participant 6: And I think there needs to be a level of humility too. Like it should be like counselor educators recognizing this is hard, and not wanting to be too punitive or too harsh. And to even, you know, be able to think about where’s the student at in their life and to think creatively and critically about how can we better, as a program, support them [doctoral students]. What other resources are we not tapping into that maybe we could.

In summary, improving PPC approaches involved faculty identifying and addressing deficiencies in current practices for managing PPC among doctoral students. This subcategory encompassed specific strategies aimed at enhancing PPC management: improving documentation, being proactive, considering standards, updating policies, intervening earlier, and educating doctoral students about PPC expectations. These efforts sought to foster a culture of transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement within counselor education, aligning with the broader goal of addressing the challenges associated with PPC among doctoral students. Lastly, these perspectives collectively illustrate a shift towards a more supportive and student-centered approach in addressing PPC among doctoral students, emphasizing understanding, development, and accountability without punitive approaches that are harsh or stigmatizing.

Program Evaluation

The third subcategory in enhancing PPC management was program evaluation. Program evaluation involves a comprehensive assessment conducted by faculty, administrators,
and external accreditors to scrutinize the design, organization, and operational aspects of the CES program. This evaluation process examines elements such as curriculum structure, program policies, cohort models, faculty-student interactions, and administrative practices, all of which significantly shape the learning environment, student experiences, and overall effectiveness of the program. By assessing these facets, program evaluation aims to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement within the CES program.

Moreover, program evaluation plays a crucial role in addressing pertinent issues such as PPC among doctoral students, as it allows for the examination of structural or procedural factors that may contribute to or mitigate PPC occurrences. Through systematic assessment and analysis, those conducting the program evaluation can inform strategies for enhancing program efficacy, promoting student success, and fostering a supportive learning environment conducive to professional development. Within program evaluation, participants identified two properties that further describe and explain how program evaluation plays a role in addressing and managing PPC among doctoral students: 1) CES program and structure and 2) doctoral versus master-level students.

CES Program and Structure. The first property of program evaluation, CES program and structure, refers to the overarching design, organization, and operational aspects of the CES program. It encompasses elements such as curriculum structure, program policies, cohort models, faculty-student interactions, and administrative practices. These elements significantly influence the learning environment, student experiences, and overall effectiveness of the program. By examining these aspects within the context of addressing PPC issues among doctoral students, structural or procedural factors within the CES program may contribute to or mitigate PPC occurrences, thereby informing strategies for improvement and intervention.
In exploring the aspects of doctoral programs and their impact on addressing PPC issues, participants shed light on various aspects of program management and structure. First, some participants highlighted issues related to program closure and the dynamics of cohort models. Participant Two described the challenges his program faced.

Participant 2: So…our doc program... I should just preface this. Our doc program is currently in sort of this sunset phase where we are actually getting ready to close it because we could not actually get quality candidates.

Participant Three discussed the pros and cons of the cohort model in her program.

Participant 3: Sometimes, if you have a cohort model, for an example in this program, we have a cohort model for our doc students. So… the trajectory is very similar. All of them are going through similar stages to get to the end. Um, sometimes, there’s pros and cons to that. One of the cons is depending on the culture that’s created within that cohort, between the cohort members, they will be either… like, cohesive or absolutely not. Um, or they’re cohesive together, but they’ll challenge the faculty in a way of like articulating some big like statement of how they’re wrong somehow. Sometimes that’s accurate. I agree. Like sometimes, you know… we need to be challenged.

Participant One shared an experience with a transfer student from a closing program.

Participant 1: So, just for some context, this was a student that had been enrolled in another doctoral program that closed down, and so she had completed like two years in another doctoral program that closed. And so when she applied to our program, it was as a transfer student. And she had very strong references from her faculty members and, uh, you know, and they were very much advocating like, “Please admit her to your CACREP-accredited program… you know, our program is closing.”
Furthermore, discussion emerged regarding faculty supervision, advisor support, and the role of peer dynamics within doctoral cohorts. Participant One explained the supervisory role in her program.

Participant 1: Yeah, this is something we have been, you know, talking about as faculty (laughs) and like trying to get, you know… We got a lot of like change in who our faculty have been in the past six or seven years, and so I think we have kind of... We have some newer policies now than we did when I started. But yeah, so I think all of our doctoral students have a faculty supervisor when they’re in that clinical experience, and so, right? So, first is like that faculty feedback and supervision is that early place where it happens. We also, you know, all of doctoral students have an advisor from the beginning. And so, we really try to use advisor conversations as a part of like kinda remediation continuum.

Participant Eight discussed the role of peer dynamics within doctoral cohorts.

Participant 8: …a lot of times in doctoral programs, your doctoral members of your cohort or in your program, they tend to police each other quite a bit. So, I think, they’re always on the lookout for each other, and they’re always so attending to their own competency, and their behavior that … they tend to be a little bit... even more strict on their doctoral colleagues.

Participant Six highlighted the need for practical experience and feedback.

Participant 6: So, for our program, we’re moving towards having a required counseling internship for our doc students that kind of replaces the practicum, and so we’re not really shifting a whole lot with what we do, it’s just gonna be kind of just moving it, changing the name. I’d have to look at the standards. I don’t remember if they required that or not, but I feel like doc students definitely should be doing (laughs) counseling and getting
feedback on it, because I know they can come in with really varied skill levels, and
sometimes bad habits…in their counseling skills, and, you know, I think some of it’s
even speaks to the fact that there’s not always a lot of accountability or feedback, when
you’re a counselor out in the field unless you’re intentionally seeking that out.

Moreover, Participant Five voiced concerns about program structure and its impact on student
engagement, particularly in online environments. Participant Five described the specific
challenges she faced with online program structure.

Participant 5: So…we use Blackboards. Everything will be laid out. They [doctoral
students] have a syllabus. The syllabus has all of the assignments, the rubric, the
expectations, the description, the date, how to reach me. Everything is listed there. I also
linked that information to Blackboard. So, on the Blackboard, it’ll be listed under week
one. Week one might say “introduction.” It will have this time. So, everything that they
can see in the week one through 15 is also in the syllabus. And they still just have
difficulty with, I don’t know, what to submit, “I couldn’t see, I couldn’t find.” It seems
to just be a lot of excuses to prolong, like, time…or they need more time to complete
things, instead of just saying, “Hey, I lost track of time,” or whatever the case is. It’s like
it’s just excuses.

Participant Five noted structural issues affecting program delivery.

Participant 5: …Some of the issues that we have from the students come from the
structure of the program. Yeah, in terms of not getting back to students, not responding,
inability to retain faculty. Um, you know, like they are told, you got to do a residency.
But again, these are students who live all over. Some of them, they work. Well, they
work. So you can’t tell somebody in March, “Hey, you gotta fly to Virginia.” You know,
flight, hotels and kids, you know, work. It’s just so many things that they’re not giving upfront so that they can say, “Okay, you know what? I’m aware if I take this program, they’re doing my first year, they’re doing the fourth week in May, I have to do...” You know, it’s not set in stone for them. So, I think for a lot of them would happen too. When you’re in your online program, you think, well, I don’t know, I mean, educated, we think different. But when they hear it online, I think they think asynchronous. So they’re not thinking synchronous. So if I say, “okay, you know, class is going to be held at 7 o’clock Wednesday,” well, one thing that happened is we already have a class at this time. So it’s also teachers scheduling classes at the same time. This, it’s more classes than it is time. There’s something going on with that too. But, the issue for them is like, well, “I’m still at work at 7 o’clock here. It’s 4 o’clock in California.”

Participant Five further elaborated on the impact of program structure on student engagement.

Participant 5: … I think it’s just around the structure of the program, because I think that impacts the delivery, and it impacts the quality of the work that’s, you know, received. When they don’t have any structure, nobody’s telling them return something. They don’t know. They just kinda keep on going…. But I think that’s really the biggest frustration is the time of the program is not being made clear. That is not synchronous. I mean, they’re just not asynchronous. It’s synchronous. That’s really it.

**Doctoral versus Master-Level Students.** The second property of program evaluation, doctoral versus master-level students, refers to the distinct characteristics, training trajectories, supervisory dynamics, and gatekeeping responsibilities observed between these two levels of students within counseling programs. It encompasses the nuanced differences in educational standards, developmental expectations, and professional dispositions between doctoral students
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and master’s students. This property is essential for comprehensively understanding and
addressing PPC issues among doctoral students, as it sheds light on the unique challenges and
opportunities present within doctoral training programs compared to master’s-level programs.

Participants emphasized the connection between master-level and doctoral students,
highlighting the potential influence that doctoral students can have on master-level students and
their professional development due to the responsibilities that doctoral students undertake.
Moreover, participants collectively underscored the disparities in standards and expectations
between the two student groups, identifying the need for greater clarity and attentions to the
standards and expectations of doctoral students.

Participants provided valuable insights into these distinctions, offering perspectives on
the unique characteristics and challenges faced by students at each level. Participants shed light
on the standards and expectations placed on doctoral students, highlighting the perceived
similarities and differences between doctoral and master-level programs. Participant Two
emphasized the need for consistent standards across both levels of programs.

Participant 2: And so, we have these standards, like I think that everybody else does or
should for their doctoral programs like they do their master’s students.

Participant Three discussed the focus on master’s programs over doctoral programs.

Participant 3: No, it’s interesting. Yes, and I think there’s reasons for it. I think one of
the reasons is usually if there’s a PhD program, there’s a master’s program, we tend to
overly focus on a master’s program in addressing the personal professional dispositions
that are very clear there. And the PhD programs, they’re so respected as close to
colleagues that we expect you’ll get your shit together and that, so that then you can now
help us do, get your training to support the master’s students. So there’s a disconnect in
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we really need to make sure we’re actually training the PhD students and making sure
they’re getting their development in the ways that they need and not prioritizing the
master’s students.

Participant One highlighted the foundational expectations for doctoral students.

Participant 1: I think that’s kinda how we see like that early foundation. I mean, that is
like in a CACREP doctoral program, the CACREP core from the master’s program are
there. Like, as a doctoral student you have to meet the master’s course and standard plus
the doctoral ones. I think we have seen some instances where that’s really not been met.
Um, and … these are definitely places that we really kind of lean in and try to focus. As a
doctoral student, when I teach the Theories to Practice class, you know, we are really
trying to broaden that and we’re trying to say like, you know, it’s not just master’s
theories, like, “What does integration approaches look like? How are you bringing in
more about your understanding of trauma and crisis? And how are you kind of pulling
these things together?”

Additionally, participants underscored the potential impact that doctoral students can have on the
broader counseling profession, highlighting the significance of their training and development
within doctoral programs. Participant Two articulated the long-term impact of doctoral students
on profession.

Participant 2: Sort of theoretical idea where it’s like you can look at a counselor, you can
look at a master’s student and say like, “okay, like maybe this person isn’t appropriate
for the profession,” for whatever reason, right? So then you say like, “oh, all right, we
wish them well, this just isn’t for them.” That over the course of potentially like a 20-year
career. They will not have interacted with, I don’t know, 5,000 people or 7,000 people,
right? Whatever. Well, that’s one counselor. If you go to the doctoral level, right? That number expands. Into this long, huge, like algorithm that is like, well, one doctoral student who is not gatekept for PPC reasons, but then potentially graduates and then goes influences scores of master’s students and potentially other doctoral students, right?

Participant Two further noted the potential for research and discovery at the doctoral level.

Participant 2: I think there’s tons of work that’s been done, again, at the master’s level, and then you get to the doctoral level, and it’s kind of like this fertile field, like just full of potential discovery.

Participants discussed the shifting dynamics of relationships and supervisory roles as students progress from master’s to doctoral programs, emphasizing the increased responsibility and expectations placed on doctoral students. Participant Two emphasized the evolving relationship dynamics with doctoral students.

Participant 2: The only other thing that it’s not that you didn’t ask it, it’s just maybe I didn’t articulate it well enough, it’s that like, I do think that there’s a difference in the type of relationships that we have with doctoral students than master’s students. Now, I’m not saying that you can’t or any other counselor educator and supervisor can’t have meaningful relationships with master’s students. That’s totally a thing. Um, but I think that the relationship dynamic shifts when students start a doctoral program and then faculty start those relationships with them.

Participant Eight highlighted the challenge of transitioning from master’s to doctoral roles.

Participant 8: I think, a couple of issues are …being very varying kind of having…as you enter to be a doctoral student. I think at [name of university] we’ve always modeled that you move closer to the actual like counselor educator position, so as a doctoral student,
you’re much closer to actually being a counselor educator than you are to being a master’s student. And that’s really difficult, because a lot of our students, a year and a half ago, they were a master’s student. They connect with them. They might even have friendships within those cohorts. So, but now they’re in this evaluative stance, where they’re providing supervision. They’re expected to engage…present themselves in a manner that is representing [name of university], that’s professional and sometimes we see kind of lack of clear boundaries…

In summary, the program evaluation subcategory explored the CES program’s structure, organization, and operation to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, aiming to enhance efficacy and address PPC among doctoral students. Additionally, this subcategory exposed distinctions between doctoral and master-level students, emphasizing the necessity for tailored support and clear expectations to foster professional competence.

To conclude, the fourth category, enhancing management of PPC within CES programs, highlighted a crucial aspect of missing gaps, which involved identifying and rectifying deficiencies hindering effective support for faculty in managing PPC issues with doctoral students. These gaps include ambiguous definitions, insufficient research, lack of specificity, and absence of standardized procedures. Participants highlighted the need for clearer definitions of PPC, more research dedicated to understanding PPC among doctoral students, specific guidelines and policies, and standardized processes to effectively manage PPC issues.

Additionally, faculty focused on improving PPC approaches, which entails identifying deficiencies in current practices and implementing strategies aimed at better managing PPC issues among doctoral students. The strategies include improving documentation practices, taking a proactive approach to PPC concerns, considering relevant standards, updating policies,
and procedures, intervening earlier, and educating doctoral students about PPC expectations and gatekeeping. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of shifting away from punitive measures towards a more supportive and student-centered approach, aiming to foster understanding, development, and accountability without undue harshness or stigmatization.

Lastly, the program evaluation subcategory involved a comprehensive assessment of various aspects of counseling programs, including design, organization, and operational elements. Participants discussed two key properties: CES program and structure and doctoral versus master-level students. The former focuses on the overarching design and operational aspects of counseling programs, while the latter delves into the distinctions between doctoral and master-level students, emphasizing the importance of understanding these differences for effectively addressing PPC issues. Insights from participants underscored the multifaceted nature of doctoral program management, highlighting both strengths and challenges and stressing the need for clear standards and expectations for doctoral students.

Understanding Doctoral Experiences

During the initial round of analysis, the fifth category that emerged was understanding doctoral experiences. Understanding doctoral experiences encompasses a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted challenges, expectations, motivations, and power dynamics inherent in the pursuit of doctoral education, with a keen focus on addressing PPC among doctoral students. It involves scrutinizing the personal, programmatic, and aspirational dimensions of doctoral students’ journeys, acknowledging the influence of individual stressors, academic requirements, professional aspirations, and the conferred authority of a doctoral degree. Within this category, three subcategories emerged: 1) challenges, 2) expectations and mentorship, and 3) students’ intentions and power. Through exploration of these subcategories,
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this category seeks to illuminate the intricate interplay between personal, academic, and professional factors shaping doctoral students’ experiences and fostering a culture of integrity, competence, and ethical responsibility within academic and professional spheres.

Challenges

The first subcategory of understanding doctoral experiences was challenges. Challenges represents the diverse array of obstacles and difficulties encountered by doctoral students throughout their academic journeys. These challenges manifest on both personal and programmatic levels, influencing students’ emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall professional competence. Within the realm of doctoral studies, challenges encompass two properties, personal stressors and program stressors, each contributing uniquely to the complexity of doctoral experiences and the potential development of PPC.

Personal Stressors. The first property of challenges, personal stressors, encompass a diverse range of individual-level factors and life circumstances that contribute to heightened stress, emotional strain, and difficulties in managing academic responsibilities within doctoral programs. These personal stressors may include health issues, family responsibilities, societal pressures, cultural experiences, and instances of imposter syndrome, wherein students perceive themselves as inadequate or undeserving of their academic achievements. Personal stressors influence doctoral students’ ability to engage effectively in coursework and other doctoral responsibilities, potentially leading to the development of PPC.

Participants in the study provided insights into various personal stressors experienced by doctoral students, shedding light on how these challenges manifest within academic contexts. Participant Three highlighted the common occurrence of personal stressors impacting doctoral students’ abilities to engage fully in academic activities and manage their responsibilities.
Participant 3: So, I think it is a very common one...if there’s behavior issues. I think other pieces [are] life situations, resulting where like maybe whatever’s going on in their [doctoral students’] world, they’re having a baby, whatever it could be is playing such a significant role that they’re struggling being present in classes or in the program in some way. And then they will take it out, like they’ll focus on like something you said or a task as if that is the bigger picture issue when it’s not. The bigger picture issue is whatever stuff you got going in your own life world, now you’re projecting these smaller level things because that’s what you can try to have control over.

Participant One further underscored the significant impact of personal stressors on doctoral students’ academic experiences, illustrating how program faculty navigate and address these challenges within academic contexts.

Participant 1: …There’s another doc student that has just had a lot of like family health things that she’s responsible for, and so she’s another one that this semester, when she was supposed to be doing supervision, we said, “As program faculty, we recommend you do not start supervision. It is a very intensive experience, and we think that you would not be like emotionally well (laughs) if you added this to your plate when you’re in a very much a caretaker role right now with your partner.”

Participants Four emphasized the importance of distinguishing between culturally influenced experiences and complex life stressors, suggesting a nuanced understanding of the various stressors doctoral students encounter.

Participant 4: Increasingly, it’s so important to differentiate between what are persons sort of socialized cultural and sort of like societal experiences that are sort of being
displayed in the program and kind of understanding them that way. And then also, like, complex life stressors.

Participant Six highlighted the need for flexibility in providing support tailored to the diverse range of trauma or stressors that doctoral students may experience, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and addressing these factors in academic settings.

Participant 6: …but at the same time, like how they [doctoral students] get there and the supports they need, I think also might look different, and I think we’re wanting to be open to that and recognizing like…I don’t know, even recognizing things like what are trauma or stressors that might be going on in someone’s life and how is that impacting their work and how might that enter into the conversation.

Participant Five underscored the pervasive nature of personal stressors among doctoral students, highlighting their impact on time management, emotional well-being, and perceptions of academic achievement.

Participant 5: Even though it’s stressing me out, I don’t have the time. But because I told everybody, I’m gonna do it, I’m gonna do it. [referring to doctoral students].

Participant 5: That’s a whole lot of just the same thing. Everybody knows the cat died, the dog died, they lost the baby, lost a parent.

Program Stressors. The second property of challenges, program stressors, encompass institutional and systemic challenges within doctoral programs that contribute to heightened anxiety, frustration, and difficulties in navigating academic requirements and expectations. These stressors arise from various sources, including program policies, administrative procedures, advisor relationships, and academic demands, ultimately impacting doctoral students’ experiences and well-being, and potentially exacerbating PPC.
Participants highlighted the presence of *program stressors* within doctoral programs, shedding light on the institutional and systemic challenges that doctoral students encounter.

Participant Three emphasized the importance of addressing concerns related to program policies and syllabi, highlighting the need to validate doctoral students’ perspectives while grounding discussions in the program’s overarching objectives.

Participant 3: …it is inappropriate for them [doctoral students] to be making these comments about the policies, those type of things. I think that’s when we struggle more because…Um, so during those times, when trying to voice concerns related to a policy or a syllabus, it’s more of hearing them [doctoral students], our process is like standard counselors, hearing them out, validating…doesn’t mean we’re agreeing with them. And then that being said, depending on what it’s about, you may be going back to the doctoral student manual and or handbook and saying, “well, what does it say there?” Or “what is the purpose of this course again? Or what is the purpose of this assignment?” Those type of things. Because sometimes it’s easy to lose sight of what the actual purpose is and so then you go back to grounding it into why we’re doing what we’re doing.

Moreover, Participant One acknowledged the challenges inherent in doctoral programs, underscoring the complexity of gatekeeping and the support needed for doctoral students.

Participant 1: So I think that in some ways when I think about how we support doctoral students, it’s like acknowledging that there are challenges. (laughs) Right? Like we can’t like provide some of these confidential information, but acknowledge that like, “yes, there are challenges in this and gatekeeping is really hard.”

Participant Eight discussed the program environment and the required emotional investment of doctoral students in their career paths, noting the defensive responses that may arise when
feeling threatened. Additionally, he addressed the significance of advisor relationships and the barriers to seeking help or expressing vulnerability.

Participant 8: …you [doctoral student] just feel like your whole heart is into this career path, and that if you feel threatened in that, you’re probably going to be a little bit more defensive, because you’ll be like, “Are they gonna kick me out, what does this mean, why am I being targeted versus my peers?”

Participant 8: … or they’re maybe not getting that kind of check in, you know, they’re not…and sometimes that’s the doctoral student not being confident to like share everything with advisor. Sometimes that could be a relationship issue is that they don’t feel comfortable sharing everything…. Sometimes it’s like, “I’m really struggling here in this class, so how do I ask for help early, before like I start to kinda fall behind, or start to try to catch up at a cost of me just kind of like losing my mind in a certain way?”

Furthermore, Participant Four raised awareness of how program structure may differentially impact students that are neurodiverse or have various learning styles, emphasizing the importance of understanding individual differences within the program context.

Participant 4: …I think like neurodivergence, and different learning styles can make things appear personal when, in fact, they are more about learning and academics.

Participant Six highlighted the anxiety-provoking nature of program evaluations and review processes, noting the potential for doctoral students to interpret feedback as criticism rather than mentorship. He also emphasized the need for interventions to support doctoral students’ well-being and participation in program discussions.

Participant 6: … I know our faculty’s often talking about that, but I do wonder if students sometimes, when they’re in that review board process, like it’s anxiety provoking, and
maybe it’s… They often feeling like they have to defend themselves in some case and if there’s the opportunity for them to sort of like be full participants in saying what they need or saying some of their vulnerable feelings in those moments too.

Participant 6: … but I think that can ramp up the anxiety sometimes for our doctoral students, and they can kind of be interpreting us as like not as much maybe like mentors, but more like these critical evaluators of what they’re doing all the time.

Finally, Participant Five addressed the influence of program stressors on doctoral students’ motivation and conveyed concerns that these students have expressed about program issues.

Participant 5: So, their [doctoral students’] motivation is low. So sometimes I do think that they are also frustrated about things going on within the department.

Participant 5: The group that I have now, they were also voicing concerns and complaints.

**Expectations and Mentorships**

The second *subcategory* of *understanding doctoral experiences* was *expectations and mentorships*. *Expectations and mentorships* encompass the explicit and implicit criteria, behaviors, and achievements expected from doctoral students within their academic and professional pursuits, along with the multifaceted relationships and support structures between faculty mentors and doctoral students. These expectations delineate the benchmarks for success, professional conduct, and competence attainment within doctoral programs, guiding students’ progress and shaping their experiences throughout their academic journey. Mentorship and guidance within this context involve dynamic interactions aimed at fostering academic, professional, and personal development. By providing structured support and guidance, mentors can help students navigate the rigors of doctoral education, address stressors, and cultivate
resilience, ultimately contributing to a healthier academic environment and mitigating the risk of PPC.

Additionally, the subcategory of expectations and mentorships encompasses faculty opportunities to detect signs of PPC issues sooner and intervene proactively to reduce the likelihood of further progression of such challenges. Within the expectations and mentorship subcategory, participants identified two key properties: doctoral performance criteria and mentorship and guidance. These properties offer further insight into and descriptions of doctoral students’ experiences within their programs, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of their academic journey and the supportive relationships that underpin it.

**Doctoral Performance Criteria.** The first property of expectations and mentorships, doctoral performance criteria, outlines both the explicit and implicit standards, behaviors, and achievements expected from doctoral students in their academic and professional roles. These expectations delineate the benchmarks for success, professional conduct, and competency attainment within doctoral programs, guiding students’ progress and shaping their experiences throughout their academic journey. Failure to meet these expectations and standards may not only hinder academic progression but also exacerbate PPC among doctoral students, potentially leading to feelings of inadequacy, overwhelm, and diminished confidence in their abilities to navigate academic and professional challenges effectively.

Participant insights shed light on the multifaceted nature of expectations and standards placed upon doctoral students within academic contexts. Participant Two highlighted the acknowledgment and recognition of students meeting or exceeding academic expectations within their program.
Participant 2: And so, at our institution, we have, if you’re doing all the good things, all the things that we need you to do, you are…in good standing, right? You’re right where you need to be. If you are excelling, then we each semester would note a couple of students that were doing exceptionally well, and we would recognize them.

Participants Three and One emphasized the importance of communication and autonomy in understanding and meeting academic expectations.

Participant 3: So, on the [doctoral student’s] side, if it’s a smaller level where you just have a conversation, you hear their voice…now we’re gonna validate in that whatever that way is, but then also share our expectation of them and why.

Participant 1: … And so that, yeah, it feels like that’s really important of seeing some of those ability to meet the expectations that are set before you independently.

Participant One also underscored the necessity for students to independently fulfill their responsibilities.

Participant 1: I mean, yes, we’re supporting you [doctoral student], but there are some things that you should be able to kinda figure out without us having to come through and like remind you or do it for you or kinda show you how to do it.

Participants Seven, Eight, and Four underscored the developmental aspect of meeting expectations within a learning environment, while Participant Eight and Four further discussed the alignment of expectations with ethical and professional standards, highlighting the importance of clear outcome criteria for mentoring purposes.

Participant 7: Because this is a learning environment. We’re not expecting everybody to be perfect from the beginning. We’re teaching. We’re growing. We’re molding.
Participant 8: We’re like, “This is, you know, you’re expected to treat your colleagues well,” and as a faculty member, I can’t be a bully. I can’t be passive-aggressive. I can’t be, you know, avoidant of dealing with conflict within my department. I need to be an active professional participant, and we’d expect that for them [doctoral students] in their cohorts. Participant 8: …sometimes our expectations for a behavior change is a little bit too drastic, but can they [doctoral students] follow lines with like, are they able to then do the job of a counselor educator ethically and competently, and…safely?

Participant 4: … I think having very clear outcomes that students have to meet to demonstrate professional competence are important not only because we’re evaluating, but also because students need to know what those are to be mentored adequately towards them.

Participant Six emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent high standards for all students within academic programs, reflecting the overarching expectations and standards upheld within doctoral education.

Participant 6: Like we wanna have the same high standard, you know, for any student…

**Mentorship and Guidance.** The second *property* of *expectations and mentorships*, *mentorship and guidance*, encompass the multifaceted relationships and support structures between faculty mentors and doctoral students, aimed at fostering academic, professional, and personal development. Additionally, *mentorship and guidance* provide faculty with opportunities to detect signs of PPC issues sooner and intervene proactively, thereby reducing the likelihood of further progression of such challenges.

Participants identified *mentorship and guidance* as a pivotal aspect of doctoral education, which involves the dynamic interaction between faculty mentors and doctoral students. This
interaction in return shapes students’ experiences and trajectories within their academic programs. Participant Three emphasized the importance of mentorship, critical thinking, and flexibility in mentorship, advocating for a supportive environment that facilitates positive change and reflection.

Participant 3: We’ll start with doctoral students. I would provide that, I want you [doctoral student] to be transparent and I want to empower you to be a critical thinker but doing it in a way that is going to support positive change, in a way that you’re reflective to what you say and how you say it. Um, and giving rationale and grounding to the things that you’re thinking about. I think as doc students being open and curious is a stance that even as counselor educators, we always should have, being open and curious to whatever the concern is, and being flexible to changing your perspective throughout the process, potentially, no matter if you’re the doc student or you’re the counselor educator.

Additionally, Participants Three and One discussed the significance of mutual respect and empathy in mentorship, suggesting that both mentors and students should recognize when a mentoring relationship may not be the right fit.

Participant 3: Like, depending on your relationship with that student, you have to also be mindful of if whatever we need to talk about that’s coming from me or is it best coming from a different faculty member for mentorship?

Participant 1: I think some of that in that conversation of like kind of the mutual respect and empathy is saying, “As a student, when it’s around these kind of things [PPC and gatekeeping], how can you kinda come to that realization for yourself, too, that this is just not the right fit on either side?”
Participant Seven emphasized the role of faculty in mentoring doctoral students to thrive in academic settings, focusing on stress management, feedback, and professional growth.

Participant 7: I think that faculty members can do a lot of mentorship around how to not just survive, but actually thrive in an academic setting. Um, that often, is going to tell you that you need to produce more. You need to do more. You need to be “on” all the time. Um, I think that even like, helping students manage their stress levels will help them be able to engage in this space in a way that’s gonna be...give them longevity in the field. So, I think that there’s a lot of ways that we can mentor, we can be explicit. We can have more specific conversations to set doc students up for success.

Additionally, Participant Seven highlighted the importance of paying attention to early signs.

Participant 7: I think that there’s a lot of responsibility to make sure that we’re actually paying attention and we’re noting things when we see them not just when they become these huge, egregious things.

Participant Eight highlighted the nurturing aspect of mentorship underscoring the supportive role of mentors in cultivating a conducive learning environment for doctoral students.

Participant 8: …because by monitoring somebody [doctoral students], and saying like, “I’m watching this for you. I really wanna know that like I’ve noticed this,” that actually makes them more mindful, and pay more attention, and they tend to kinda snap out of it or they tend to ask for help if they’re really struggling.

Participant Eight also described his mentoring approach.

Participant 8: And, because you actually have somebody who is really nurturing you [doctoral student] and caring about you at [name of university] we meet with all of our
doctoral students once a week, it’s kind of fun like…because that’s actually some of my favorite times of my week.

Participant Eight further discussed mentoring on professional conduct.

Participant 8: Sometimes it’s talking about challenging supervision cases. Sometimes it’s mentoring them about how do you have appropriately [set] boundaries with students, and how to actually hold power?

Participant Six discussed the importance of mentorship interventions and empowering doctoral students to advocate for themselves within academic programs.

Participant 6: …some of the advice I give to our students, often at like the orientation or something is to really try to be intentional about how you plan your time and be intentional about being open to feedback. It’s there to help you. It’s there to help you improve as a professional, and I think it’s really important for doc students to recognize that they’re gonna be pushed and challenged and grow in their programs.

Participant Six also reflected on the importance of cultural relevance in mentorship.

Participant 6: And we’ve tried to kind of like help process that with students in the review board meetings or help think about, you know, is there more opportunities for mentorship, or more like certainly cultural relevant interventions that we could do. And also, that they have a voice and should advocate for themselves, and that counselor educators and programs are not perfect and that they should feel like they should speak up and talk about things if maybe they’re feeling like unjustly targeted or something too, because I imagine that might happen sometimes.

Participant Five reflected on the significance of mentor check-ins and supportive gestures in fostering a supportive mentorship environment for doctoral students.
Participant 5: I’ve been checking in, you know, “Hey, I’m just checking in to see how you all feel. Does anybody need anything?”

Students’ Intentions and Power

The third subcategory of understanding doctoral experiences was students’ intentions and power. Students’ intentions and power delves into the motivations, aspirations, and the consequential influence that accompanies the attainment of a doctoral degree. This exploration into students’ intentions and power is vital within the broader context of PPC among doctoral students as it uncovers the intricate web of factors shaping doctoral students’ academic journey and their subsequent impact on professional competence. Within the students’ intentions and power subcategory, participants identified two key properties: doctoral motives and PhD power and responsibility. Understanding these properties is essential for mitigating the risk of PPC among doctoral students and fostering a culture of integrity and responsibility within academic and professional spheres.

Doctoral Motives. The first property, doctoral motives, involves understanding the underlying motivations and aspirations driving doctoral students in their academic pursuits. By recognizing these motives, faculty gain a deeper understanding of doctoral students’ individual experiences within doctoral programs, enabling them to address potential factors contributing to personal and program stressors. Delving into students’ motives allows faculty to gain insights into how to support students effectively, thereby mitigating the risk of PPC and fostering a healthier academic environment.

Exploring doctoral students’ motives and intentions provided valuable insights into their academic journey and professional aspirations. Participant Two raised a critical question about students’ commitment to their doctoral programs and their subsequent actions after leaving. He
shared a personal experience highlighting the challenge of understanding students’ motives when they suddenly disengage from the program.

Participant 2: Does this student have any intention in continuing in the program?

Participant 2: After spending approximately two years with them [doctoral student] in various experiences and training and coursework and all that other stuff. And then we never heard from them again and so then we dismissed them. And then, the irony is this person maybe about a year later was applying for a job and listed me as a reference. So, this agency reached out to me and asked me to provide feedback on the quality of this applicant. And what I did was…Or I think they pinged me with an email and said, “Hey, I’m applying for this job…And I’ve listed you as a reference.” And I shot back to them like, “Hey, it’s really, really nice to hear from you. I haven’t heard from you in years. Um, I’m willing to be a reference for you, but I want you to know that I’m gonna be honest about my experiences with you.” And I didn’t hear anything from them for a while. And so then I went through with the reference.

Participant One emphasized the importance of tailoring support and guidance based on students’ career trajectories.

Participant 1: …but sometimes I think how we’re addressing it can be tailored at times to where they are headed professionally and like saying, “Okay, like, your teaching scores are not as high. I know you’re telling me that you’re not planning to go into a teaching role, but you could still adjunct. Like, what does this look like for you to grow here, especially if you’re not gonna be doing it as much? Um, you know, and not that we’re failing you for this, but like you, you got some room to grow.”
Participant Four explored how students may leverage doctoral programs for purposes divergent from their stated intentions, indicating potential misalignment between personal motives and program expectations.

Participant 4: So, I think the similar thing happens in counselor education. Like a person will say, “I’m in a counselor education and supervision program, but I really want to become a consultant and I’m going to use it to go into leadership.”

Participant Five delved into her unique perspective on the multifaceted nature of doctoral students’ motives, highlighting the complexity of professional identity formation and the influence of external factors such as money and status.

Participant 5: So I think that’s part of the issue is about looking at why do you wanna attend your PhD? You know, what is that about? Trying to explore people’s motives might also help them learn a little bit more about their identity.

Participant 5: And it kinda makes me hesitant to wonder, you know, actually, what is your motivation? I think a lot of them, “I’m the first one to have PhD,” so it’s the title more so than it is the work that they want to do.

Participant 5: But I don’t think some people are able to really find their selves a professional identity because they’re in it for either money or status, but they’re not really in it to help move forward as a change agent. Um, but I really think honing on their why is beneficial because you have people in the field for the wrong reason.

**PhD Power and Responsibility.** The second property, PhD power and responsibility, encompasses the recognition of the inherent authority and influence bestowed upon individuals upon obtaining a doctoral degree, emphasizing the ethical responsibilities associated with such power dynamics. This concept not only acknowledges the significant impact of doctoral
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education on individuals’ perceived authority but also underscores the importance of
understanding and addressing potential misuse of power and ethical violations within academic
and professional contexts. Within the broader context of PPC among doctoral students, PhD
*power and responsibility*, underscores the critical role of doctoral education in shaping ethical
behavior and competence, guiding CES programs in developing comprehensive evaluation and
support systems to ensure responsible and ethical conduct among doctoral students. By
proactively addressing issues of competence and ethical behavior, institutions and CES programs
can uphold the integrity of academic and professional standards while mitigating the risk of PPC
among doctoral students.

Participants emphasized the influence and responsibility that come with earning a doctoral
degree, pointing out the essential need for addressing potential misuse of power and ethical
violations within academic and professional contexts. Participant Two reflected on the profound
influence wielded by individuals with doctoral degrees, emphasizing the heightened stakes of
addressing PPC at the doctoral level due to the far-reaching consequences of unethical behavior.

Participant 2: Yeah, all of that power, right? Like a PhD comes with an inferred amount of
power, like a high amount of power.

Participant 2: Then those people are going to go out into the world potentially and not do
good. They’re going to violate their codes of ethics, they’re not going to uphold their
beneficence, and then they’re going to potentially impact tens of thousands of people. So,
it’s like the stakes, the significance of the PPC and addressing it at the doctoral level to me
is at a much higher magnitude because of the math. With being in the field and being
granted this degree.
Participant Four elaborated on the diverse roles and responsibilities assumed by doctoral graduates, highlighting the importance of ensuring competence across all domains, regardless of students’ intended career paths. Participant Four emphasized the necessity of evaluating doctoral students’ suitability for various roles, recognizing that the conferred degree validates competence across multiple domains, including supervision and organizational leadership.

Participant 4: Like if they’re [doctoral students] using it for a third purpose or something like that...they still need to fit with all of those, like if somebody is not suitable to be a supervisor, but they are going to lead an organization or they’re not competent...Or they don’t have the temperament to teach and evaluate students, they’re still graduating with us [counselor educators] saying that they do. So I think not doing the, “Oh, but they’re only going to do this,” because once they get the degree, they can do all of it...Or.. I think this is weaker, because they think all of it affects people’s clinical practice, like, “Oh, they really just want to stay in clinical practice and have a PhD.” It’s like, no. Like, if they’re showing some problems in supervision, that’s still a problem, like ‘cause we’re not just doing an advanced practice degree. They [doctoral students] come out with the title, “Counselor Educator and Supervisor” or the degree.

Participant Five offered insights into students’ motivations for pursuing a doctoral degree, suggesting that some may seek the title of “doctor” for the perceived power and prestige it affords.

Participant 5: But I think sometimes they [doctoral students] want the title.

Participant 5: I think it’s just more so to just say “I’m a doctor.” And sometimes I think that’s power.
To conclude, the fifth category, understanding doctoral experiences involved a comprehensive exploration of challenges, expectations, and power dynamics inherent in doctoral education, all aimed at addressing PPC among doctoral students. Participants delved into challenges such as personal stressors and program stressors, delineated expectations and mentorships, and explored students’ intentions and power of obtaining a doctoral degree. Through this exploration, participants reported insight into the complex interplay of factors shaping the doctoral journey. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of doctoral experiences and emphasizing mentorship, guidance, and ethical awareness, participants offered considerations for fostering resilience, competence, and ethical responsibility among doctoral students.

Summary

Chapter Three focused on the initial analysis of faculty experiences in addressing PPC among doctoral students CES programs. This chapter included a detailed description of the participants, the data analysis process, and the emerging themes from the first round of interviews. The analysis revealed five main categories: complexities of PPC, cultural awareness and PPC, faculty’s response to PPC, improving PPC management, and understanding doctoral experiences. The category of complexities of PPC highlighted the diverse types of PPC, methods for addressing them, and the varied outcomes of these interventions. Faculty shared their strategies for documenting and addressing PPC, emphasizing the need for clear definitions, research, and standardized procedures. The category of cultural awareness and PPC focused on the importance of understanding and considering the diverse and marginalized identities of students, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Faculty reflected on their own diverse and marginalized identities and the impact of these
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identities on their interactions with students, stressing the need for cultural competence in managing PPC.

The category of faculty’s response to PPC examined how faculty members react to and manage PPC issues, including the barriers they face, the collaboration and support among colleagues, and the role of self-reflection. This category underscored the need for cohesive efforts and mutual assistance among faculty to effectively address PPC. The category of enhancing PPC management involved discussing strategies to improve current practices, such as better documentation, proactive approaches, adherence to standards, policy updates, early intervention, and educating students about PPC expectations and gatekeeping processes. Faculty emphasized the importance of shifting towards supportive measures rather than punitive ones.

Lastly, the category of understanding doctoral experiences examined the challenges, expectations, and motivations of doctoral students. Faculty reflected on their roles in mentoring and supporting students, acknowledging the impact of personal and programmatic stressors on students’ professional competence. Overall, Chapter Three provided a comprehensive overview of faculty perspectives on managing PPC among doctoral students, highlighting the need for continuous improvement and support within CES programs.
CHAPTER 4: Second Round Analysis

Chapter Four presents the findings from the second round of interviews, conducted after the initial round of analysis. This chapter delves deeper into the participants’ experiences and processes of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs. Building on the experiences identified in Chapter Three, it clarifies the connections between the participants’ experiences, processes, thoughts, and feelings. The second round of analysis focuses on the interactions between and among categories when addressing PPC among doctoral students. This chapter confirms, clarifies and reconceptualizes the categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions from the first-round analysis.

Review of Procedures

After completing the first round of analysis, I identified gaps in perspectives, views, and information that required further exploration. While many participants shared their experiences of addressing PPC among doctoral students and described their processes, the first-round analysis revealed missing details on how participants received guidance on addressing PPC, managed internal and external barriers, navigated power dynamics, and handled unresolved PPC issues. To address these gaps, I formulated specific questions for the second round of interviews that prioritized and targeted participants’ processes, linking them to their experiences.

Similar to the first round, I used semi-structured interview questions for the second round. Based on the findings from the first-round interviews and the identified gaps, I asked the following questions:

1. How does mentorship and guidance or lack of it influence your gatekeeping process or process of addressing PPC? (mentorship and guidance for faculty).
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2. Tell me about a time you weren’t able to address PPC concerns?

3. How do you navigate power dynamics when addressing PPC with doctoral students and when consulting on PPC concerns with colleagues?

4. In the first interview, we discussed the internal and external barriers when addressing PPC issues. Can you describe what happened after you encountered these barriers with PPC, both external and internal?

5. How do you handle unresolved PPC issues?

I continued to ask follow-up questions and prompts based on participants’ responses, providing clarifications and examples when requested.

Due to Participant Five opting not to participate in the second round, I recruited an additional participant. During the initial recruitment process, a faculty member expressed interest in participating in the study but was unavailable at the time of the first-round interviews. This faculty member later became available, and I extended an invitation for the second round of interviews.

Description of Participants

For the second round of interviews, I recruited and interviewed a new participant to replace Participant Five. I conducted the interview via Zoom, following the same procedure and protocol as with other participants, with a duration of approximately 60 minutes. This new participant was assigned the identifier “Participant 9.” Participant Nine self-identified as a ciswoman, White and Latina Professor and Department Head in an in-person CES program with 19 years of work experience.
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Data Analysis

During the analysis process, I used initial and focused coding to confirm, clarify, and reconceptualize the existing codes from the first round of analysis. I used the emerging categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions from the second round of analysis with the findings from the first round, either confirming or clarifying the findings. To demonstrate the existing and new findings, I constructed a new conceptual map representing findings from the second round of analysis, informed by the first round.

These categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions are denoted in the depicted fonts and shown in Figure 2. The arrows in the conceptual map demonstrate the interconnectedness between and among the categories.
Figure 2

Conceptual Map of Second-Round Analysis
Initial Findings from Second Round of Analysis

Five categories from the first round of analysis remained unchanged after the second round. However, I adjusted the structure and order of the categories to better represent the actual process of faculty addressing PPC among doctoral students and how these categories relate to each other. The original order of the categories was: 1) complexities of PPC, 2) cultural awareness and PPC, 3) faculty’s response to PPC, 4) enhancing management of PPC, and 5) understanding doctoral experiences. The new order of the categories, with one renamed category, is: 1) understanding doctoral experience, 2) complexities of PPC, 3) marginalization, power, and PPC (previously was “cultural awareness and PPC”), 4) faculty’s response to PPC, and 5) enhancing management of PPC.

After two rounds of interviews, I recognized the importance of the understanding doctoral experiences category, as emphasized by all participants. Participants highlighted the significance of recognizing the complexities of PPC. Based on the shared meaning during the interviews and my process of co-creating meaning with these faculty members, I observed that because participants understand doctoral experiences – including doctoral students’ challenges, expectations, mentorship, intentions, and power – they can identify the complexities of PPC. These complexities include various types of PPC, different methods for addressing PPC, and numerous outcomes of PPC. In understanding doctoral experiences and the complexities of PPC, faculty also recognized the issues of marginalization and power in addressing PPC among doctoral students.

Understanding of doctoral experiences, complexities of PPC, and marginalization and power inform how faculty respond to PPC. Their responses involve facing various barriers, fostering collaboration and support, and engaging in self-reflection. With these
experiences and processes, faculty emphasized the importance of **enhancing management of PPC** by **addressing missing gaps, improving PPC approaches, and engaging in program evaluation.** Importantly, these categories are not linear but rather interconnected, illustrating the iterative and cyclical nature of faculty addressing PPC in CES programs.

In the second round of analysis, the five **categories** and their respective **subcategories** with **dimensions** remained consistent. However, I observed notable developments in the findings. Specifically, I merged two properties in the **subcategory improving PPC approaches** within the **enhancing management of PPC category.** Additionally, I identified new **properties** to provide further depth and specificity to the emerging themes. These changes and new **properties** are elaborated on in subsequent sections, offering nuanced insights into counselor educators’ experiences and processes of addressing PPC among doctoral students in CES programs.

**Understanding Doctoral Experiences**

The **category of understanding doctoral experiences** remained consistent between first and second rounds of analyses. The **subcategories of challenges, expectations and mentorship,** and **students’ intention and power** remained unchanged. However, in the **expectations and mentorship subcategory,** three new **properties** emerged: **blurred boundaries, counselor to counselor educator,** and **displaying empathy and compassion.**

**Blurred Boundaries**

Within the **expectations and mentorship subcategory,** a newly added **property of blurred boundaries** refers to the phenomenon wherein the delineation between professional roles and personal relationships becomes ambiguous or indistinct within the mentorship dynamic between counselor educators and doctoral students. This ambiguity can manifest in various ways, including over-identification with doctoral students’ experiences, engaging in casual or collegial
interactions that may compromise the evaluative or supervisory nature of the relationship, and the reluctance to enforce appropriate boundaries due to perceived closeness or familiarity. While demonstrating empathy and support is crucial, maintaining professional boundaries is equally important to ensure a healthy and effective educational environment. Counselor educators must recognize the importance of professional distance, avoid over-familiarity, and uphold appropriate boundaries to prevent potential conflicts or exploitation of the system.

Participant Three shared insights into the potential for counselor educators to become immersed in the experiences of doctoral students, leading to a blurring of professional boundaries.

Participant 3: When you’re working with doc students, it’s really easy to join in on whatever triangulation, whatever’s happening with them.

Participant Four discussed counselor educators teaching doctoral internships, highlighting the informal and collegial nature of interactions that may contribute to blurred boundaries.

Participant 4: People who teach doctoral internships are like, “Oh, this is really just me teaching my colleagues” and I don’t treat internship that way and have a fun discussion about how they can do these things better than they’re doing.

Participant Eight emphasized the importance of keeping professional boundaries to maintain a healthy educational environment.

Participant 8: But I think it’s always about: how do you keep those professional boundaries?

Furthermore, Participant Eight reflected on the importance of maintaining evaluative distance in the mentorship relationship with doctoral students to prevent the erosion of professional boundaries.
Participant 8: We want people to look at that [comprehensive examination], people that could potentially be more less biased. And you know, I think that’s a really important part of owning that. Like, “Hey, I’m in the evaluative process. I might need to step back, I might need you to kinda respect that, you know, that whole process moving forward.” But I also think it’s how you carry yourself with them [doctoral students] as well. Like, you don’t wanna ever be too friendly, you don’t ever want to kind of blur those boundaries, like they’re your work colleague. They’re not. You know, this is somebody that is getting training. And I think it’s not uncommon for doctoral students to... when they have a little…sense of that kinda, “I feel comfortable, I feel like I know what I’m doing.” They often get almost too comfortable and too lax in their presentation. And sometimes it’s okay to remind them like, “Hey, we have to kinda remember our advising or our faculty-doctoral student dynamics.”

Participant Nine explored the nuanced nature of boundaries in relationships between faculty and doctoral students, acknowledging instances of inappropriate closeness and the challenges in maintaining clarity in these dynamics.

Participant 9: So, it makes sense to me that some of the boundaries are looser than they are with master students, and then there’s the numbers component. You know, if I have one master student in a class of 30, right? Versus my mentee, and I’m the only one they see. So I think the nature of that relationship makes it sometimes less clear… I’ve seen and I’ve personally experienced like a reluctance to challenge the students or reluctance to name, “Hey, this is a competency concern.”

Participant 9: …And I think because of the closeness…and not even in relationships that are…I’ve seen faculty student relationships that were inappropriately (laughs) close,
right? And had to step into them as an administrator. But kinda just the nature of that relationship. Like, they don’t wanna call it a remediation plan. We’ll be like, “We have to do…” Our own acronym [name] (also known as professional development plan). “We have to do a pre- [professional development plan].” Which is like the advising step on the way to a full-blown plan. But we have no problem naming that with our master students, but it comes to our doctoral students, and somehow, we neglect to identify that conversation as a pre- [professional development plan]. (laughs)

In summary, the property of blurred boundaries highlights the complex and often challenging dynamics within the counselor educator-doctoral student relationship in CES programs. Blurred boundaries may influence the integrity of the evaluative and supervisor roles of counselor educators and their ability to effectively address PPC among doctoral students. Maintaining clear, professional boundaries would allow for objective evaluation and appropriate intervention, thereby fostering growth and competence of future counselor educators.

Counselor to Counselor Educator

Within the expectations and mentorship subcategory, a newly added property of counselor to counselor educator highlights the challenges and distinctions between the roles of practicing counselors and counselor educators. This property underscores the unique difficulties faced by doctoral students transitioning from a clinical setting to an academic environment, where the skills and dispositions required for success may differ significantly. Counselor educators often need to balance acknowledging the clinical expertise of their students with providing feedback and guidance necessary for academic and professional growth in an educational context. They rely on their counseling skills to offer constructive feedback to their doctoral students.
Participant Seven discussed the complexities of mentoring experienced counselors who are returning to academia. She highlighted the need to respect the clinical expertise of these individuals while also emphasizing the importance of adapting to academic expectations and dispositions.

Participant 7: And I would say some of probably the toughest gatekeeping conversations I’ve had had been with folks that have been in the field of counseling as professional counselors for like 30-ish years that are…truly, probably have an expertise in counseling and have come back into PhD programs and maybe don’t have the academic skills or the academic dispositions. They are probably very skilled practitioners. And so, I think those conversations have been interesting because they’re a balance between like honoring the person’s clinical expertise that like in that space, you probably far exceed, right? Like what I am capable of and I wanna honor that clinical space. But in this academic space, like I [faculty member] truly do hold the expertise and the feedback that I’m giving you is to make you be successful in this space. And so, I actually just had a conversation with the doctoral student last week about that…she was feeling very defensive about some feedback that I provided, and they actually had to practice. There was a video assignment where they watched a video of an instructor giving them some feedback and then they had to respond to that feedback in a non-defensive way.

Participant Eight reflected on the benefits of being a counselor when transitioning into the educator role. He emphasized the importance of interpersonal skills and the ability to provide supportive, yet critical feedback to students.

Participant 8: And so, it becomes… I think I’m very fortunate that we’re counselors. We know how to give hard news. And we know how to validate, and we know how to hold
space for insecurity and self-doubt. I know from other faculty I work with that don’t have…Some faculty just don’t have great interpersonal skills. Sometimes… a lot of different faculties across the different sciences and the university… they really, really struggle with giving that inner feedback to their students. That’s maybe more dispositional and not academic.

Participant Nine shared her experience with a doctoral student who was a well-established clinician. She discussed the challenges this student faced in transitioning to a student role, particularly regarding receiving constructive feedback and adapting to academic writing requirements.

Participant 9: So, this is a few years back. We had a doctoral student who was a well-established clinician, was a bit later in their career, and I think there were a couple issues at play. One, was stepping back into a student role or a learning role, and not that there was an expectation for steep hierarchy or anything like that, but this individual was very defensive whenever any constructive feedback was delivered. They also had some difficulties with academic writing. They had a background in creative writing.

In summary, the property of counselor to counselor educator highlights the unique challenges faced by doctoral students transitioning from clinical practice to academia. Balancing the recognition of clinical expertise with the necessity of academic rigor and feedback is crucial for addressing PPC among doctoral students. This balance ensures that students can successfully navigate their new roles as emerging counselor educators while maintaining professional growth and competence.
**Displaying Empathy and Compassion**

Within the *expectations and mentorship subcategory*, the newly added property of *displaying empathy and compassion* refers to the practice of counselor educators empathizing with doctoral students’ challenges and demonstrating compassion in their interactions. This involves understanding students’ struggles, acknowledging their emotional states, and offering support and understanding without compromising academic standards. However, while faculty viewed displaying empathy and compassion as generally positive, they also identified potential challenges, such as missing opportunities to address PPC issues effectively.

Participant One emphasized the importance of offering grace and understanding to overwhelmed doctoral students, refraining from pushing on professionalism issues due to compassion for their circumstances.

Participant 1: And so, but I haven’t pushed on that as a professionalism thing because I’m like, I know that they’re [doctoral students] really overwhelmed, and not always well. So, I’m just kind of trying to give that grace in there. So, it may be another example of there are times that’s how I deal with it [PPC issues] when they are not resolved. Like, that’s not one that I have felt the need to call out ‘cause of my compassion for where they are at.

Participant Six discussed the challenge of maintaining genuine empathy while providing constructive feedback, aiming to support students’ growth while respecting their vulnerability.

Participant 6: And recognizing that sometimes like that might be really hard if they’re [doctoral students] in this position where they feel like they’re being evaluated. It can be hard for maybe a student to put that out there. And I want to kind of try to be genuine
Participant Eight reflected on the deep emotional connection and empathy developed towards doctoral students, understanding their challenges and providing support through difficult times.

Participant 8: And we have that relationship with them [doctoral students] and we’re like, “They’re struggling right now. Do I wanna cause more struggle towards them?” And I think that’s a really big check for you, as a faculty member, because you care about these doctoral students. You, I mean, you work with them for a long time, you really want the best for them, you become actually, like… I’m very close [with] a lot of my folks… Not everybody, but a lot of people I had advised. I still maintain connection with them… They’re in my heart. Like, I really care about them.

Participant Eight also highlighted the risk of turning a blind eye to PPC issues due to counselor educators’ empathy.

Participant 8: And you know, I have a lot of empathy for them [doctoral students]… They didn’t wake up and they were like, you know, “This is the behaviors I wanna manifest.” It’s usually a consequence of several things that are occurring in their life that are distracting them, causing potentially emotional dysregulation, causing them to be unfocused and potentially miss very important aspects of their responsibilities… And you’re like, “Oh, my gosh.” And they’re deathly afraid. They’re like, “I don’t wanna be kicked out of this program. I want to keep pushing… I mean, you know, this is my career path…” I think all of us as, you know, counsel educators have been blinded by aspects of our own empathy.
In summary, the property of displaying empathy and compassion underscores the crucial role of empathy in counselor educators’ interactions with doctoral students. By understanding and empathizing with students’ challenges, counselor educators can provide effective support while maintaining academic rigor. However, being overly empathetic might blind faculty to certain PPC issues. Therefore, a balanced approach is vital in addressing PPC among doctoral students, fostering an environment where students feel supported and valued on their journey towards becoming competent professionals in CES.

**Complexities of PPC**

The category of complexities of PPC remained consistent between first and second rounds of analyses. However, the definition of the category changed to better reflect and represent the complexity of the process of addressing PPC among doctoral students. The revised definition of complexities of PPC captures the multifaceted nature of faculty’s experiences and processes in identifying, evaluating, and attempting to resolve PPC issues. This category highlights the intricate challenges faculty face in recognizing diverse types of PPC, employing varied methods to address these issues, and managing the resulting outcomes. Faculty members navigate a web of academic, dispositional, clinical, and major PPC concerns, each requiring tailored interventions and yielding different results. The complexities of PPC underscore the dynamic, often ambiguous, nature of the process, where faculty must balance institutional policies, ethical considerations, and individual student needs.

The subcategories of types of PPC, methods for addressing PPC, and outcomes of PPC remained unchanged. However, the definitions of methods for addressing PPC and outcomes of PPC subcategories changed to represent the complexity of the process of managing PPC issues at a doctoral level. The revised definition of methods for addressing PPC delves into the
strategic and procedural approaches faculty employ to tackle PPC issues among doctoral students. These methods are characterized by their adaptability and responsiveness to the unique challenges posed by each PPC case. Faculty members engage in a continuous process of encounter, feedback, evaluation, and remediation, striving to promote professional growth and competence. The complexity of these methods lies in their need for flexibility, precision, and consistency, as faculty must navigate varying student behaviors, academic standards, and institutional requirements. Effective methods for addressing PPC demand a balance between support and accountability, fostering a developmental approach while upholding rigorous professional standards.

The revised definition of outcomes of PPC encompasses the diverse and multifaceted results that emerge from faculty and doctoral students addressing PPC issues. These outcomes are not linear but exist on a continuum, ranging from successful resolutions to ongoing challenges. Faculty members encounter a spectrum of outcomes including behavioral improvements, voluntary departures from the program, persistent issues, broader impacts on peers and students, and, in severe cases, dismissal. The complexity of these outcomes lies in their variability and the nuanced interplay between faculty interventions, student responses, and institutional policies. Each outcome reflects the intricate balance faculty must maintain between fostering student development, ensuring professional standards, and mitigating potential harm within the academic and professional community. Additionally, in the subcategory outcomes of PPC, two new properties emerged: appeal and legal processes and forward-looking perspectives on competence.

Appeal and Legal Processes
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Within the outcomes of PPC subcategory, a newly added property of appeal and legal processes pertains to the formal procedures and legal avenues available to doctoral students who challenge decisions such as program dismissal or remediation. This property highlights the structured processes involved in appeals, including involvement of formal committees, administrative reviews, and potential legal considerations. It underscores the significant impact of appeals on both students and programs, affecting relationships, academic progress, and institutional decisions.

Participant Three discussed the formal committee’s role in dismissing a student from the program and the subsequent appeal process, highlighting the escalation to higher administrative levels and potential legal implications.

Participant 3: The formal committee let them [doctoral student] go from the program. It was that substantial. There’s no remediation as in, “You can do better.” It was, “We do not want you in this program for these reasons.” It was very substantial. Now, I wouldn’t say the graduate school or whoever’s the administration that also can overturn it. That student has every right when you do a formal committee and then whatever that remediation is, letting go of them [from] the program, they have the right to appeal it. That’s when it goes to a larger spectrum. That student did want to appeal it… Participant 3: … you’re bringing the attorney general of whatever that university is to coordinate and all those things. We already did that, whoever was on that committee, I wasn’t during the actual formal remediation process before they decided to let that student go. But now you’re bringing them in again to make a decision on “did this program within my institution make the correct decision?” It gets bigger and bigger if they do appeal… Technically when it gets that big, any email with that student’s name
Participant Eight reflected on the complexities and uncertainties involved when students successfully appeal decisions like a professional development plan, illustrating the emotional toll and potential outcomes of reinstatement following initial dismissal.

Participant 8: It’s tough [unresolved PPC]. It’s really tough because that’s happened before. Like, we’ve had people challenge a professional development plan and won this. And you know they no longer on a professional development plan, we don’t have that remediation for them. Um, and it’s really, really tough. It can be really scary because, effectively you really feel uncertain about how I can keep on giving feedback. Because often, I think in negative remediation experiences, both parties are so hurt, and the one party is so aggrieved that the working relationship will shut down. Now, I will say that doesn’t happen all the time. I think sometimes… we’ve had people overturn professional development plans and we’ve actually kicked people out of the program. And then they’d won an appeal and been let back into the program. But then we asked them. We’re like, “Okay, you’re not in the program. I mean, you’re in… you’re back in the program, I mean. But do you feel good being here?” And… that person actually still left (laughs), which I thought was just a waste. I mean, it’s like all of that energy, all of that pain and hurt.

In summary, the property of appeal and legal processes underscores the structural procedures and potential legal implications involved in doctoral students appealing decisions such as program dismissal or remediation. This property is crucial in understanding how
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counselor educators navigate complex administrative and legal frameworks while addressing PPC among doctoral students.

*Forward-Looking Perspectives on Competence*

Within the *outcomes of PPC subcategory*, a newly added *property* of forward-looking *perspectives on competence* underscores participants’ optimism and anticipation regarding the future resolution and developmental progress of doctoral students in CES. This *property* reflects the belief among counselor educators that issues of professional competence among doctoral students may naturally resolve over time through various stages of professional development or external interventions.

Participant Four reflected on the eventual accountability of licensing boards in addressing ongoing concerns about doctoral students’ professional competence. Her insights highlight a reliance on external oversight mechanisms to resolve resistant issues.

Participant 4: It’s so interesting because I do know…And I mentioned this before, and I think I’m just doing a tally in my head, but actually a lot of the folks that I had concerns about or had during their program have been gatekept out of the profession. That whole thing of once they get in a position of power, they don’t know what to do with it. And they say, our licensing board has actually sanctioned a number of folks who I had concerns about. Couldn’t do anything about over the years. So maybe that’s not saying anything good, really, but it is to show that sometimes licensing boards do end up taking care of issues.

Participant Seven expressed concerns about the assumption among faculty that potential issues with doctoral students will be identified and addressed at later stages in their academic journey.
Participant 7: I think that there’s kind of a sense with doctoral students that at some point down the line, like there will be natural weeding out of the process, right? That like potentially, they’re not doing well in this first or second semester class. What like we’ll catch that later down the line when they’re like doing teaching or when they’re doing supervision. Or their dissertation chair will catch that down the line. Or maybe they’ll graduate but they won’t find a job and then we don’t, right? I think that there’s kind of this assumption that there are so many different places where doc students can get hung up that sometimes as faculty members, we can be, “Oh yeah, it’ll be caught further down the line,” which is very problematic. You know, a lot of going around (laughs), right?

Participant Eight acknowledged the challenges faced by CES programs when addressing recurring issues of PPC among doctoral students. He expressed a cautious optimism that such behaviors may be revealed and addressed over time through continued observation and intervention.

Participant 8: But I can also see is that there might be times where your hands are tied as a counseling ed program. And, you know, you’re just hoping, like we just have to stay focused and keep an eye on them [doctoral students]. And I do see that eventually that non-professional behavior will crop up in other areas too.

Participant Nine shared experiences where unresolved issues with doctoral students sometimes find resolution as they progress into professional roles or through personal growth and self-awareness. Her narrative underscored a belief in the self-correcting nature of professional trajectories and personal development.

Participant 9: This one’s uncomfortable, but it’s true. Like, people gateslip. And I’ve seen a couple things happen. You know, I’ve seen where somebody we tried to address
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it, we didn’t really fully. We got enough to resolve the plan, but it’s still gonna be this ongoing thing. And somebody [doctoral student] gets out into the world of work and they do it in the world work and they don’t… It doesn’t go so well for them, right? (laughs) Like, sometimes it works. If you’re [doctoral student] not harming students, right? If you’re not harming students, if I can say, “This might not be the most effective counselor,” or “they’re gonna be great teaching and supervising but they’re not going to get their research done.” Okay. What’s the consequence of that? (laughs) So, sometimes that works its way out or they realize, “Oh, I didn’t wanna be in this type of position anyway.” So sometimes it works out. The system kinda takes care of itself, but I’ve also seen students who leave, and they grow, and they heal, and they address things that had been concerns. Right? I’ve seen it with doc students. I’ve seen it with master students. So, I think there’s a part of me that also trusts that it’ll work itself out.

In summary, the property of forward-looking perspectives on competence underscores a belief among counselor educators that PPC issues may naturally resolve through various stages of development or external oversight mechanisms. Participant narratives highlighted the expectation that ongoing concerns may be identified and addressed through continued observation, professional growth, and personal development. This forward-looking approach not only emphasizes the importance of ongoing support and intervention but also underscores the complex nature of addressing PPC within CES programs.

Marginalization, Power, and PPC

After the second round of analysis, I renamed the category of cultural awareness and PPC to marginalization, power, and PPC. This change better represents the perspectives, meanings, and processes associated with identity intersectionality, marginalization, and power
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dynamics within the context of addressing PPC among doctoral students. During the second round of interviews, participants increasingly shared their experiences and processes associated with diverse and marginalized identities, highlighting the power dynamics in academia rather than merely cultural awareness. To accurately and more specifically represent participants’ voices, experiences, and processes, I renamed this category to marginalization, power, and PPC.

The subcategories of diversity and marginalization and power dynamics in academia remained unchanged. However, within the subcategory power dynamics in academia, three new properties emerged: 1) authority, power, and rank in academia, 2) dismantling power, and 3) implicit expectations of faculty. Notably, the property of authority, power, and rank in academia (initially titled “power in academia”) emerged during the first round of analysis and was integrated into the power dynamics in academia subcategory, as it aligned with the overarching theme. However, after the second round of analysis, many participants emphasized the importance of recognizing and naming authority, power, and rank in academia as critical components in addressing PPC among doctoral students. Consequently, I added this property for greater specificity.

Authority, Power, and Rank in Academia

Within the power dynamics in academia subcategory, the property of authority, power, and rank in academia explores the influence wielded by individuals in positions of authority within academic settings, particularly in the context of managing PPC among doctoral students. It encompasses the hierarchical structures, decision-making processes, and the impact of power dynamics on both students and faculty. This property highlights how authority figures, such as program chairs and tenured faculty, shape the experiences and outcomes of PPC management
through their decisions and influence, often reflecting broader systemic issues of power and marginalization within academia.

Participant Three discussed the hierarchical decision-making processes and the influence of tenured faculty on PPC management, emphasizing the role of program directors and the necessity to follow their directives despite collaborative discussions.

Participant 3: Then when you’re working with more seasoned faculty, like when I’m working with my PhD director, those type of things, that gets more sticky. At the end of the day, my program director is very aware of gender, very aware of a lot of intersectional identities on how that can influence our conversations together. But also, you follow what she says at the end of the day. She’ll make sure she gives open space for you to share whatever it is in a two-way dialogue. Usually, we collaborate and we’re really good about coming up with our plan together and brainstorming consequences. I’m a middle faculty range, so I’ve been here three years, at the end of the day if she had a strong reaction to something, I will follow her. Because at the end of the day, she’s the tenured faculty, and she’s the one who will take more of the brunt if something happens.

Participant Four elaborated on the significant influence of individuals in positions of power within academia, noting the importance of mentorship and guidance for both those in power and their colleagues, especially in gatekeeping processes.

Participant 4: So, the whole piece of ... If I’m the person in power, let’s say I’m the program chair or the equivalent of the program chair or department chair, probably not even the program coordinator because I don’t believe the program coordinator actually has a lot of decision-making power in things like gatekeeping. They’re more of the scheduler. So, if I’m the person in power, I feel like the mentorship and guidance is a lot
more important because my power is more significant and I do have more influence over the process. And I’ve been in both positions. If I’m not in that position of power, then that mentorship and guidance becomes much more important because then I am having to be the advocate for the right action in the system rather than if I’m the person in power, I need to be the advocate for right action in the system. When I am just a team member, it becomes less important, but it’s still important because everybody needs to be on the same page for gatekeeping action to be effective and not divisive in the faculty.

Participant 4: Just because a student has done things you don’t like or maybe the student’s personality is irritating or they have made requests that you’re unfamiliar with when you’re a person in power, doesn’t mean that they’re inappropriate for the profession. It could be cultural, it could be a neurodivergence issue, it could be generational difference. I know that many gen X and boomer age faculty are really put off by gen Z behavior at times, when other younger faculty are not. They just see it differently.

Participant 4: But the advisor because of their position in the program and I think our propensity to protect our own advisees was able to protect the person from any gatekeeping action. It’s a power thing.

Participant Seven addressed the adversarial nature of some academic departments, where faculty members may struggle to address issues of PPC due to lack of support from department heads or chairs who may not share their perspectives on counselor education.

Participant 7: I think some faculty really are in pretty adversarial departments where their department chair, department head potentially isn’t a counselor educator maybe or maybe isn’t somebody that necessarily is kind of like on their side in some of these
issues. So, I do think that there’s some pieces of this that sometimes make it hard for faculty members to speak up when they notice an issue with a student or to own a mistake that they made if they did not attend to an issue with a student.

Participant Eight reflected on the impact of authoritative faculty members on decision-making processes, highlighting the challenges faced by new faculty when powerful tenured faculty dominate discussions and decisions.

Participant 8: And you’d go to these jobs, and there would be really scary counselor educators you’d work with. Really big power houses and they have a lot of authority, and you’re like, “I don’t feel safe sharing my opinion about this…” I’ve seen this translate before. A long time ago, I did a study on gatekeeping at admissions. And one of the things was if an old faculty member is “We’re not gonna take on this person. This person’s not a good fit. They’re gonna be trouble, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” And then the new faculty like, “I thought they were fine. I thought they’d been okay.” But because that strong, opinionated faculty with the power had so much just clout, they were like, “I’m not gonna speak up. I’m not gonna put my neck out for that other person.”

Participant Nine discussed the explicit acknowledgement of power dynamics in faculty interactions, illustrating how hierarchical relationships influence decision-making and communication within academic settings.

Participant 9: I say this with the faculty I supervise too. “Okay. I’m pulling rank here,” or I’ve had people say, “Okay. Is this a conversation among colleagues who have different perspectives or are you saying this as my supervisor?” (laughs) So we just name what it is, you know?
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Participant Two highlighted the critical role of faculty power in managing PPC issues among doctoral students. He emphasized that faculty have the choice to either address PPC issues, thus using their power appropriately, or neglect them, which constitutes a misuse of power.

Participant 2: I think I have a professional obligation to like, you know, if it [PPC issue] does happen, if something is happening like I need to address it. I think a misuse of my power would be letting those things slip away. And I think that, like you know, that has happened probably a couple of times for me where I’m like I should address this with them [doctoral student]. You know, it’s not a huge issue to me on a scale of one to 10. It’s probably about a 1 and a half or a 2, but you know, and like looking back on that, I think that was probably a misuse of my power, meaning I didn’t use. I didn’t use it in the way that I should have, which means I should have spoken to them. I should have called them down, or we should have set up a time to talk. And I think…that’s how power can be used appropriately or misused. So it’s kind of like that. The absence of using it is maybe a misuse.

In summary, the property of authority, power, and rank in academia sheds light on the complex power dynamics that shape the management of PPC among doctoral students. By addressing the hierarchical structures and decision-making processes within academic settings, this property highlights the significant influence of authority figures on both faculty and students. These power dynamics often dictate the outcomes of PPC management, reflecting broader systemic issues of marginalization and the necessity for mentorship and collaborative decision-making. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing PPC effectively and fostering a more equitable academic environment.

Dismantling Power
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Within the **power dynamics in academia subcategory**, the property of **dismantling power** refers to the conscious efforts by faculty and administrators to reduce or eliminate power differentials between themselves and doctoral students. This involves creating an environment of mutual respect, open dialogue, and collaboration, where hierarchical barriers are minimized to foster a more inclusive and equitable academic experience. The focus of this property is on facilitating open communication, understanding diverse perspectives, and ensuring that authority is exercised in a culturally responsive and non-oppressive manner.

It is important to clarify that **dismantling power** does not mean faculty need to bend their professional boundaries or become overly familiar with students. Instead, faculty should establish professional relationships where they do not “hold power over” doctoral students, but still hold them accountable within a respectful student-professor dynamic. Faculty can acknowledge and address power differentials while maintaining appropriate boundaries, using their inherent power to provide guidance and mentorship that effectively addresses PPC and supports student success. By being mindful of this balance, faculty can avoid the pitfalls of **blurred boundaries** and excessive familiarity, ensuring that they exercise their authority in a way that fosters both accountability and professional growth.

Participant Two discussed strategies to address power issues with doctoral students by promoting open conversations and setting aside hierarchical roles. He emphasized the importance of approaching these situations as collaborative discussions between two people.

Participant 2: Yeah, so, addressing power issues, like say with doctoral students, I really try and approach those situations and just say, “Let’s have a conversation about this. Let’s discuss this as two people. Let’s set aside, you know, my role or my title, your role, your title, and let’s just talk about this as people, and how we as people have
hopes/expectations and/or things that we all need to be addressing or following, and how
would we navigate this?” And so, I try and make it inclusive in that sense that this is a
collaborative discussion or talk. Oftentimes what I’ll do is reduce or try to eliminate that
power differential is to have students put themselves in my shoes. So, I’ll say like,
“What would you do? What would you do in this experience where you know you are in
this space, and have to make a decision regarding the conversations or the behaviors that
are happening?”
Participant Three emphasized transparency and two-way dialogue with students when addressing
PPC concerns. She focuses on understanding students’ perspectives and collaboratively working
towards meeting ethical standards.

Participant 3: I’ll start with students. I think just in general you’re being very transparent
and opening up a two-way dialogue. Usually, even when I start any type of concern
conversation, it’s always, “Here’s what I’m hearing so far or what I’m noticing. Help me
understand what you’re seeing, what you’re viewing, what you’re experiencing?” Then it
keeps it very broad and big so there’s a two-way dialogue. Then at the end of the day and
then you can still talk, well, no matter what their excuses or whatever rationale is.
Depending on what it is, if it’s still not appropriate you can then now bring in like, “I am
hearing what you’re saying. At the end of the day, here’s what our Code of Ethics say,”
or, “Here’s what our student handbook says, and you’re not meeting those. We need
these things to happen. How do you think we can work together specifically [for] you to
ger to the standards that we have?” That would be with the student relating to power
differential.
Participant Four highlighted the importance of cultural responsiveness and avoiding oppressive feedback. She shared her approach to being cautious with the exercise of power to ensure fairness and sensitivity in evaluations.

Participant 4: So, I may be tasked with telling a person that they are not meeting a requirement when in my head I’m going, “they may be meeting the requirement, but the assessment within the system is not sensitive to the actual variation of competence.” So, I think that’s one place. I think I’ve just become much more careful with my power, probably erring on the side of letting more things go by that maybe they need more attention. But I’d rather give somebody no feedback than give them feedback that is oppressive. So I think that’s one area where the power dynamic is. And I don’t know that it’s a good thing. I would hope that the system would be more culturally responsive.

Participant Six discussed the importance of demystifying information and ensuring transparency to foster understanding and reduce power imbalances. He focuses on making information accessible to students to enable informed discussions.

Participant 6: You know, again, I think like that demystifying can kind of like be part of that process too. So, it’s less like, “I have all the information you have to ask me the questions” and more like “let me try to put this out there in a way so that you can sort of be more informed and you can kind of understand where I’m coming from. And why I approach it the way that I do.”

Participant Eight reflected on his approach to formality and titles, highlighting the importance of acknowledging the evaluative process while maintaining a more informal and approachable demeanor to reduce perceived power differences.
Participant 8: Some faculty only request to be like, “You need to call me Dr. [last name].” And I think I’m a little more informal at that, like “You can call me [first name]. It’s okay and I don’t have a problem with that.” And some people still say, you know, “Professor or Doctor [last name].” So, I think always acknowledging that regardless of that kinda connection you two have, there is an evaluative process that you were performing for them.

In summary, the *property of dismantling power* highlights efforts by faculty to minimize hierarchical barriers and foster an environment of mutual respect and collaboration. Through transparent communication, cultural responsiveness, and inclusive practices, faculty aim to create a more equitable academic experience. These efforts are crucial in successfully addressing PPC among doctoral students, ensuring that evaluations and feedback are fair, sensitive, and non-oppressive. By actively working to dismantle power differentials, faculty contribute to a supportive and inclusive academic environment that promotes the professional growth and competence of doctoral students.

**Implicit Expectations of Faculty**

Within the *power dynamics in academia subcategory*, the *property of implicit expectations of faculty* refers to the implicit and often unspoken norms and responsibilities that faculty members are expected to adhere to within the academic environment. These expectations are not formally documented but are understood and followed, shaping the behaviors and actions of faculty members in their roles. These can include expectations around mentorship, consultation, independence, and handling students’ PPC issues.

Participant Three highlighted the unspoken expectation within her program regarding consultation and mentorship. She noted that while it might be framed as mentorship, the program
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implicitly expects faculty to consult with the program director before making decisions. This unspoken rule extends to including the advisor for the cohort in decision-making processes, suggesting a layered expectation of seeking guidance from specific individuals.

Participant 3: Technically, it’s mentorship, but a more unsaid expectation is that we have a program director for our PhD program. To expect it you seek consultation with her. You can call it mentorship if you want, but we don’t even call it consultation. We just [have an] expectation [to] talk with them first before you do anything. I could also say that’s also a form of mentorship as well a requirement in our program in a way. An unsaid requirement is you add in either for sure the PhD director, but also sometimes whoever the advisor is for that cohort in our decision making.

Participant Six discussed the unspoken rule in academia that faculty members should operate with a high degree of independence. This expectation of autonomy is highly valued in higher education but not often explicitly addressed. He suggested that this norm can contribute to PPC issues being overlooked because the culture promotes a sense of individual responsibility and self-sufficiency.

Participant 6: But it’s also like there’s this kind of unspoken rule I think in academia and as faculty members that we should have things figured out and that we should work in this really autonomous way; like independence is really valued in higher ed in a way that we don’t often talk about. And I think that plays into it a lot and that can cause these issues to kind of go unnoticed for a while maybe too.

Participant Seven described the implicit expectation that faculty members individually manage and address student performance and behavioral issues. She noted that this unspoken responsibility can dis incentivize faculty from raising concerns because acknowledging PPC


issues often results in additional work for that faculty member. This creates a scenario where PPC issues might be ignored to avoid the burden of managing them.

Participant 7: It really was kind of professor by professor. If you felt like a student wasn’t meeting expectations, either disposition-wise or if a student kind of objectively was not meeting the course expectations and was getting low grades, then it was kind of your responsibility as a faculty member to use kind of your own knowledge of the expectations to say there’s an issue here and raise that issue. And a lot of times, if you notice the issue, it becomes yours to manage, which I think in some ways disincentivizes faculty members from raising the issues. If that means that, “Oh, well, if I call it out, then I gotta do all this work around it.” And you might hear that from other participants also (laughs) that there’s kind of this piece that you’re not super-incentivized to raise issues because it means a lot more work for you as a faculty member, so.

In summary, the property of implicit expectations of faculty highlights the implicit norms that shape faculty behaviors and responsibilities. These unspoken rules include expectations around consultation and mentorship, autonomy in managing one’s responsibilities, and the burden of addressing students’ PPC issues. These norms, while not formally documented, significantly influence faculty actions and decision-making processes, often creating additional challenges and pressures for faculty members navigating their roles in addressing PPC.

Faculty’s Response to PPC

The category of faculty’s response to PPC remained consistent between first and second rounds of analyses. The subcategories of barriers, collaboration and support, and self-reflection remained unchanged. However, new properties emerged within these subcategories. Specifically, the subcategory of barriers gained two new properties: ambiguous sharing norms
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and *time-intensive* process. The subcategory of *collaboration and support* gained four new properties: *mentorship for counselor educators, transferring responsibility of PPC, receiving support from colleagues,* and *united front.* Notably, the *property of receiving support from colleagues* emerged during the first round of analysis and was integrated into the *collaboration and support subcategory,* as it aligned with the overarching theme. However, after the second round of analysis, many participants emphasized the importance of receiving support from their colleagues as critical components in addressing and managing PPC among doctoral students. Consequently, I added the *property of receiving support from colleagues* for greater specificity.

In the subcategory *self-reflection,* the property of *counselor educator identity* expanded to reflect the leadership role that counselor educators hold. The subcategory *self-reflection* gained four new properties: *finding closure/acceptance, personal and professional self-work, individual perspective on PPC,* and *transition from doctoral student to counselor educator.*

**Ambiguous Sharing Norms**

Within the *barriers subcategory,* the *property of ambiguous sharing norms* refers to the lack of clearly defined guidelines or expectations regarding the permissible scope and timing of discussions related to student competency issues. This ambiguity manifests in counselor education settings where faculty members experience uncertainty about when and how to discuss PPC concerns during official meetings. Participants perceive restrictions or unclear boundaries on discussing sensitive student issues, such as competence challenges, within the designated spaces of faculty meetings. This uncertainty contributes to a fragmented communication environment, as faculty members navigate whether and how to address PPC-related topics amidst a primarily task-focused agenda. Consequently, these *ambiguous sharing norms* hinder
open dialogue and proactive strategies for effectively supporting doctoral students facing PPC within CES programs.

Participant Four highlighted the decentralization and lack of designated discussion spaces in faculty meetings, expressing confusion over restrictions on discussing students’ PPC issues.

Participant 4: Now that we are less centralized, more remote, don’t get together, don’t have a space in our faculty meetings to talk about these things. Literally, it’s almost like I don’t understand it. We [aren’t] allowed to talk about students in the faculty meeting, and I’m uncertain why that’s the case. It’s supposed to be like, I don’t know who’s supposed to do the talking about these things.

Participant Four further observed that fragmentation and busy schedules inhibit opportunities for addressing PPC issues in either official or unofficial settings.

Participant 4: But I feel like our program has gotten fragmented enough at this point in time that there’s no space to talk about these things [PPC issues] during our official meetings and calling an unofficial meeting, it just feels like everybody’s so busy.

Participant Six reflected on his experiences as a new faculty member, highlighting challenges in determining appropriate spaces and timing for discussing sensitive issues within faculty meetings.

Participant 6: I think that for me like when I was a new faculty in the program that was challenging in some ways because it would feel like, “Well, is this an appropriate space to do this [discuss PPC issues] or what?” You know, we’re always so busy and have so much to do in our meetings like when is it appropriate to bring this up? When is it sort of severe enough to bring it up or some of it was even like, self-efficacy. When is it like,
“Oh, this is something I should be able to handle on my own versus this warrants discussion.”

Additionally, Participant Six discussed the lack of conversations about program structures, PPC issues, and faculty dynamics during meetings, noting the impact this has on newer faculty.

Participant 6: But I think that, you know, we don’t always talk about that or we’re often so like task focused in our program meetings that we’re not necessarily talking about these structures and these dynamics and what that looks like, and how that impacts things. But I definitely notice like our newer faculty in our program are not speaking up as much in those meetings.

In summary, the property of ambiguous sharing norms highlights the impact of unclear boundaries and how a focus on operational tasks rather than substantive discussions may hinder proactive approaches to addressing PPC among doctoral students. Clarifying these norms has the potential to improve communication and collaboration among faculty members, thereby fostering a more supportive environment for navigating PPC in CES programs.

**Time-Intensive Process**

Within the barriers subcategory, the property of time-intensive process refers to the significant time, effort, and deliberation required in CES programs to address PPC or related gatekeeping measures. This process often spans months to years, involving extensive faculty involvement, discussions, and decision-making stages.

Participant Two underscored the extensive time and energy required, noting that resolving issues can span from months to even years, particularly in cases involving extended PPC issues or significant gatekeeping considerations.
Participant 2: Yeah, and the only other thing I’ll say about that [navigating barriers], all of that is that it’s time extensive, these kinds of things are not reconciled in two weeks. Sometimes, they take months, sometimes they take semesters. You know, in worst-case scenarios, they take years, like when you’re going through extended PPC issues, and/or like bigger gatekeeping things…they take a long time and a lot of energy.

Participant Six reflected on the slow pace of reaching consensus on critical matters like shifting language or tone around PPC and gatekeeping, indicating that these discussions can require considerable time to resolve amidst competing priorities.

Participant 6: And just like, I think we’ve started to kind of have that conversation on shifting the language too and there’s been some level of like different disagreement of like…what should our tone be. And I think we haven’t necessarily reached a consensus on that and I think there’s been some good conversation on that but it’s the kind of thing that takes a long time to figure that out. (laughs) And so we kind of just put that aside because we had so much to do.

Participant Eight highlighted the structured and time-consuming nature of their program’s remediation process, emphasizing the comprehensive faculty involvement and decision-making required.

Participant 8: We also make…and I think this is a strength of our program that I really like. It takes a lot of time, unfortunately, which is the downside of it. But we make all of our remediation process is actually open to all faculty. So, all faculty get to weigh in on it, all faculty get to contribute to the remediation plans, and then all faculty get to hear updates on it. And then we have to officially vote as a group to put somebody on a
professional development plan or remediation plan, and we have to vote to remove them from a professional development plan.

Furthermore, Participant Eight acknowledged the intensive nature of the PPC and gatekeeping process, noting its impact on faculty time and responsibilities.

Participant 8: It’s an intensive process ‘cause it takes up minutes of faculty meeting that could be spent on other stuff. And also, this is not necessarily a contracted portion of your job. Like, you’re contracted to teach classes and do research and do service. And part of this is service to the university and service to the program. But like, on all your other responsibilities, now comes another more intensive…And sometimes it’s not intensive all the way though, but at any start of a remediation process, that’s the most time-intensive portion of it [until] when you graduate them.

In summary, the property of time-intensive process underscores the time and energy invested in addressing PPC. This property highlights the importance of structured processes and sustained faculty engagement in fostering professional competence among doctoral students.

**Mentorship for Counselor Educators**

Within the collaboration and support subcategory, the property of mentorship for counselor educators refers to the dynamic and ongoing guidance provided by experienced faculty to their less experienced colleagues. This mentorship helps counselor educators navigate professional challenges, develop their skills, and manage issues related to student competence and program culture.

Participant One emphasized the value of having a go-to faculty member for advice and guidance in addressing various challenges.
Participant 1: There’s definitely one faculty member here who I really went to, like to say: “You know, this is happening. How would you deal with this? Or what do you think about this? Or how should I respond to this email? Or, you know, I’m hearing about these things with this student that’s teaching, help…Let’s, like, troubleshoot it together.”

Participant One also underscored the necessity of faculty mentorship in ensuring issues are handled with seriousness and sensitivity.

Participant 1: I think any of those types of [PPC] issues, like, wanting to make sure it’s dealt with like seriousness and sensitivity is really important. Um, and so, I think having other faculty mentorship and guidance in that has certainly been necessary for the process.

Participant Three reflected on the informal mentorship received from more experienced faculty, which helped her navigate program culture and address broader concerns over time.

Participant 3: I would say every program’s going to be different on this, and most of the time we don’t have formal mentorship approaches in our programs to help faculty. However, in my particular program, I would say as soon as I started, I had one particular experience about to be tenured faculty that went out their way to provide mentorship and anything under the sun. At first, I started out with small things like “how do you adjust to the program culture the way we do things here?” Then it eventually turned into bigger ones. That go-to person when you’re wanting some mentorship on personal and professional disposition concerns of students and those type of things. I think you end up as a faculty finding each faculty member they can meet your need in a different way.

Participant Six acknowledged the significant support received from experienced faculty, which helped in personal development and maintaining professional standards.
Participant 6: But I also think some of the faculty in our program who have been around longer have provided me some really great mentorship and some really helpful perspectives on things. I know for me like it’s helped me kind of recognize my people pleasing tendencies and my need to sometimes step outside of those and hold more of standards for students sometimes and not give them too much leeway or grace.

Participant Six also described the structured mentorship received during his first year as faculty, emphasizing the regular one-on-one meetings.

Participant 6: She [mentor] offered to have kind of like regular one-on-one meetings with me in my first year in the program that was really helpful. And I would run a lot of things by her.

Participant Nine described the early reliance on experienced colleagues for guidance and decision-making in complex situations.

Participant 9: And so, I think the nature of that has shifted across time. So, when I was earlier in my career, I would go to a senior colleague or I would go to our department chair (laughs) and our department chair would say, “I think we better call legal on this one,” or whatever it is.

Participant Nine also described how as she advanced in her career, she transitioned to becoming a mentor, helping colleagues navigate concerns and discern appropriate actions.

Participant 9: I think, as I’ve progressed in my career, I’ve become more of the mentor in terms of helping faculty members navigate discerning, like, what is the concern? How does the concern link to a work behavior? What are our options for addressing it? Does this need to be formal at this point or can it be less formal? So, I think at this point in my career, I’m doing more of the mentorship on the content or the basic process, and I’m
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seeking guidance when I realize that we’ve got something that’s unique or different, like a specific vulnerability.

In summary, the property of mentorship for counselor educators highlights the essential role that experienced faculty play in guiding and supporting their less experienced colleagues within counselor education programs. This mentorship is crucial for troubleshooting student-related issues, ensuring matters are addressed with the appropriate seriousness and sensitivity, and aiding in personal and professional development. As faculty members progress in their careers, they often transition from mentees to mentors, contributing to a collaborative and supportive environment vital for addressing challenges and fostering growth within counselor education programs.

Responsibility Transition

Within the collaboration and support subcategory, the property of responsibility transition refers to the process by which faculty members communicate and pass along unresolved issues related to PPC among doctoral students to other faculty members. This involves sharing concerns, maintaining communication, and ensuring continuity in addressing the issues without merely deferring responsibility.

Participant One highlighted the importance of maintaining continuity and communication when passing along concerns about a student’s readiness to the next clinical supervisor.

Participant 1: I had shared with our faculty, “I’m concerned about the student’s readiness.” And me passing along my information to their next clinical supervisor so that other faculty was aware that this is where we ended, and they need more. So, I guess maybe that’s not everything got resolved with me, but I was still part of the process, now I’m sharing information and supporting the next person that’s coming along. Not that
I’m trying to just like bump it down the road to say like, “I don’t want to…You know, it’s not that I didn’t wanna deal with it, but it’s how am I kinda giving this time?” And I have concerns, so I’m sharing those and recognizing that I’m not the only one involved in this.

Participant Seven emphasized the need for good communication and mutual respect among colleagues when transferring responsibility, acknowledging her own oversight and warning others about potential ongoing issues.

Participant 7: And so, I think, in this instance specifically, I consulted with the faculty and just kind of let them know and owned that I think I let this one slip a little bit. “And whoever has the student in their classes next semester, these are the things I noticed. And if they continue, like I gave feedback at the end of the semester, I don’t know if it was actually heard, and/or if they understood that this was not a single instance. This was a pattern that I was seeing. And so, please, whoever has the student in the classes next semester, keep an eye on this because I do think this is gonna continue to be an issue.”

So, I think that was how I handled it in that space. And I think that requires you to have really good communication with your colleagues and a lot of respect amongst your colleagues for them to be able to kind of take that feedback and not feel like you’re kind of pushing off a problem onto them, that’s true, which is definitely was not the intention.

Participant Seven further reflected on the responsibility and impact of transferring issues, recognizing the additional workload it places on colleagues.

Participant 7: I think that there’s a warning part of it and I think that there’s a like owning your own mistake in the gatekeeping part of it too and owning that like…warning that you’re giving is putting additional work on your colleagues’ plate.
Participant Nine discussed the process of re-engaging or transferring responsibility when issues remain unresolved, suggesting that sometimes a different faculty member might be more effective.

Participant 9: So, I think first of all, if it’s an ongoing thing, it’s not fully resolved, right? You re-engage the process or you get somebody else, like, “Okay. I’ve not been effective at this, let’s see if a different faculty member can move into it.”

In summary, the property of responsibility transition underscores the necessity of effective communication and collaboration among faculty members when addressing unresolved PPC among doctoral students. Faculty members must share their concerns and provide pertinent information to ensure continuity and support for the student. This process requires transparency, mutual respect, and acknowledgment of the additional responsibilities placed on colleagues. By maintaining open lines of communication and recognizing the limits of their effectiveness, faculty can collaboratively address PPC, ensuring effective and consistent management of issues across the program.

**Receiving Support from Colleagues**

In Chapter Three, the subcategory of collaboration and support highlighted the significance of receiving support from colleagues. Although the subcategory already encompasses the definition and participants’ experiences along with their processes, the property of receiving support from colleagues is emphasized again due to its prominence in the second round of interviews. The definition and quotes remain consistent and unchanged, representing both the subcategory of collaboration and support and the added property of receiving support from colleagues. This property underscores the critical role of support in effectively addressing and managing PPC among doctoral students.
In Chapter Three, the subcategory of collaboration and support is defined as the cohesive efforts and mutual assistance among colleagues to address PPC issues encountered by faculty members. This collaborative approach involves seeking consensus on recognizing and addressing PPC issues, consulting with colleagues for guidance and validation, and fostering a supportive environment conducive to effective remediation and gatekeeping processes. Faculty members rely on the collective expertise and shared values within their professional community to navigate PPC-related challenges and ensure consistent, well-coordinated responses to student concerns. Second-round interviews further supported this subcategory and property by highlighting participants’ experiences and the critical role of receiving support from colleagues.

Participant Three emphasized the necessity of seeking support from colleagues to effectively assist a struggling student.

Participant 3: And seeking support from your colleagues in order to best support the student who might be struggling.

Participant Seven highlighted the value of having supportive supervisors and colleagues, even if it means needing a colleague to reiterate points.

Participant 7: I’ve had some really great supervisors that have been really wonderful. And I’ve had some really great faculty colleagues also who if I need them to step in and reiterate what I’m saying, as frustrating as that is for me to have to have kind of a colleague cosign.

Participant Six discussed the importance of having a supportive group of colleagues who are open to discussing and collaborating on issues, even if they don’t always agree.

Participant 6: And they need to have, I don’t know, ideally, like a supportive group of colleagues that will be open to discussing and collaborating on that, and not that they
always have to agree, but that they kind of all have the values that gatekeeping is
important and work to identify students, and support students, and gatekeep if needed.
Participant Six also noted that collaboration among faculty is a regular and integral part of his program.

Participant 6: That very often in our program it’s kind of like all the faculty in our program are collaborating on it like we’re meeting regularly as a program.

Participant One emphasized the shared commitment among program faculty, making it not just the responsibility of one person.

Participant 1: I mean, I think again, if we’re like seeing it as like a shared commitment as program faculty, then it’s not just all one person.

Participant Four highlighted that gatekeeping is always a team effort.

Participant 4: Whenever there is gatekeeping, it’s always a team effort. Or it has to be a team effort.

Participant Eight mentioned the collaborative approach where all faculty contribute to remediation plans and updates.

Participant 8: So, all faculty get to weigh in on it, all faculty get to contribute to the remediation plans, and then all faculty get to hear updates on it.

Participant Nine discussed the benefits of consulting across faculty while maintaining the bounds of FERPA.

Participant 9: Consultation helps. We can do this within the bounds of FERPA. You know, when we’ve got our relationships with each other. We know our students, and there can be real benefit in consulting across faculty in the same group.
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In summary, second round interviews further emphasized how the property of receiving support from colleagues is vital in managing and addressing PPC issues among doctoral students. The collective efforts and mutual assistance among faculty members facilitate a supportive and effective approach to PPC issues and gatekeeping. By consulting with colleagues, seeking consensus, and leveraging the shared expertise within their professional community, faculty members ensure consistent and well-coordinated responses to PPC challenges. While faculty might differ in their approaches to addressing PPC issues or may lack support from colleagues in some departments, having a collaborative environment significantly enhances their ability to address PPC.

**United Front**

Within the collaboration and support subcategory, the property of united front denotes counselor educators’ cohesive and aligned stance within a program, where they collectively agree on recognizing and addressing PPC among doctoral students. This unity fosters a supportive environment characterized by consistent approaches and mutual understanding among faculty members. However, participants expressed that while alignment among faculty values and vision is ideal and beneficial, achieving this alignment remains challenging.

Participant Two emphasized how faculty members align closely in addressing PPC.

Participant 2: You know, like for the most part, we’re always in really good lockstep with things. Like we’re almost always in very close agreement with how to address and well how to recognize and address those [PPC] things.

Participant 2: I think, mainly the key component of all of that was the beliefs and philosophies of gatekeeping and PPC among my colleagues, that was instrumental.

Participant One highlighted how faculty members collaboratively understand and address PPC.
Participant 1: So, I think that as our faculty have changed, we are kind of right now, I think, a pretty cohesive unit. I think that all of us are sharing more about what that looks like.

Participant Four reflected on the collaborative atmosphere that existed within the doctoral program faculty, discussing the benefits when alignment is achieved.

Participant 4: I think we actually did a better job of gatekeeping at the PhD level earlier because we had frequent discussions and we had more of a team atmosphere around the doctoral program.

Participant Six discussed the culture of openness and feedback among faculty members.

Participant 6: And it’s something like we’re providing feedback to each other a lot and we kind of have a culture of doing that and of openness to doing that. And I think that helps it make it more of a collaborative process.

Participant Eight emphasized the collaborative approach in addressing issues during faculty meetings.

Participant 8: We’ll usually address it in a faculty meeting, and we’ll spend a lot of time kind of thinking about collaboratively like, “Okay, what is this issue?” And really what we’re looking for is there’s an issue, let’s say, that popped up in this class or maybe in supervision, “do we see these same types of issues that the doctoral student is doing in other contexts?”

Participant Nine discussed the importance of setting clear expectations and maintaining a unified approach.

Participant 9: We need to work together. We need to set warm but firm expectations. So that we don’t open the door to have all this drama pulling us every other way. And the
more we do that well, like we’re the healthy parent system, the more we’re able to catch and be effective in addressing student concerns as they come up.

In summary, the property of united front reflects the ideal of a cohesive and aligned approach within the faculty. This unity is characterized by shared beliefs and philosophies regarding the recognition and management of PPC issues. Participants consistently emphasized a close agreement and collective stance on how to address these challenges, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment. However, they also acknowledged that achieving a united front is not always possible, and disparities in values and visions often exist. Despite this, participants recognized the clear benefits of alignment, which enhances the effectiveness of addressing PPC among doctoral students.

Counselor Educator Identity

Within the self-reflection subcategory, the property of counselor educator identity refers to the multifaceted role embraced by faculty members within counselor education programs, encompassing educator, leader, advocate, and mentor. It involves a deep commitment to upholding professional standards, advocating for the counseling profession, and ensuring the well-being of both students and clients. This identity integrates aspects of teaching, supervision, leadership, gatekeeping, and clinical practice, reflecting a holistic understanding of the responsibilities inherent in training future counselor educators.

Participants emphasized the importance of strong clinical skills, adherence to ethical principles, and the integration of counseling values into all facets of counselor education. In discussing their roles, participants highlighted the complexity of their identity as counselor educators, blending various responsibilities and perspectives. Additionally, participants noted that department chairs often serve as leaders when PPC issues arise in doctoral students.
Participant Two highlighted this point, discussing the leadership responsibilities associated with addressing PPC issues and the additional tasks taken on by department chairs.

Participant 2: But like the reason that it is maybe leadership in that capacity is because that appointed person, that program chair or that program coordinator, whatever whomever is kind of in that leadership position they are tasked with. Then, you know, taking that beyond and interacting with others that might be outside of the program. And I know that like. That’s how it’s happened for me personally, where I wasn’t necessarily working with the Doc student. I did not have them as an advisor or an advisee. I’m sorry, but, you know, we as a group, decided that this Doc student was no longer fit for our program. We moved to dismiss them. Then it was me in that leadership capacity, saying, here’s why. Here’s the rubrics that we follow. Here’s our collective assessment, and that was me, explaining that to my chair. That was me, explaining that to the dean of the graduate school. That was me, you know, explaining it to other people. I think these experiences what you’re doing, what you’re looking at, you know, like leaders kind of have to step up. And they have to sometimes take these issues of PPC beyond, and sometimes they don’t. And I think that, like at least the way that I would hope it would it be experienced is sometimes things are small and they can be fixed, and they can be addressed. Then, other times, it requires more people to be involved.

In summary, the property of counselor educator identity encompasses diverse roles, including educator, leader, advocate, and mentor, with a strong commitment to professional standards and the success of students. Participants underscored the importance of clinical skills, ethical principles, and the integration of counselor education values. They also highlighted the
complex nature of their identity, where department chairs often play crucial leadership roles in addressing PPC issues in doctoral students.

*Finding Closure/Acceptance*

Within the *self-reflection subcategory*, the *property* of *finding closure/acceptance* refers to counselor educators reflecting on their roles and actions within their professional context, striving to reconcile unresolved issues or decisions by acknowledging their efforts, accepting limitations, and aligning personal values with institutional practices.

Participant One reflected on the process of *finding closure* and making peace with decisions made within the program.

Participant 1: So how do I handle the unresolved ones? I mean, I think at the end of the day, it’s knowing that I’ve done what I needed to do to my best ability. Um, and I’m not perfect. Our program’s not perfect in dealing with it, but “did I offer support when needed? Did I speak up about concerns? Was I a part of the team that’s working together?”

Participant 1: So, I think, I have to kind of make peace with it. And so thinking about the things that, you know, help in that again are like trusting that we’ve gone through the process that we’ve done what I needed to do, and that I’m not alone in it. I think that like, shared identity and commitment, I think kind of helps in those situations that just still have some sets of openness, but I’d need to close them to move on, if that makes sense.

Participant Two discussed his approach to making peace with unique circumstances through informal validation from colleagues.

Participant 2: And here’s the other thing…part of my making peace with it, if you wanna call it that or if I describe it in that way, part of me just casually in a very discreet way,
kind of asked other colleagues in the field like, if they’d ever had something like that happen [dispositional PPC], and everyone was like, “No, no, no, no.” So, I didn’t feel weird about that. I just felt like I was in a unique circumstance.

Participant Four acknowledged and accepted her perspective on PPC as part of her professional development.

Participant 4: I’m giving myself a pass on that. I’m not going to feel super guilty about it because I think it’s part of that thing of, I don’t know if anybody thinks about PPC as a doctoral student as research practices and ethics.

Participant Six emphasized trust in established procedures and the importance of embracing imperfections.

Participant 6: I think it’s just an element of like knowing like I want to trust the process and procedures that we’ve laid out like these procedures have worked for us in the past and I want to lean on them, and know that I think they’re not perfect, but I think that we’re in a good spot with them.

Participant Seven discussed her temperament and approach to accepting outcomes within the institutional framework.

Participant 7: And so, I feel like my temperament kind of goes to that like I can pretty easily say I did everything that I could within the bounds of my role. I made my view very clear. Um, I feel like I communicated myself really well. I’m okay with letting it go that this did not go exactly the way that I wanted it to this time.

Participant 7: I think for the external barriers component, I think that there’s a part of like just feeling okay with that you did as much as that you could within the system that you’re in. There have been times when I have noted in faculty meetings that like I do not
agree with the consensus but I understand that as a faculty, we have decided that consensus kind of rules in this space…And sometimes as a faculty member, we just have to be okay with that and just make sure it’s noted that we’re not in alignment with the rest of the group.

In summary, the property of finding closure/acceptance involves the process of reconciling unresolved issues related to PPC. This process includes acknowledging one’s efforts, accepting inherent limitations, and aligning personal values with institutional practices. Participants underscored the importance of making peace with decisions and actions taken, trusting established procedures while acknowledging their imperfections. This reflective approach supports personal and professional growth, fostering a supportive environment where faculty members navigate complexities and effectively manage PPC challenges in counselor education programs.

**Personal and Professional Self-Work**

Within the self-reflection subcategory, the property of personal and professional self-work refers to the ongoing process of counselor educators engaging in introspection, seeking mentorship, and employing coping strategies to address internal and external barriers related to their roles. This involves personal growth, reflection on professional practices, seeking support, and translating challenges into opportunities for improvement and scholarship. During the second round of interviews, participants openly shared their approaches to engaging in personal and professional self-work regarding PPC issues and their complexities. This property occupies a significant place in the second round of analysis, illuminating how faculty navigate the complexities of addressing PPC issues among doctoral students in academic settings. Their openness allowed me to understand the authentic processes faculty engage in, revealing
vulnerabilities as they discussed internal and external barriers to addressing PPC among doctoral students. Their vulnerability and openness facilitated a deeper understanding of their internal processes of managing barriers in handling PPC issues, managing unresolved PPC issues, and engaging in personal work. Faculty emphasized the importance of taking responsibility for how they handle PPC issues, seeking consultations, reaching out for additional support, and committing to self-improvement.

Participant One discussed the personal work involved in managing expectations and navigating discomfort within her role.

Participant 1: I think there is some, personal work that kind of has to happen around what my expectations are and how when expectations aren’t being met where I offer or just have kind of that empathy for that, right? Like I want to be that way.

Participant 1: So, what happens after [encountering internal and external barriers]? I think there’s been some trial and error on some of that. I think sometimes when we sit in our discomfort, it forces change. (laughs) I think that, you know, “Oh, I’m not so sure about that.” Like, “Oh, that felt icky. I don’t feel okay about that…” I mean, the barriers that I felt were “I’m not certain [about] those kinds of things.” So, then what happens if I stay at that barrier, then I’m still left with that like feeling. And so, I think that I reach a point where I can’t stay there, and something has to change. So maybe, again, kind of going back to other faculty for mentorship, like talking it out. I feel like in my first couple years as a faculty, when I was at like ACES every gatekeeping session I could go to, I went to. (laughs) But now again, most of them are not about doc students, but I mean, I think just like recognizing, I’ve got to know and do better here.
Participant Two reflected on processing emotions, seeking scholarly outlets, and adapting approaches to overcoming barriers.

Participant 2: Then again, I think, I said that even though I’m unable to reconcile some things specifically with students, I process how I feel about it, I connect with others and commiserate a little bit about it. And I also try and take those things, and I try and turn them into scholarship in some ways, because it’s like, “I’m not the only one whose gonna have to go through this or who has gone through this. So, how do I take this, how do I make something of it in a way that can be better for our profession?”

Furthermore, Participant Two articulated his approach to personal and professional growth in addressing PPC issues.

Participant 2: I either had a different kind of conversation with different language or I challenged myself internally in a different way to say like, “Hey, this is still a thing, let’s process what’s going on for you,” like, I know that sounds weird, talking about myself in the third person, but it’s almost like, I don’t know (laughs), I’ve gotta find another way. It’s very Thomas Edison. It’s like, “Okay, I found out one way that I’ve encountered this barrier, whether it’s internal or external, and that didn’t work, so now I need to try it a different way.” And I just kept at it…at least, I would like to think, or most, if not all of those moments where I needed to be in that capacity.

Participant Three emphasized the value of seeking mentorship and gaining perspective to grow professionally.

Participant 3: For me, it really is seeking mentorship from people that can really provide validation or at least a different perspective to help me grow in whatever that residual issue is.
Participant Four discussed coping mechanisms and the importance of personal counseling in managing emotional challenges.

Participant 4: I think the piece of taking it personally, it could either be taking the student’s behavior personally or maybe the response of the faculty. I can take that personally too. I think just because it’s so important. I’d handle that in two different ways. Number one, I can just do what I can do. I will set my course of action and do what I think is right within the system. And the other piece is I can go to therapy and just sort it out. And I think that’s really important. We always say therapists need therapists, counselor educators need therapists too. Because I think it’s really easy to become overburdened or burnt out especially with stuff like this. To have a place where you can talk about the stresses and strains and uncertainties.

Participant Six commented on self-reflection, seeking mentorship, engaging in research, and transitioning institutions for professional growth

Participant 6: So, I’m thinking some of the barriers have really inspired the… I guess the internal barriers have really inspired a lot of self-reflection. And a lot of thinking about who I am as a counselor educator, and thinking how can I overcome these barriers and improve? How can I seek supports from other people? How can I try to be humble with this and be not defensive if I get feedback from others about improving in this. And I think just the need to kind of continue to evaluate how I’m looking at students and to be noticing parts of my personality like the people pleasing elements. So I think it’s really been a lot of reflection largely in some of those mentorship conversations have been helpful with that too and some of it has also been kind of engaging in some research with colleagues around this topic myself as well that’s helped me kind of gain more
perspective and more confidence on it. In terms of the external barriers, I think, honestly
like (laughs) moving institutions from that first one to here has been huge with that.

Participant Seven explored internal barriers to addressing PPC issues, and the role of
consultation and personal counseling in overcoming challenges.

Participant 7: I think when there’s been internal pieces that have kind of held me back
from moving forward, I think in those spaces, I have really relied on consultation and my
own personal counseling to kind of do some digging about like what of my own stuff is
making it hard for me to push the student or challenge the student or provide feedback to
the student. What about this feels unsafe? Is it truly unsafe to my job? Like I’m afraid the
student’s gonna go to the bursar or gonna go to my boss, or gonna go to somebody and
complain. Like does this truly feel like a threat to my livelihood? Or is this more of like
an identity thing, like I feel like this student is a threat to like who I am? Do I feel like the
student’s gonna hurt my feelings? Or am I gonna come out of this kind of like feeling
emotionally sad or bad because of this? And is that what’s giving me hesitation?

Participant Nine discussed seeking external perspectives and managing emotional involvement
through scenario analysis.

Participant 9: So, there’s benefit internally, but sometimes, for me, to call somebody who
doesn’t know the players at all. Like a colleague that I really trust who doesn’t know the
players and say, “Can I just run a scenario by you? Imagine if you had a doctoral student
who was engaging in this way.” Right? And when I do it, I try to take as much emotion
out of it as I can. I try to just see, like, does somebody not familiar with it go to
remediation or do they have a different wondering? And I’ve had both. I’ve had some
people, like, “You have to. This is a problem.” And I’ve had others be like, “I just
In summary, the property of personal and professional self-work reveals faculty’s commitment to personal and professional self-work as they navigated challenges related to addressing PPC issues. Participants shared insights into their introspective processes, seeking mentorship, and employing coping strategies to enhance their professional practices. Participants’ openness provided a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in counselor education, showcasing their willingness to discuss internal barriers to managing PPC issues and seeking continuous improvement. This property sheds light on how faculty adapt and evolve, demonstrating vulnerability while striving to uphold professional standards and contribute to scholarly advancements in the field.

**Individual Perspectives on PPC**

Within self-reflection subcategory, the property of individual perspectives on PPC pertains to how counselor educators perceive and interpret issues related to professional competence among doctoral students. This property highlights the varied viewpoints and personal approaches that educators adopt when addressing and understanding PPC challenges within academic settings.

Participant One underscored the importance of recognizing diverse student behaviors and personalities, emphasizing that each student is unique in their approach and capabilities.

Participant 1: And I think as a faculty member with all of our students, I have to remind myself that who I am as a student is not who everyone is as a student for many reasons. And so the way I show up is not the way everyone shows up.
Participant Two recounted a significant personal challenge in maintaining professional standards and ethical practices while reconciling with a decision that challenged his initial judgment or views about a student.

   Participant 2: It [dismissal of a student] was overturned, I think, by the provost or the graduate dean, so we had to still like allow this person to be in our program, and that was personally a very, very big challenge, because I had to rally. I had to say like, “Okay, I can’t continue to like, you know, unfairly judge this student,” and, I believe, that I was able to reboot, still maintain all of my expectations and my professional standards and keep all of my ethics in place, and not bias my experience or interpretations with that student after they were allowed to stay.

Participant Three reflected on how vulnerable she feels when discussing PPC issues, acknowledging the delicate balance between sharing experiences authentically and safeguarding professional reputations.

   Participant 3: I have a feeling I’m probably not the first person to say this, but it’s a very vulnerable experience. I think even just interviewing with you, there’s more vulnerability compared to what other topics we would talk about. I think there’s that uneasiness of how much do I share and is too much related to person professional disposition examples? I have a feeling most folks have kept it pretty generic because of trying to protect their program and trying to protect their students that are within the program. I just want to say that aloud.

Participant Six discussed the variability in dissertation quality and the complexities involved in setting standards, illustrating the personal dilemma of balancing completion timelines with academic rigor.
Participant 6: Like for research and like teaching or something like that, like we said there’s very little standardization of what [does] problematic research and teaching look like or what’s our standard for research. I have read some dissertations that coming from counselor ed that I wouldn’t let pass and it seems like there’s really [varying] dissertation quality out there. I think that’s something I want to even have more conversation [with] my colleagues about in terms of like, “Well, what is the students’ work on dissertation looking like?” And some of that is too like it’s complicated because we always say like a good dissertation is a done dissertation and like that students want to get it done, don’t want to be in the program forever. And I think it’s really like complicated sometimes with that and with that kind of competing with like, “Well, I want them to do like a good quality product.” And some people say, “Oh, if they’re not going into doing research in their future maybe it doesn’t need to be that good of a quality.” And so I still feel like kind of unclear on where is my bar for that and where do I intervene. And I certainly have ways of kind of like individually pushing students and trying to help them without slowing them down too much.

Participant Seven highlighted the diversity of perspectives within academic departments regarding when and how to intervene in student performance issues, underscoring the importance of collegial negotiation and understanding differing thresholds for intervention.

Participant 7: I have been lucky enough to be in departments where I truly do respect my colleagues. And so, there’s been some pieces of like this might just be like my own personal preference on how we do this (laughs). Or this might just be my own personal preference that like we take care of this before it snowballs too big. And I’ve had some colleagues that have had a different temperament than me that have been like, “Eh, we
really don’t want to address problems unless they’re like really big and really glaring,” right? And so I do think that there’s kind of this whole continuum of when do we address problems? When do we step in? Um, how hard do we put up barriers around students moving forward? I think that there’s different tolerances for that in departments. And I think that’s a good thing that there’s some negotiation there and there’s people with a lot of different perspectives on when and how you should step in when you have students with performance issues.

In summary, the property of *individual perspectives on PPC* reveals a dynamic spectrum of viewpoints and approaches. Participants articulated personal challenges, ethical dilemmas, and diverse interpretations when addressing PPC issues in doctoral students. From navigating unique student behaviors to grappling with ethical decisions and differing departmental norms, these perspectives underscore the complexities inherent in counselor education.

**Transition From Doctoral Student to Counselor Educator**

Within *self-reflection subcategory*, the property of *transition from doctoral student to counselor educator* refers to the journey and adaptation process counselor educators undergo as they shift from being doctoral students to faculty members. This involves overcoming initial challenges, gaining confidence in their new roles, and developing a broader perspective on professional practices and responsibilities.

Participant One highlighted the initial difficulty of transitioning from being a doctoral student to teaching doctoral students, emphasizing the feelings of imposter syndrome and the challenge of assuming the faculty role so soon after being a student.

Participant 1: I think actually, like work with doc students in particular is the bigger stretch in those early years as a faculty member, ‘cause you just were a doc student, and
you don’t learn how to teach doc students when (laughs) you’re a doc student. I mean, I think that first year, and maybe we talked about this some last time when I was doing, like, supervision of supervision, and I was like “Oh, I was just doing the supervision like last semester.” So, like [there is] imposter syndrome a bit, but then also like, “Oh, but now I am the faculty and how do I kinda lean into that role of it?”

Participant Six discussed the lack of initial awareness regarding PPC issues in doctoral students, attributing this to having recently graduated from his own doctoral studies. Over time, he developed a better understanding and became more comfortable addressing these issues.

Participant 6: And I think I’ve learned when I first was a counselor educator, I think I didn’t have as much awareness in terms of like doctoral students’ PPC issues. It felt like I was still too close to that myself being a doctoral student recently. Like I didn’t have this broader perspective. But now having worked more with doctoral students I think I have more of a sense of that and I feel more sort of comfortable bringing those up too.

Participant Seven mentioned the lack of training in gatekeeping practices after becoming a full-time faculty member. She shared the experience of being appointed as the chair of the Remediation Committee during her first semester, which underscored the abrupt transition and the need to quickly adapt to new responsibilities.

Participant 7: But after I graduated and became a full-time faculty member, I didn’t really have a lot of training around kind of what gatekeeping looks like once I’m kind of the faculty member. Piece of it when I started at my job at [name of the university], they actually made me the chair of the Remediation Committee my first semester working there.
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In summary, the property of transition from doctoral student to counselor educator involves navigating the challenges of assuming new roles, overcoming imposter syndrome, and developing a comprehensive understanding of professional practices. This journey highlights the importance of mentorship, self-reflection, and gradual acclimatization to faculty responsibilities.

Enhancing Management of PPC

The category of enhancing management of PPC remained consistent between first and second rounds of analyses. The subcategories of addressing missing gaps, improving PPC approaches, and program evaluation remained unchanged. However, within the improving PPC approaches subcategory, two properties of being proactive and intervening earlier were merged together, creating a new property of preemptive action. Additionally, two new properties emerged in the subcategory of improving PPC approaches: need for faculty mentorship and preventing harm/risk.

Preemptive Action

In Chapter Three, the properties of being proactive and intervening earlier existed as separate concepts. However, after the second round of interviews, I merged these properties into a single property: preemptive action. This new property captures both the proactive and early intervention strategies for addressing PPC issues among doctoral students. Combining the definitions from Chapter Three, I formulated a single definition that reflects the emphasis faculty members placed on preemptive action during both rounds of interviews as a means to improve PPC approaches in CES programs.

Within the improving PPC approaches subcategory, preemptive action involves actively anticipating, identifying, and addressing PPC issues among doctoral students before they escalate. This approach underscores the importance of timely intervention and continuous
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improvement, promoting a proactive stance towards problem-solving and support. Faculty members engage in reflective practices to detect emerging PPC concerns early, revise policies and procedures, integrate gatekeeping conversations into the curriculum, and provide mentorship. By intervening at the initial stages of a student’s academic journey, preemptive action aims to enhance student success, faculty satisfaction, and the efficient use of resources.

Need for Faculty Mentorship

Within the improving PPC approaches subcategory, the property of need for faculty mentorship refers to the essential support and guidance required by faculty members, particularly new ones, to navigate the complexities of PPC issues and their roles in counselor education programs. Effective mentorship is highlighted as crucial for professional development, understanding institutional cultures, and managing doctoral student remediation.

Participant Four expressed the sentiment that mentorship and guidance are insufficiently provided, highlighting the challenges faculty members face in receiving adequate support.

Participant 4: Yeah. I think the mentoring and guidance is, I guess, if I were to sum it up is it doesn’t happen often enough. And I think there are multiple reasons for it. If I think back far enough, there were certainly times when it would’ve been useful for me to get more guidance, but once you are a doctoral level faculty like teaching and advising in a doctoral program, there’s also a sense of ownership of your students. Because once you become somebody’s dissertation chair, you’re their advocate more so than the other faculty.

Participant Six reflected on the process of acclimating to a new institutional culture and the role of mentorship in navigating professional norms and expectations.
Participant 6: For me it felt like a process of trying to figure out what was the culture like here because I come from another institution where it was different too. And so, it felt like I was kind of watching what other people were doing and when they brought it up. And that served for me as an example to feel like when should I bring it up and when is it appropriate to bring it up with the whole group versus when is it appropriate to bring it up with maybe just one other person? And when is this more about something I can fix on my own versus something that everyone needs to be aware of?

Participant Seven highlighted the challenges in receiving structured mentorship and training in managing PPC issues, underscoring gaps in support for faculty navigating complex student dynamics.

Participant 7: For the doctoral students that I have kind of had some remediation issues with I’m trying to think of how the universities worked in that capacity. There really wasn’t much training or structure to that either.

Participant 7: I think the only maybe concrete feedback that I’ve gotten is from a department chair who said, “Anytime you have a conversation with a student over Zoom or over the phone, make sure you follow that up with an email that kind of explicitly states what was talked about and what the outcomes were.” But that wasn’t a department policy necessarily. That was kind of their tidbit on kind of good remediation, good gatekeeping procedures. But beyond that, I don’t know if I’ve really gotten kind of prescribed mentorship on how to do that.

Participant Eight emphasized the critical need for mentorship and guidance in the early stages of a faculty career, pointing out the potential pitfalls of insufficient support.
Participant 8: You know, and part of it is we’ve had a couple new faculty, they’d be like, “What do you mean by this?” Because we’ve been dealing with it year to year to year, but it’s the first time they’re hearing these types of things. So, a lot of times, we will just go too quickly and don’t attend to like, “Okay, this is somebody new in the room, we can kinda lose them.” Or I think as a new faculty, you have some responsibility too to speak up when things are uncertain. Or that you don’t understand something. I’ve seen some faculty really do well at this. So, “Okay, I don’t understand that. Could you help clarify that for me?” And I’ve seen some faculty be very shy. They don’t wanna look like they don’t know what’s going on.

Participant Eight also reflected on his own experience with the lack of mentorship during the first years of his career as a counselor educator.

Participant 8: It was rough. Yeah, it was not fun. And so, I don’t know if I got the mentoring experience that I wish I would’ve got in my first year.

In summary, the property of need for faculty mentorship underscores the critical role of structured guidance and support for faculty navigating PPC issues in CES programs. Participants identified gaps in mentorship that hinder effective management of student dynamics and professional expectations, highlighting the necessity for comprehensive mentorship to foster faculty development and enhance institutional support in addressing PPC challenges among doctoral students.

**Preventing Harm/Risk**

Within improving PPC approaches subcategory, the property of preventing harm/risk refers to proactive measures taken by faculty to address behaviors or concerns among doctoral students that could potentially cause harm, whether to individuals within the program or beyond.
Participant Two highlighted the critical importance of addressing behaviors early on to prevent potential future harm. He emphasized the necessity of taking proactive steps despite the challenges posed by unwanted outcomes like lawsuits or negative publicity.

Participant 2: … “We are trying to protect people,” or “We are trying to address behaviors, you know, within that student that could potentially end up in the long run, if they were to successfully make it through, hurt people.” And so, what we’re saying is, “This is much, much bigger” and so, even though a lawsuit is unwanted or negative publicity is unwanted, it’s certainly the lesser of two evils, because if this person gets out, and has a degree, and is acting negligently or harmful towards others, that’s gonna be some serious damage. [sharing these insights with administrators in his university].

Participant Six expressed the need to assess serious concerns thoroughly, questioning whether certain students are suitable for the program if issues persist. His reflection centers on the pivotal decision-making process aimed at mitigating risks within the academic environment.

Participant 6: I feel like with more serious concerns, it’s like where’s the point where I’m like, “Well, we really need to take a step back and analyzes this, is this student a good fit for the program if they don’t improve?”

Participant Nine shared an example of a current remediation case involving behaviors that could harm others within the program. She underscored how PPC issues often extend beyond academic performance, encompassing sensitive areas such as racism, sexism, or heterosexism that require careful management to prevent harm.

Participant 9: And so, I’ve got one example of somebody under remediation right now for behavior that could be harmful to a student. All the doctoral PPC that I see haven’t
necessarily been about teaching quality or supervision quality. There’ve been some flavor of like, you know, racism or sexism or heterosexism.

In summary, the property of preventing harm/risk underscores faculty’s proactive efforts to identify and manage behaviors among doctoral students that pose potential risks within counselor education programs and beyond. Participants emphasized the necessity of early intervention to mitigate future harm, navigating complexities such as legal implications and ethical considerations. This approach aims to uphold professional standards, safeguard individuals, and maintain program integrity, reflecting a commitment to fostering safe and supportive academic environments.

**Summary of Findings from Second Round of Analysis**

Chapter Four explored counselor educators’ experiences and processes in addressing PPC among doctoral students in CES programs. Through a second round of interviews, the chapter delves deeper into the complexities, challenges, and nuanced processes involved in managing PPC. This analysis clarifies and refines the initial findings from Chapter Three, revealing the interconnected nature of various categories, including understanding doctoral experiences, complexities of PPC, marginalization, power, and PPC, faculty’s responses to PPC, and enhancing the management of PPC.

The findings highlight that these categories do not exist in isolation but are deeply interwoven, reflecting the dynamic and iterative nature of faculty’s approaches. For instance, the understanding of doctoral experiences helps faculty better understand the complexities of PPC. Similarly, addressing marginalization and power dynamics is essential for shaping effective faculty responses to PPC. Enhancing PPC management requires continuous support, reflective practice, and programmatic evaluation, which in turn, impacts all other categories.
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The chapter underscores that addressing PPC is not a linear process but a multilayered one that requires ongoing adaptation and integration of various strategies. Counselor educators must navigate internal and external barriers, seek collaboration and support from colleagues, and engage in self-reflection to foster a supportive academic environment. The interconnectedness of these elements emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to managing PPC, ensuring that both faculty and students are supported throughout the process.
CHAPTER 5: Weaving the Web: Faculty’s Multilayered Approach to PPC Issues

I conducted 16 interviews with eight counselor educators to develop a theory or framework about faculty’s processes addressing PPC among doctoral students. Interviews revealed that when faculty encounter PPC among doctoral students, they begin by wanting to understand doctoral students’ experiences. Specifically, they set intentions to understand doctoral students’ challenges, such as personal and program stressors, followed by choosing when to offer mentorship and when to discuss expectations of doctoral students. Faculty spoke about doctoral students in a way that showed how deeply they cared for students’ success in the program. However, they felt limited or restricted in their ability to manage or monitor doctoral students’ intentions for pursuing a Ph.D. degree. They also recognized that doctoral degrees confer power and responsibility to program graduates which reinforced the importance of addressing PPC among doctoral students. When faculty navigated understanding doctoral experiences in CES programs, they also identified types of PPC that doctoral students might struggle with, leading to various methods for addressing PPC and different outcomes of PPC, collectively representing complexities of PPC.

Faculty made active efforts to recognize how diversity and marginalization influence the process of addressing PPC in academia. Specifically, faculty considered their own identities, students’ diverse and marginalized identities, and highlighted the power dynamics that occur in academia. Although faculty made efforts to dismantle power within their relationships with students, they all spoke to the dynamics of authority, power, and rank. By recognizing 1) doctoral experiences, 2) complexities of PPC, and 3) marginalization and power, faculty’s responses to PPC involved navigating internal and external barriers, seeking collaboration and support, and engaging in self-reflection. As faculty respond to PPC, they also recognized how
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CES programs can better enhance the management of PPC. Specifically, faculty need to improve their PPC approaches, address missing gaps, and engage in program evaluation. If CES programs work towards enhancing the management of PPC, then doctoral experiences could improve, and faculty could more successfully navigate complexities of PPC, be more responsive to issues surrounding marginalization and power, and better respond to PPC issues when they arise.

The Web

The theory of faculty addressing PPC among doctoral students is depicted in an image resembling a spider weaving a web. This web captures the intricate and interconnected nature of faculty’s multilayered approach to PPC. The image illustrates the dynamic and cyclical process of understanding doctoral experiences, identifying the complexities of PPC, recognizing the impact of marginalization and power, responding to PPC, and enhancing the management of PPC within CES programs.

Just like there are various species of spiders on Earth, no counselor educator is the same. Spiders have multiple spinnerets and eight legs, which are useful for web-building, similar to counselor educators holding multiple roles or identities within the profession – counselor, teacher, supervisor, researcher, and advocate/leader – that are helpful in addressing PPC issues. Spiders go through specific steps of weaving the web that include an initial base line, creating the frame, strengthening the center, non-sticky spirals and adhesive spiral threads, and final touches (British Arachnological Society, n.d.).

The first step a spider takes in weaving the web is the initial base line. The spider releases a sticky thread and lets the wind carry it to a suitable surface, establishing the initial framework of the web (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Similarly, faculty begin their process of
addressing PPC issues by understanding the experiences of doctoral students. This involves recognizing challenges, setting expectations, offering mentorship, and understanding students’ intentions and power within the academic context. This foundational understanding sets the stage for further actions.

The second step a spider takes in weaving the web is creating the frame. The spider creates a Y-shaped netting and adds more radials to form the basic structure of the web (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Similarly, faculty’s next step involves recognizing the complexities of PPC. Faculty identify the types of PPC (academic, dispositional, clinical, and major) and choose methods to address them (encounter, feedback, evaluation, and remediation). They manage the various outcomes of PPC, aiming for resolution or favorable outcomes (e.g., assessment of change/improvement, resolution), though sometimes they encounter unfavorable outcomes (e.g., decision to leave the program, dismissal). This step creates the initial framework for managing PPC.

The third step a spider takes in weaving the web is strengthening the center of the web by adding additional threads (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). This strengthening step for faculty involves a more comprehensive process that addresses marginalization, power, and PPC dynamics. Faculty recognize and address the influence of marginalization and power dynamics in managing PPC. They consider diverse and marginalized identities and make conscious efforts to dismantle power differentials. Faculty also navigate authority, power, and rank within academia and contend with implicit expectations (e.g., mentorship, consultation, independence, and handling students’ PPC issues) adding strength to their process.

The fourth step a spider takes in weaving the web is creating non-sticky and adhesive spiral threads. The spider creates a spiral of non-sticky threads to move around the web during
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collection and then creates adhesive spiral threads starting from the outside and working inwards, ensuring the web is functional and effective (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Likewise, faculty’s next step in functionally and effectively addressing PPC involves their responses to PPC during which they navigate internal and external barriers, seek collaboration and support, and engage in self-reflection. These actions allow faculty to move fluidly within their roles, ensuring their efforts are functional and cohesive, and that they effectively manage PPC.

The fifth step that spider takes is making final touches to the web. The spider completes the web by adding final touches and waits for prey to come along (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Faculty’s final touches in their approach to managing PPC involves enhancing management of PPC. Faculty enhance the management of PPC by addressing missing gaps, improving PPC approaches, and engaging in program evaluation. These actions ensure that their efforts are comprehensive and that they effectively manage PPC, benefiting both faculty and students. This ongoing process represents their commitment to enhancing management of PPC and supporting doctoral students’ success.

The web-weaving process illustrates the intricate, methodical, and multilayered approach faculty take in addressing PPC among doctoral students, conveying the complexity and interconnectedness of the steps involved in understanding the process of addressing PPC. Figure 3 demonstrates the meticulous, structured, and interconnected approach of a spider weaving the web or faculty addressing PPC among doctoral students. The five categories are at the center of the web, with subcategories and one property located exterior to the categories. After each category, white layers represent the inner layers of the web or the internal process that faculty
engage in in their process of addressing PPC. The black layers represent the outer layers of the web or the external process that faculty engage in when addressing PPC.
Figure 3

Weaving the Web: Faculty’s Multilayered Approach to PPC

Key for Figure 3:
First layer after the spider – five categories
Second, third, fourth, and fifth layers – subcategories
Dismantling power – property
White layers – internal process
Black layers – external process
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Understanding Doctoral Experiences

Similar to a spider establishing the initial framework of the web, the first step in addressing PPC among doctoral students is understanding their experiences in CES programs. All participants expressed their desire to acknowledge and validate doctoral students’ experiences during a rigorous CES program, and identified three ways to build understanding and awareness of these experiences: (1) challenges, (2) expectations and mentorship, and (3) students’ intentions and power. These subcategories represent faculty’s motivation and intentionality around wanting to support doctoral students and assist them in succeeding in their programs rather than deeming or labeling them as problematic or taking a punitive approach to addressing PPC right away. Faculty made proactive efforts to understand what could potentially contribute to the development of PPC and how they could support students in addressing PPC concerns effectively and successfully.

Challenges

Participants tried to understand doctoral experiences by actively learning about doctoral students’ challenges and making an effort to validate these challenges. Faculty were internally motivated to hear about doctoral students’ personal and program stressors, offering an understanding that PPC may result from these stressors. This insight helps faculty see that in some instances doctoral students struggle with PPC due to personal and program-related stressors. However, faculty also recognized that doctoral students may enter the program with pre-existing PPC issues or possess personality traits that contribute to PPC issues. This empathetic approach helped faculty provide more effective support to address PPC concerns in a nuanced and individualized manner.
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*Expectations and Mentorship*

Participants sought to understand doctoral experiences by offering mentorship and communicating expectations set for doctoral students in CES programs. Depending on the PPC issues and challenges doctoral students navigated during their programs, faculty tried to offer more guidance and mentorship to support their academic, professional, and personal development. Faculty also reiterated the performance criteria, behaviors, and achievements expected from doctoral students within their academic and professional pursuits. These dynamics and interactions with doctoral students were driven by internal motivations and were within the faculty’s abilities to manage.

*Students’ Intentions and Power*

Participants sought to understand doctoral experiences by recognizing doctoral students’ intentions and motives with their Ph.D. degrees in CES. Although students’ intentions and power remained outside of faculty’s control (or external process), faculty made efforts to gain an understanding of student’s underlying motivations and aspirations driving their academic pursuits. By learning about these intentions and motives, faculty could intervene when they identified a disconnect between students’ intentions and the essence of the CES profession.

Participants emphasized that obtaining a doctoral degree in CES brings inherent power, authority, and responsibility. They stressed the need to proactively address PPC issues and uphold the integrity of professional and academic standards. Additionally, participants noted that students’ intentions and power remain an external process because, once a doctoral student graduates with a Ph.D., faculty have limited control or influence over how the new counselor educator might act. This lack of control poses potential risks, as unresolved PPC issues in graduated students could negatively impact others.
In summary, by focusing on understanding doctoral experiences through acknowledging challenges, providing expectations and mentorship, and recognizing students’ intentions and power, faculty demonstrated a comprehensive approach to supporting their students and addressing PPC effectively. This foundational understanding or this baseline of the web allows faculty to identify potential issues early and provide the necessary interventions. With this deepened understanding and framework, faculty are better equipped to recognize the complexities of PPC, the next crucial component in the web or the process.

Complexities of PPC

Just at the spider adds a Y-shaped netting and more radials to supplement the basic frame of the web (British Arachnological Society, n.d.), the second step in addressing PPC among doctoral students involved adding more layers by recognizing the complexities of PPC. Faculty added these radials or layers through (1) identifying types of PPC that doctoral students might struggle with, (2) choosing methods for addressing PPC, and (3) managing outcomes of PPC. This approach allowed faculty to tailor their interventions to the specific needs and circumstances of each doctoral student. While these steps might appear straightforward and chronological, the actual process of identifying types of PPC, choosing methods for addressing PPC, and managing outcomes of PPC can involve internal and external barriers, require collaboration and support from colleagues, and warrant enhancing management of PPC, emphasizing the complexity of PPC.

Figure 3 illustrates how the subcategories of types of PPC and outcomes of PPC demonstrate the external processes that faculty have limited influence or control over, while the subcategory of methods for addressing PPC shows how faculty can choose and decide on a method to address PPC issues.
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**Types of PPC**

Faculty face the first complexity in weaving the web when identifying the *types of PPC* that doctoral students might struggle with. This is an external process because faculty did not have much control or influence over the *types of PPC* that doctoral students present with, come in with, and struggle with during a program. Faculty identified four different *types of PPC*: academic, dispositional, clinical, and major. The complexity lied in identifying these types of PPC and finding an appropriate and effective *method to address* them.

Faculty unanimously indicated that identifying *academic PPC* was the easiest type of PPC due to the objective nature of the process and the evidence of poor-quality work not meeting the academic standards. Once identified, faculty used various *methods to address* this type of PPC. Faculty found identifying *dispositional PPC* the most challenging due to its subjective nature, personal interpretation, and faculty’s perspectives. They noted a lack of clear definitions for *dispositional PPC*, often leading to difficulties in choosing the best *method to address* it. Faculty expressed a high level of concern about *clinical PPC* because doctoral students have already undergone clinical training during their master’s programs, raising questions about their professional development and clinical work post-graduation. Additionally, faculty were concerned about ethical issues related to working with clients in the community and supervising counselors-in-training (or master’s level students) as a part of doctoral training. Faculty emphasized that *major PPC*, which could involve academic, dispositional, and clinical PPC, warranted intervention or remediation as a part of the gatekeeping process.

**Methods for Addressing PPC**

Faculty face the second complexity of weaving the web when choosing a *method for addressing* a *type of PPC*. These *methods for addressing PPC* included strategies and
procedures employed to identify, assess, and intervene in instances of PPC among doctoral students. This process could be viewed as an internal process where faculty have control or influence over the ways they address PPC. Depending on the type of PPC, faculty used different methods for addressing PPC: encounter, feedback, evaluation, and remediation. The complexity lied in selecting the appropriate methods for addressing PPC and anticipating how doctoral students might respond.

Faculty shared that when they encountered PPC, their initial observations or direct experiences often prompted them to take immediate action. Other times, they felt unsure of when and how to act as they first wanted to understand doctoral students’ experiences. They also faced challenges when PPC concerns surfaced through other sources such as doctoral peers or previous employees, hoping faculty would take action. Adhering to FERPA by protecting students’ confidentiality while addressing these concerns added another layer of complexity.

When faculty attempted to provide feedback to doctoral students on their types of PPC and specific behaviors, they worked on finding a balance between offering constructive and direct feedback while also wanting to understand and validate doctoral students’ experiences in the program. Faculty reported complications occurring when doctoral students, especially those with established careers as counselors, challenged faculty’s feedback and became defensive.

Faculty also conducted evaluations to measure doctoral students’ progress across academic, dispositional, and clinical domains during their training. The purpose of evaluations was to engage in ongoing assessment of the five doctoral roles: counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and advocacy/leadership. Some faculty reflected on CACREP standards requiring evaluation, which led them to utilize specific evaluation tools to measure progress in
areas such as teaching. The majority of the faculty reported more clarity in evaluating teaching and supervision roles, but noted a lack of procedures for research, advocacy or leadership, and nonacademic domains like professional dispositions. This made effective evaluation and intervention challenging.

When faculty intervened with doctoral students who exhibited PPC, they engaged in a remediation process, including interventions such as a professional development plan. If doctoral students showed no behavioral changes or improvements, in severe cases the remediation process may have led to dismissal from the program. Faculty hoped to observe behavioral changes and PPC resolution through remediation. However, faculty noted that the remediation process was often slow and labor intensive, requiring frequent revisits and adjustments.

Outcomes of PPC

Faculty face the third complexity of weaving the web by managing various outcomes of PPC. Results depended on the type of PPC and methods for addressing PPC. Faculty could only partially control these outcomes, which contributed to the external nature of the process. More specifically, faculty did not have much influence over doctoral students’ choices such as deciding to leave a program. Faculty viewed these outcomes ranging from favorable to unfavorable. They encountered specific outcomes in their experiences addressing PPC, including appeal and legal processes, assessment of change/improvement, resolution, decision to leave the program, lack of resolution, impact on others, dismissal, and forward-looking perspectives on competence.

Faculty often faced appeals and legal processes when doctoral students chose to challenge their decisions. Although students had the right to appeal, faculty found this outcome complex, and emotionally taxing. They feared being involved in legal processes and felt uncertain about students returning to programs following dismissal. Faculty considered this
outcome unfavorable. When faculty assessed changes or improvements in doctoral students, they viewed this outcome as favorable. Behavioral changes in students indicated growth and a desire to improve. In most cases, faculty reached a resolution depending on the type of PPC the student struggled with. They found academic PPC easiest to resolve and some dispositional PPC, such as communication patterns and acceptance of feedback, also showed promising signs of resolution.

Faculty viewed a doctoral student’s decision to leave a program as both favorable and unfavorable. When favorable, the departure of a student prevented further PPC issues, which benefited the program and the profession. However, when unfavorable, faculty hoped the student would improve and complete the program. Faculty saw the student’s decision to leave a program as both a resolution and a lack of resolution. The decision resolved the immediate PPC issue but left faculty feeling they hadn’t fully addressed the concerns.

When faculty couldn’t resolve PPC, they faced ongoing concerns or external barriers within the academic program. Additionally, unresolved PPC led faculty to engage in their own internal process of self-reflection, revealing their internal thoughts, feelings, and actions. For example, faculty had to find ways to achieve closure/acceptance with unresolved PPC. Consequently, the lack of resolution felt unfinished for some faculty, was emotionally taxing, and created concerns about the future roles of doctoral students with PPC issues.

Faculty worried about the impact of doctoral students with PPC on others, such as their doctoral peers, master-level students they work with, and potentially future students in counselor education. This outcome may have manifested as negative, distressing, or harmful due to the actions or behaviors of doctoral students with PPC issues. Faculty especially worried about doctoral students posing potential harm or risks in their responsibilities as doctoral students and
future counselor educators. They unanimously indicated that such harm or risk would be detrimental to communities, counseling students, and CES programs. However, faculty also were unable to fully address the potential impact that a doctoral student might have on others due to CES program’s structure, power dynamics in academia, and institutional structural barriers.

All faculty indicated that dismissal as an outcome of PPC was the last resort. Dismissing a student required significant effort, such as collecting evidence of PPC, documentation, consultations, and university approval. Faculty shared experiences where dismissing a student was a favorable outcome due to the student displaying major PPC or major violation, allowing faculty to stop these PPC issues. Conversely, faculty also shared that dismissing a student was an unfavorable outcome when they did not have a chance to see changes in the student’s behavior or when students failed to communicate their intentions regarding the program. For example, some students did not communicate with faculty for about a year, which ultimately led to their dismissal.

Lastly, faculty shared their forward-looking perspectives on competence as an outcome of PPC. They expressed optimism and anticipation regarding the future resolution of PPC and developmental progress of doctoral students in CES. Faculty believed that unresolved PPC issues may resolve themselves over time through various avenues such as future professional development or external interventions such as licensing boards, evaluations, or universities. Many faculty viewed this outcome with hope that the “profession” would address PPC issues down the road. However, some expressed concerns about these forward-looking perspectives on competence due to the uncertainty that these PPC issues would be resolved, resulting in students impacting others in the future.
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In summary, the complexities of PPC underscored the intricate and multifaceted nature of identifying, addressing, and managing PPC among doctoral students. Faculty navigated these complexities through a structured process involving the identification of PPC types, selection of appropriate methods for intervention, and management of diverse outcomes. This dynamic process reflected the ongoing efforts of faculty to support doctoral students while maintaining the integrity of the CES programs. By understanding and navigating these complexities, faculty wove the foundational layers of their approach to addressing PPC. As faculty navigated the complexities of PPC, they also emphasized the importance of understanding how marginalization and power dynamics influenced the identification and management of PPC.

Marginalization, Power, and PPC

The third step in weaving the web adds extra threads to strengthen the center of the web (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Faculty’s third step in addressing PPC among doctoral students involved understanding how marginalization and power influence the management of PPC. Similar to a spider strengthening the center of its web, faculty worked on not only understanding doctoral experiences and managing the complexities of PPC, but also on recognizing the importance of marginalization and power when it comes to PPC issues. Faculty aimed to strengthen their processes of addressing PPC, dividing them into internal and external processes.

Internally, faculty focused on understanding, recognizing, and addressing the diverse and marginalized identities of both doctoral students and faculty involved in managing PPC. Depending on these identities and the type of PPC a doctoral student faced, faculty adjusted their methods for addressing PPC and their approaches to mentorship and setting expectations.

Externally, faculty acknowledged that power dynamics in academia served as external barriers
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to addressing PPC issues, limiting their influence. Faculty described their attempts to recognize marginalization and power through (1) diversity and marginalization and (2) power dynamics in academia.

Diversity and Marginalization

Faculty internally strengthened the center of the web by considering the diverse and marginalized identities of students and faculty. For example, they were internally motivated to recognize various identities, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, particularly within the academic and PPC contexts. Faculty attempted to understand how these multiple identities intersect and influence experiences, perspectives, and opportunities while acknowledging the marginalization certain identity groups face, particularly those of color. This recognition involved understanding doctoral students’ identities and engaging in self-reflection on their own identities in student-faculty relationships. All faculty emphasized the need for CES programs to adopt proactive measures fostering an inclusive and equitable environment, dismantling systemic barriers, and addressing the complex intersectionality of identities to effectively mitigate PPC issues.

Power Dynamics in Academia

Faculty recognized power in academia as an external process, with dismantling power being the exception as they had limited influence over how authority, power, and rank operated within the academic systems. Faculty emphasized three specific threads or factors influencing power dynamics: (1) dismantling power, (2) authority, power, and rank in academia, and (3) implicit expectations of faculty.

First, the internal process of dismantling power significantly impacted faculty’s process of addressing PPC. The importance of this process prompted the inclusion of dismantling power
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as the only property in Figure 3. Faculty highlighted their efforts to create environments of mutual respect, open dialogue, and collaboration, where they intentionally minimized hierarchical barriers and promoted inclusivity and equity in doctoral students’ academic experiences. These efforts demonstrated faculty’s commitment to being mindful, validating, and supportive of doctoral students’ experiences.

Second, all faculty emphasized that navigating authority, power, and rank in academia is an external process that influences the management and outcomes of PPC. Faculty emphasized how authority figures such as department chairs, tenured faculty, or program administrators, significantly impacted the management and outcomes of PPC due to the hierarchical structures in academic settings. Faculty experiences reflected two sides of this thread or property: they found security in managing PPC with doctoral students due to the support and guidance from those in positions of authority, power, and higher rank, but they also felt apprehensive about questioning the methods of more authoritative, powerful, and higher-ranking faculty members. This process revealed the multilayered approach that faculty must take when addressing PPC, highlighting factors not fully within their control. Furthermore, faculty shared their experiences navigating authority, power, and rank among colleagues, including hierarchical relationships, the influence of tenured faculty on new faculty, lack of support from department heads or chairs, and lack of mentorship. Collectively, these experiences revealed the institutional structural barriers that faculty navigated when addressing PPC.

Third, faculty described some implicit expectations in academia that they need to fulfill, viewing this process as external. These implicit expectations, not formally documented, arise from colleagues, tenured faculty, and authority figures. Faculty offered examples of implicit expectations such as methods for addressing PPC issues, consultation with tenured faculty or
program administrators, mentorship, and independence or autonomy. Specifically, academia often expected faculty to demonstrate their ability to know things and resolve issues on their own, highlighting their persistence and capability.

In summary, the dynamics of marginalization, power, and PPC significantly influenced how faculty addressed PPC among doctoral students. Faculty navigated these challenges by recognizing the diverse and marginalized identities of students and themselves and consciously working to dismantle power differentials to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment. They also contended with the influence of authority, power, and rank within academia, balancing security and apprehension in managing PPC. Implicit expectations fueled by power dynamics in academia further shaped their approaches and behaviors, adding another thread to the intricate web they weave in addressing PPC. This multifaceted process underscored the importance of understanding and addressing these dynamics to manage PPC effectively. As faculty navigated these dynamics, their responses to PPC became crucial in shaping the outcomes and experiences of both students and faculty.

Faculty’s Response to PPC

The fourth step in weaving the web involves creating both non-sticky and adhesive spiral threads, starting from the outside and working inward, to ensure the web is functional and effective (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Faculty engaged in a similar process, where they moved through the process of addressing PPC by having various responses to PPC. The spiral threads or the faculty’s response to PPC category holds an essential position in the web as it truly reveals how faculty navigate and manage PPC issues in doctoral students. In this category, faculty allowed themselves to be open, vulnerable, and honest about their internal and external processes paralleling how a spider constructs and moves around the web, outward and inward.
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Naturally, this category combines and addresses all other layers of the web or understanding doctoral experiences, navigating the complexities of PPC, and attending to power dynamics in academia. Faculty disclosed three factors or threads that influenced their responses to PPC: (1) barriers, (2) collaboration and support, and (3) self-reflection.

**Barriers**

As a spider creates non-sticky and adhesive spiral threads for a web, the process of responding to PPC produces specific barriers for faculty. Barriers involved internal and external challenges that hinder the effective management of PPC issues among doctoral students. These processes are represented in Figure 3, with the white layer showing the internal barriers and the black layer showing the external barriers. Faculty shared how these barriers impede their roles as counselor educators, affecting their ability to address and resolve PPC concerns effectively. Examples of internal barriers included assumptions about students’ competence levels, resistance from students, self-doubt (such as imposter syndrome), emotional strain, and the impact of individual teaching styles. Examples of external barriers included institutional structures (e.g., graduate school or department culture), and cultural dynamics within the department or among colleagues.

The ones that faculty highlighted the most include ambiguous sharing norms, time-intensive processes, assumptions of competency, differences in addressing PPC, gateslipping, lack of standardized procedures, internal barriers, reports of PPC from external sources, and institutional structural barriers. Faculty navigated these internal and external barriers simultaneously, similar to how a spider moves through the web outwardly and inwardly. Some of the external barriers were more common and shared across CES programs, while internal barriers were more individualized and personal, revealing the unique struggles faculty face.
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Collaboration and Support

As a spider constructs threads to move around the web, faculty must collaborate and seek support to effectively respond to PPC. Unanimously, faculty emphasized the importance of collaboration and support from colleagues when responding to PPC. All faculty shared that they experienced cohesive efforts and mutual assistance from their colleagues when faced with responding to PPC issues. They relied heavily on their colleagues’ collective expertise, shared values on PPC and gatekeeping, guidance, validation, and a supportive environment. However, because faculty could not control when, how much, and what type of support they might receive from their colleagues, collaboration and support represented an external process.

Faculty considered themselves fortunate to receive support from colleagues, but they also acknowledged that such supportive culture does not exist in all counseling departments. They reflected on how dynamics among faculty changed over time, transitioning to a united front and shared beliefs around PPC issues. Depending on the culture of collaboration and support, some faculty discussed how they transitioned responsibility of PPC to other faculty, offered a comprehensive report on PPC, took responsibility for mistakes or gateslipping, or proactively addressed PPC. Within collaboration and support, faculty discussed the importance of receiving mentorship at a faculty level to know how to respond to PPC. While some faculty were fortunate to have mentors who offered guidance on professional development and PPC during the early stages of their careers, others did not, forcing them to learn on their own.

Self-Reflection

As a spider aims to create an effective and functional web, faculty aim to engage in self-reflection to better respond to PPC. Self-reflection involved faculty’s internal process and motivation to deliberately contemplate their roles as counselor educators when confronted with
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PPC issues. **Self-reflection** holds immense significance in the web or process of addressing PPC among doctoral students as it offers insights into how faculty reflect on their roles, behaviors or actions, and **responses to PPC**. Faculty offered a glimpse into their internal worlds, highlighting the importance of engaging in **personal self-work**, which translates to their professional roles.

Faculty engaged in **self-reflection** through: (1) reflecting on their counselor educator identity, (2) finding closure/acceptance (with unresolved PPC), (3) reflecting on past PPC experiences, (4) engaging in personal and professional self-work, (5) reflecting on personal doctoral experience, and (6) transitioning from doctoral student to counselor educator. Faculty emphasized that without **self-reflection**, they were unable to move further in the process of **responding to PPC**. They discussed how **self-reflection** helped them recognize their internal and external **barriers** and when they needed to seek more **collaboration and support** from their colleagues.

In summary, by navigating **barriers**, leveraging **collaboration and support**, and engaging in **self-reflection**, faculty developed a comprehensive **response to PPC**. This multifaceted approach reflects the intricate process of weaving the web, ensuring that faculty can address PPC effectively by considering both internal and external factors. Faculty shared the same goal as a spider; they wanted their web or process of addressing PPC to be functional and effective.

**Enhancing Management of PPC**

The spider finishes constructing its web by adding the final details, then positions itself to wait for prey to get caught (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Faculty completed their process of addressing PPC by offering final details on how to **enhance management of PPC**. They highlighted the importance of identifying and rectifying deficiencies in handling PPC issues in CES programs. They pointed out factors within and outside of their control, referring to the internal and external processes involved in **enhancing the management of PPC**. The three
factors or details that complete the web or **enhance the management of PPC** are: (1) **addressing missing gaps**, (2) **improving PPC approaches**, and (3) engaging in **program evaluation**.

**Addressing Missing Gaps**

The first factor that **enhances the management of PPC** involves **addressing missing gaps**. These gaps serve as an outer, external layer of the web, indicating the need for changes on a larger, professional level largely outside their control. Faculty unanimously identified the following gaps: (1) **ambiguous definitions** around PPC, especially **dispositional PPC**, (2) **insufficient research** on doctoral students’ PPC and gatekeeping, (3) **lack of specificity** in ways to address PPC in distinct doctoral roles and ways to evaluate these roles, and (4) **absence of standardized procedures** in managing PPC at a doctoral level. These gaps served as **institutional structural barriers** for faculty because they lacked **standardized procedures**, necessary guidelines, and policies to manage the **complexities of PPC**. Many faculty discussed how professional and academic standards, CES programs, and departments need to address these **missing gaps** to properly engage in the PPC process.

**Improving PPC Approaches**

The second factor that **enhances the management of PPC** involves **improving PPC approaches**. Faculty have the responsibility, choices, and ability to identify ways to **improve PPC approaches**, representing factors within their control. By **improving PPC approaches**, faculty would not only help themselves, but they would also better support their doctoral students. Faculty provided specific examples of **improving PPC approaches**, such as **improving documentation**, **taking preemptive action**, **considering standards**, **updating policies**, **educating doctoral students about PPC experiences**, and **needing faculty mentorship**. Faculty expressed a
desire to address PPC from a supportive as opposed to a punitive stance, and to shift approaches to signal faculty support and mentorship rather than punishment.

Program Evaluation

The third factor that enhances the management of PPC involves engaging in program evaluation. Although CACREP expects faculty to engage in program evaluation, this evaluation process confronts certain external challenges in academia. Faculty discussed the nature of CES programs and their structures and addressed differences in doctoral versus master-level programs. CACREP-accredited CES programs have various structures, program policies, cohort models, and faculty-student interactions. Faculty highlighted challenges in maintaining doctoral programs, sometimes leading to program closure, while others discussed how the cohort model in programs often creates challenges due to the doctoral peer dynamics. Additionally, faculty discussed how in-person versus online program formats impact students’ engagement and management of PPC.

Faculty addressed differences between doctoral versus master-level students, including educational standards, developmental expectations, and professional dispositions. Despite recognizing these distinct differences, faculty faced external barriers when addressing PPC in doctoral students. Faculty discussed the institutional structural barrier of universities relying on certain numbers of doctoral students to support higher enrollment number of master-level students, as doctoral students support faculty through teaching and supervision. A few participants discussed how master-level programs make more money compared to doctoral programs. Faculty revealed departmental assumption that master-level students with PPC might pose greater harm or risk to their clients in the community, downplaying the potential harm or risk that doctoral students could pose to their peers, students, and clients they might work with.
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Faculty noted that the volume of research available regarding PPC issues and gatekeeping is higher for master-level students compared to doctoral-level students.

If CES programs improved their management of PPC, this improvement would influence all other four categories. Figure 4 demonstrates the influence and connection among categories. Red arrows show the interconnectedness of the five categories while blue arrows illustrate how enhancing the management of PPC impacts the other four categories. Doctoral students would have better experiences in CES programs, faculty would better manage the complexities of PPC, navigate marginalization and power dynamics more effectively, and respond to PPC more efficiently, thus better supporting both faculty and students. This finding highlights that addressing inconsistencies or deficiencies at a broader, organizational level, such as CACREP or ACES, would lead to better integration of changes at the individual program level. Faculty emphasized the need for more support, guidance, and clarity from the professional and accreditation standards to engage in their responsibilities and roles properly.

In summary, enhancing the management of PPC through addressing missing gaps, improving PPC approaches, and engaging in program evaluation plays a pivotal role in the overall process of addressing PPC among doctoral students. These enhancements would help create a supportive environment that facilitates faculty’s ability to manage PPC effectively, ultimately benefiting both faculty and students. As the spider needs to add the final details to complete the web and wait for its prey, faculty emphasized the need for enhancing the management of PPC to complete their process of addressing PPC among doctoral students.
Figure 4 Zooming in on Categories
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Summary

This chapter presented a framework illustrating how faculty address PPC among doctoral students, symbolized through the analogy of a spider weaving the web. The web represented the intricate, interconnected process faculty undertook when addressing PPC, highlighting the importance of understanding doctoral experiences, recognizing the complexities of PPC, addressing issues of marginalization and power, responding to PPC, and enhancing the management of PPC within CES programs.

Just as a spider follows specific, cyclical steps to create an effective and functional web, faculty engaged in a multilayered approach to address PPC among doctoral students. They began by establishing a baseline through understanding the experiences of doctoral students, including their challenges, intentions and power, mentorship needs, and setting clear expectations. Faculty then built the frame of their web by recognizing the complexities of PPC, identifying various types of PPC, selecting appropriate methods to address them, and managing the outcomes, which could be either favorable or unfavorable.

To strengthen the center of the web, faculty addressed marginalization and power dynamics by considering diverse and marginalized identities, acknowledging authority, power, and rank within academia, and making efforts to dismantle power in faculty-student relationships. The spiral threads of the web demonstrate both the outward and inward processes faculty manage in their responses to PPC, such as overcoming barriers, seeking collaboration and support, and engaging in self-reflection. Lastly, just as the spider adds final touches to ensure that the web is effective and functional, faculty enhanced PPC management by addressing missing gaps, improving PPC approaches, and engaging in program evaluation. This ensured a thorough and effective process of addressing PPC among doctoral students.
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The analogy of weaving the web illustrates the comprehensive framework of how faculty addressed PPC among doctoral students, underscoring the complexity and interconnectedness of the steps involved. This detailed and systematic approach demonstrated the commitment and dedication of faculty to support doctoral students, uphold the integrity of CES programs, and effectively manage PPC issues.
CHAPTER 6: Trustworthiness, Limitations, and Implications

Chapter Six addresses a) the methods used to establish the trustworthiness of the data, b) procedures for achieving saturation, c) the limitations encountered during the study, d) the implications of the findings, and e) directions for future research. Building on the theory of “Weaving the Web: Faculty’s Multilayered Approach to Problems of Professional Competence (PPC)” introduced in Chapter Five, this chapter outlines the implications of this study for counselor educators and doctoral students in CES programs and provides considerations for future research.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed four components of establishing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility involves ensuring the accuracy and believability of the research findings. This can be achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation in the field, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and researcher reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). For this research, I established credibility through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and by actively engaging in member checking.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). This involves providing a rich, thick description of the data to allow readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other settings. For this research, I ensured transferability by presenting detailed descriptions of the research context and participants, and by consulting with my participants and dissertation chair to ensure accurate and thorough representation of participants’ voices.
Dependability involves ensuring the consistency and reliability of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). This can be demonstrated through the use of audit trails and detailed documentation of the research process. For this research, I documented the process of how I reached the final findings, including maintaining audit trails and memos to provide a clear record of the research steps and decisions made throughout the study.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). This involves demonstrating a clear connection between the data, analytic processes, and findings. For this research, I relied on an inquiry auditor to review and confirm the research process and findings, ensuring that the results are based on the participants’ experiences and perspectives rather than my own biases.

Lastly, I engaged in reflexivity which served as an overarching umbrella of trustworthiness, encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Morrow, 2005). I practiced reflexivity by maintaining a reflexive journal to document my experiences and emerging awareness of any assumptions or biases, as well as my feelings and concerns throughout the entire research process.

The below sections detail how I established the trustworthiness of the data through member checking, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, rich, thick descriptions, audit trails, inquiry audit, and reflexivity.

**Member Checking**

To further establish credibility and transferability, I engaged in member-checking. With some participants, I communicated via emails to informally check on specific phrases or terminology used during the interviews to ensure accurate representation of participants’ voices. I
also engaged in a more formal member check procedure after I completed data analysis and a preliminary formulation of the theory. Procedures for member checking involved sending an email (see Appendix G) to each participant with specific questions and an attached document that summarized my analyses and described my emergent theory/framework (see Appendix H). In the email, I offered to receive responses, feedback, and questions from participants via email or via Zoom. I asked participants to answer the following questions:

1. What are your overall impressions of the theory/framework?
2. Is there anything that resonates with you in particular?
3. Is there anything that needs to be added, changed, or removed?
4. Is there anything that I got wrong?

**Member Checking Results.** At the time of writing this chapter, I have received responses from six participants (Participants One, Two, Three, Six, Seven, and Eight).

Participant One offered overall feedback.

**Participant 1:** I love the web framework as a visual for the theory you have developed. I was able to identify elements of my responses within your categories and see how others’ perspectives added to the richness of your findings. I don’t see anything to be added or removed from my perspective.

Participant Two provided specific responses to each question and shared his overall impression of the theory/framework: “Overall, I think you’ve done an excellent job of capturing the complexities of your idea. I can tell you’ve put in a considerable amount of work and it shows.” He also noted what resonated with him in particular.

**Participant 2:** I think the second figure conceptual map is what’s most interesting to me. The outline layout really helps me understand the components and complexities of
addressing ppc at the doctoral level. I also appreciated the multicultural component and recognizing this element as an important part of the process.

Participant Two suggested two specific pieces for consideration.

Participant 2: Thanks for the opportunity to suggest two ideas. First, I don’t know if it came out in my interviews or others’ but I think modeling/mentoring doctoral students to practice fair and ethical gatekeeping with ppc issues at the doctoral and master’s level is a form of leadership. Second, in the power dynamics in academia area. Maybe there is a little space to clarify that it’s about “dismantling abuses of power” rather than just dismantling power. There will always be people in a position of author/power/etc. There are plenty of people in those areas that use their power appropriately, professionally, within policy, help people feel safe and like everyone has a voice, and in the best interests of everyone and the profession. I agree with you, there are some that abuse their power and misuse gatekeeping and either over correct or don’t at all with ppc issues.

I scheduled a Zoom meeting with Participant Two to discuss these pieces of feedback in greater detail and gain more insights on his experiences with leadership and misuse of power. After this discussion, I incorporated Participant Two’s feedback into Chapter Four, better representing the perspectives of PPC connected to leadership and further elaborating on the misuse of power. Participant Two also responded to the question of whether I got anything wrong.

Participant 2: No. You’ve done nice job with your study. With any of my comments above, please feel free to use or completely disregard them! You are the expert and I fully trust your judgement. Thank you for allowing me to be a member checker as part of your trustworthiness procedures.
Participant Three responded to the question on overall impressions of the theory/framework: “I think it is very reflective of my experience and probably others. I don't have any major changes. Figure two was hard to understand (too much going on) consider condensing it.” Participant Three responded about what resonated in particular with her, sharing: “I think the barriers experienced by faculty were well thought out.” Regarding what needed to be added, changed, or removed, Participant Three offered a few considerations.

Participant 3: You mentioned doctoral candidate. Do you actually mean a doctoral candidate or doctoral student? These are different. Just making sure the correct language is used. I am not sure if “gateslipping” was the best term. Consider using a different one but I think it’s fine.

I corrected the wording from “doctoral candidate” to “doctoral student” and reached out to Participant Three for alternative terminology to “gateslipping.” Participant Three responded: “Gateslipping just doesn’t seem like a term I’ve heard counselor educators use before, but I am totally fine if you keep it that way. I don’t have any alternatives either.” Regarding Participant Three’s feedback on Figure 2 being challenging to understand, I discussed this feedback with my dissertation chair. Ultimately, we decided that Figure 2, despite being a complex depiction, accurately represents the phenomena and simplifying it would leave out critical elements of the process. Finally, in response to the last question about what I may have got wrong, Participant Three said: “No, you did an excellent job. More detailed than most researchers! I have no doubt the extensive work you put into this.”

Participant Six answered all the member check questions. For overall impressions of the theory/framework, Participant Six responded:
Participant 6: Your structure with categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions was confusing to me. The dimensions component was the most confusing to me. Are all of these components needed? Maybe a justification for each one and more specificity in your definitions of each one could help with this. Some of what I see in your thematic structure seems to be true of PPC generally. In writing this study, you may want to highlight what in your data is most unique and important in thinking about PPC at the doctoral level (which there is a fair amount of) with quotes in your findings section and focus on it in your discussion section.

On what resonated in particular, Participant Six responded:

Participant 6: I appreciated the marginalization, power, and PPC category. That resonates with my experiences and thought process around this topic. These are important concepts too often missing from this research area. The implicit expectations of faculty seems really important and has the potential for lots of miscommunication and bias to emerge in the PPC process, especially at the doctoral level where I think policies and expectations are often less well defined. There also seems to be a ton of rich depth and nuance in the faculty’s response to PPC and Enhancing Management of PPC categories that fit with my experience and seem to have lots of important implications for the field. I appreciate how you have integrated multilayered complexity in the institutional context and the power dynamics involved in PPC decisions.

Regarding additions, changes, or removals, Participant Six stated:

Participant 6: The understanding doctoral experiences category as a whole offers important context on doctoral student experiences, but I’m a bit unclear on how this category connects to PPC. I’m not sure what your research question(s) are, but maybe
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these categories/subcategories could be adjusted to show how it intersects better with PPC. The structure of the complexities of PPC category does not fit well with its name in my opinion. Much of the subcategories feel like fairly simple classifications of qualities involved in PPC cases. There isn’t a lot that identifies the depth, nuance, and complexities of participants’ experiences based on the thematic structure. And many of the themes seem to not clearly be linked to how PPC is unique at the doctoral level.

I carefully reviewed Participant Six’s detailed feedback on each question and decided to consult with my dissertation chair, Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano, and one of the dissertation committee members, Dr. Kirsten Murray. The discussion primarily focused on the conceptual feedback provided by Participant Six, such as the structure of the categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions.

In discussing Participant Six’s response to question one, I considered the implications of not providing participant quotes in the member check process. While I had aimed to keep the process brief, including quotes could have added more richness and depth, and may have allowed for greater understanding and less confusion from participants. During my discussion with Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano and Dr. Murray, I considered the possibility that Participant Six’s detailed feedback might have been more project-focused rather than based on his individual lived experience. There was a potential that Participant Six felt an obligation to provide detailed feedback as a faculty member to a student, rather than focusing on his experience as a participant. Additionally, another possibility is that my positionality as a researcher shifted, prompting Participant Six to provide feedback from an “expert” perspective on the topic of PPC. This shift may have led Participant Six to reflect on the topic being researched rather than his overall lived experience with addressing PPC and our interactions during the two rounds of
WEAVING THE WEB interviews. After thoroughly discussing the feedback with Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano and Dr. Murray, I decided to keep the structure of the **categories**, **subcategories**, **properties**, and **dimensions** unchanged.

In response to Participant Six’s comment on the nature of PPC issues, I aimed to emphasize and differentiate PPC at the doctoral level in Chapters Five and Six, particularly in the sections on “Implications” and “Future Research.” I integrated Participant Six’s feedback and clarified the complexities of the PPC category. Lastly, when asked if I had gotten anything wrong, Participant Six stated: “Nothing that I noticed.”

Participant Seven offered overall feedback.

Participant 7: Thank you so much for following up. I had some time to review the document today and it looks amazing. You should be incredibly proud of the work you’ve put into this analysis. It represents the information I shared with you, and it is easy to understand. Please let me know if there is any additional feedback I can provide.

Participant Eight responded to the first question on the overall impressions of the theory/framework, stating: “I enjoyed reading through your model. You did an excellent job of exploring holistic process of remediation.” Participant Eight indicated what resonated in particular with him, sharing: “I liked how you included the extremely personal nature of remediation and supported the challenges in conducting proper remediation.” For the question on whether anything needs to be added, changed, or removed, Participant Eight responded: “I didn’t see any portion of the model they did not resonate with much of the interviews we had.” Lastly, for the question on whether I got anything wrong, Participant Eight stated: “No I support the information in the model.”
In this research study, I established credibility by prolonged engagement and persistent observation that increased my interaction with participants. Specifically, prolonged engagement encompassed the first and second rounds of interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. My goal was for the researcher-participant relationship to yield trustworthy data and faithfully represent the voices of those participating in the research. To build strong relationships with participants I relied heavily on my counseling skills, such as active listening, paraphrases, reflections of feelings and meaning, and probes. I approached the research process with curiosity and a willingness to receive feedback about participants’ experiences, interpretations, and my conclusions. Multiple interactions with participants provided me with an extended period of active involvement with the data.

During this process of engagement, I faced challenges in establishing rapport with one participant. In our initial interview, Participant Five demonstrated limited engagement and was frequently distracted. Despite the interruptions to the interview process, I maintained focus on conducting the interview. Participant Five struggled to provide comprehensive responses, prompting me to seek guidance from my dissertation chair and committee members. After consultations, I attempted to arrange a second interview to gain further insights, but logistical issues prevented its completion. Ultimately, Participant Five chose not to follow through with the interview. I reached out to Participant Five for member checking, just as I reached out to all the other participants of the study. However, Participant Five did not provide feedback.

While prolonged engagement allowed me to build trust with my participants and gain a comprehensive understanding of the context, persistent observations helped me gather detailed and relevant characteristics of the phenomenon being studied. Through persistent observation, I was able to identify and understand the most relevant characteristics, complexities or nuances,
and aspects of addressing PPC among doctoral students. For example, I observed the barriers faculty face in managing PPC, highlighting both internal and external barriers. I also detected themes emphasizing the importance of enhancing the management of PPC among doctoral students, such as addressing gaps in research, standardizing procedures, and defining terms. Faculty shared similar themes regarding personal improvements in managing PPC, which showed similarities across participants. However, I also recognized and understood the variability in participants’ experiences and exceptions in the data. Specifically, I noted significant differences in program structure and dynamics between in-person and remote CES programs. Persistent observation allowed me to gather comprehensive and nuanced data, which strengthened the credibility of my study.

**Rich, Thick Descriptions**

To achieve transferability, I generated rich, thick descriptions to present the data with depth and transparency, accurately and fully representing participants’ voices. Specifically, I created comprehensive definitions or descriptions of each category, subcategory, property, and dimension, followed by direct quotes from each participant to capture their experiences and processes of addressing PPC among doctoral students. I diligently worked to represent every participant’s voice and placed participants’ quotes under appropriate categories, subcategories, properties, or dimensions to offer a rich description of their experiences in their own words. This approach allows readers to determine the transferability of the data and theory on their own.

I sought consultation on how to effectively represent the depth and transparency of the data provided by Participant Five, given the limited nature of her responses to the interview questions. In the first three categories, Participant Five’s responses during the initial interviews were considered a “negative case” due to her inability to provide comprehensive answers. In the
last two categories, Participant Five’s insights were regarded as a “single case” or “unique case” as they primarily focused on her individual experiences, beliefs, and meanings, particularly shaped by her involvement in the online program. Her perspectives and experiences provided a distinct view based on the structure of her remote CES program. Despite being different from other participants, these insights were significant for showcasing a distinct viewpoint on PPC among doctoral students in her CES program.

By providing rich, thick descriptions, I aimed to enhance the study’s transferability. These detailed narratives allow readers to fully understand the context and nuances of the participants’ experiences, thereby supporting the overall trustworthiness of the research.

**Audit Trails**

To achieve dependability, I utilized an audit trail to meticulously document the process of building a theory throughout the research. I relied on memos to record my thoughts, decisions, and reflections from start to finish of the research process. I shared my audit trail with my dissertation chair and colleagues in the field for examination and feedback. This thorough documentation provided a clear and transparent record of the research process, enhancing the study’s dependability by ensuring that the findings are consistent and traceable.

**Inquiry Audit**

To achieve confirmability and dependability, I used an inquiry audit method. My dissertation chair, Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano, served as my primary inquiry auditor. From Fall 2023 to Summer 2024, I met with Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano weekly for at least an hour to work on this research and receive mentorship. She provided guidance and feedback on each part of the research process, my data, and my writing of the results. Throughout our meetings, Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano reviewed my data, offered feedback on emerging findings, and provided
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directions on how to proceed further in the research. We collaborated on initial conceptual map
drafts and the visual representation of the process. Her feedback and insights were fundamental
to the development of this theory and the entire research process.

I relied on Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano to help address my impressions and biases as a doctoral
student studying PPC among doctoral students. I discussed my experiences as a doctoral student
with her, which helped differentiate between my own experience in an in-person CES program
and the reality of some remote CES programs. She emphasized the importance of accurately
representing and illustrating the nature and reality of various CES programs.

Additionally, I consulted with dissertation committee member Dr. Kirsten Murray, on
emerging categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions after the first and second rounds
of analysis. Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano, Dr. Murray, and I held several meetings to discuss the
emerging findings and the process of developing the theory. They provided guidance on handling
my experience with Participant Five, and offered suggestions on how to best represent her voice
and integrate it into the findings honestly and accurately, describing the interview experience and
the lack of rich, thick responses. Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano consulted with Dr. Murray on the
member checking process, offering further guidance to me. Dr. Murray’s support and mentorship
were invaluable in identifying major emerging themes, addressing my experience with
Participant Five, and ensuring the accuracy of the member check process.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity served as a crucial method to establish trustworthiness in my study. I engaged
in an ongoing process of self-awareness and self-reflection by maintaining a reflexive journal.
This journal captured my experiences, assumptions, biases, feelings, and concerns throughout the
research process. After each interview, I wrote memos noting my overall impressions,
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observations of each participant, what stood out to me, what surprised me, and what needed further exploration. I heavily relied on memoing after my interview with Participant Five, trying to capture everything that took place in the interview for further reflection on ways I could improve my experience for the second round of interviews. However, Participant Five chose not to proceed with the second round of interviews.

During the first and second rounds of analysis, I wrote specific memos for various direct quotes from participants, drawing connections and creating meaning between the quotes and data. I linked my memos to specific categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions, which facilitated the development of the theory. I also created a document listing emerging data, which later transformed into a conceptual map capturing the emerging categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions.

After the second round of analysis, I reflected on how to better restructure the order of categories to more accurately represent the data and the emerging theory. I designed a second conceptual map, color-coding the categories and representing their interconnectedness with cyclical arrows. Creating a visual representation of the theory proved to be the most reflective, thought-provoking, and creative part of the process. My dissertation chair and I devised strategies for me to draw visual representations and share them with her. I experimented with various shapes and forms to represent the connections among the categories. Initially, I designed a visual framework similar to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model, but it did not fully satisfy me. Eventually, I conceptualized the idea of weaving a web, mirroring the multilayered approach faculty take in addressing PPC issues. I first drew the web (Appendix K) and then created a visual image (Figure 3), capturing the theory rooted in participants’ experiences and processes.
Throughout the research process, I reflected on my own experience as a doctoral student who has observed gaps in how CES programs identify, evaluate, and gatekeep PPC issues at the doctoral level. During interviews, participants’ sharing reinforced and confirmed my observations of the lack of preemptive actions in managing PPC among doctoral students. I also learned new concepts from my participants, acknowledging and recognizing them during the interviews. From a doctoral student’s perspective, I was not aware of some processes faculty manage when dealing with PPC issues. Participants offered me the privilege of understanding PPC issues from a faculty perspective, which was previously unavailable to me.

I acknowledged my positionality as a doctoral student to participants who held ranks of assistant, associate, and full professors, as well as program administrators and department chairs. I paid close attention to potential power imbalances, but none arose during my experience. Instead, faculty were open, honest, and vulnerable in interviews, granting me an inside look into their struggles, self-reflection, and process of evolving as counselor educators. Many participants appreciated the space and platform I provided to share their experiences and processes of addressing PPC among doctoral students. They reflected on how their involvement in the research was helpful, allowed their experiences to be seen and validated, and offered hope for more research on this under-researched topic.

Achieving Saturation

Achieving saturation involves continuing data collection and analysis until no new information or themes emerge (Charmaz, 2014). Saturation is reached when additional data collection no longer contributes to further insights or the development of new categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions of the emerging theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After the first round of analysis, I identified that while some major themes, such as types of PPC,
methods to address them, and outcomes of PPC, were redundant, other themes required further exploration. These included faculty’s process of navigating barriers in addressing PPC, mentorship at the faculty level, and power dynamics in academia. I closely consulted with my dissertation chair who helped formulate questions to address these gaps from the first round of interviews.

During the second round of interviews, I noticed participants reiterating the same emerging themes from the first round. By the fourteenth interview, no new information was added to the categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions. Even Participant Nine, who was not involved in the first round of interviews, echoed similar processes and concepts shared by other participants. Based on participants’ confirmation of the emerged findings and the lack of new information, I did not need to recruit new participants or conduct additional interviews, thus achieving saturation for this research. However, it is important to acknowledge that interviewing new participants has the potential to uncover new information.

**Limitations**

While I made proactive efforts to establish trustworthiness, this study has limitations related to prolonged engagement and member checking. As noted previously, I faced challenges with Participant Five, who chose not to proceed with the second round of interviews. My interview with Participant Five was shorter than those with other participants, averaging 30 minutes instead of the typical 60 minutes.

I recruited Participant Nine in the second round of interviews who answered second round interview questions (see Appendix F). Participant Nine provided further insights regarding the themes and concepts that emerged from the first round. Therefore, I only engaged with Participants Five and Nine once (for half an hour and an hour, respectively), compared to other
participants who completed both rounds of interviews. In summary, the limited engagement with Participant Five and Participant Nine, who participated in only one round of interviews, restricted my ability to sustain prolonged engagement.

Another limitation was the response rate for the member checking process. Despite reaching out to all nine participants, only six replied. This lack of full participation may have impacted the credibility and transferability of the data, as not all participants had the opportunity to confirm, deny, or expand upon the perspectives presented in the theory/framework.

**Implications**

The findings of this study carry significant implications for various stakeholders involved in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs, including counselor educators, doctoral students, CES programs, accreditation bodies such as CACREP, professional associations, and universities. This research uniquely provides direct insights and firsthand accounts from counselor educators, highlighting the complexities and challenges of managing PPC among doctoral students. This section explores these implications, showcasing how the novel findings from this study could inform practices, policies, and future research to enhance the management of PPC among doctoral students.

**Implications for Counselor Educators**

The literature on gatekeeping doctoral students (Krinke, 2021) highlighted several key points: the ambiguity in the gatekeeping process for doctoral students, the need for specific and distinct remediation plans tailored to doctoral students’ roles and responsibilities, and the importance of training doctoral students to be gatekeepers in the future. Unlike previous studies that often focused on isolated aspects of PPC or gatekeeping, this research integrates various components into a cohesive approach, offering a more holistic understanding. The
A comprehensive and multilayered approach to addressing PPC among doctoral students, symbolized by the analogy of a spider weaving a web, underscores the complexity and dedication involved in effectively managing PPC at the doctoral level. This novel framework provides a detailed roadmap that counselor educators could adopt to enhance their strategies for identifying and addressing PPC, filling a gap as no such comprehensive framework has previously existed for doctoral students. This research underscores the necessity of implementing clear, structured, and specific remediation plans that address the unique challenges faced by doctoral students. By adopting the detailed framework developed in this study, counselor educators could enhance their gatekeeping practices, ensuring a more effective and comprehensive evaluation and remediation process.

Research by Brown-Rice and Furr (2019) emphasized the importance of early identification and intervention for PPC, highlighting that unresolved PPC can lead to significant professional issues post-graduation. This study supports this finding but extends it by suggesting a proactive and structured approach specifically designed for doctoral students. Participants in this study suggested that faculty could take proactive steps to address PPC issues early in the doctoral program, informing doctoral students of academic and professional expectations right from the start. Furthermore, participants in this study remarked that by updating CES programs’ policies, such as doctoral student handbooks, faculty could provide clearer guidelines and expectations for doctoral students, ensuring alignment on acceptable professional behavior and academic performance. Utilizing the multilayered approach to addressing PPC, as detailed in this study, allows counselor educators to implement more effective remediation strategies, involving a combination of direct observation, structured feedback, ongoing evaluation, and tailored remediation plans. While these methods have been researched and discussed for effectively
gatekeeping master-level students (Shuermann et al., 2018), this study uniquely extends these strategies to the doctoral level, where such comprehensive guidance has been previously unavailable. By adopting these strategies for doctoral students, counselor educators could ensure that doctoral students are adequately prepared to meet the demands of the counseling profession, thereby enhancing the overall quality and effectiveness of counselor education.

The study underscores the need for professional development and personal self-work to manage PPC of doctoral students more effectively. Participants in this study explicitly identified the need for professional development opportunities to support their effective management of PPC at the doctoral level. This study uniquely highlights the critical role of self-work and personal development in managing PPC, an aspect often underemphasized in previous research. Counselor educators could seek professional development opportunities through trainings, workshops, or educational sessions focused on recognizing early signs of PPC, conducting thorough assessments, and implementing appropriate remediation plans. Participants in this study stressed the importance of engaging in self-reflection, faculty could detect potential mistakes with PPC, internal struggles or barriers, maintain professional boundaries, and expand personal perspectives on PPC among doctoral students. Notably, no previous study has explored this level of personal and professional introspection among counselor educators. The openness and vulnerability with which participants shared their experiences and processes in this study are unprecedented, providing unique insights into the intricacies of managing PPC at the doctoral level. Seeking guidance, consultation, and mentorship from colleagues could also support personal self-work. DeCino and colleagues (2020) confirm that support and collaboration with colleagues serve as crucial factors during the gatekeeping process.
The importance of mentorship, collaboration, and support in addressing PPC is a recurring theme in this study. Counselor educators should seek mentorship and collaboration with colleagues to better manage PPC issues at the doctoral level. Participants in this study explicitly emphasized that mentorship is crucial in helping faculty navigate the complexities of PPC at the doctoral level, which is distinctly more challenging compared to PPC issues at the master level. Participants in this study further noted that faculty could also make active efforts to collaborate and support each other within their department, dedicating specific times in faculty meetings to address PPC concerns among doctoral students. As highlighted by DeCino and colleagues (2020), gatekeeping is an emotionally and physically taxing experience, and mentorship, support, and collaboration are crucial both personally and professionally. This study offers a distinct perspective by suggesting formalized, structured mentorship and peer support systems within CES programs as a means to improve PPC management at the doctoral level.

This research suggests that counselor educators need to advocate for systemic changes within their institutions to support effective management of PPC at a doctoral level. This includes advocating for clearer policies and procedures, adequate resources for faculty and students, and a supportive institutional culture that prioritizes the professional development and well-being of both students and faculty. Research by Goodrich and Shin (2013) supports the need for culturally responsive interventions and systemic support to effectively address PPC among diverse student populations. Unlike previous research that broadly addressed cultural competence, this study uniquely highlights the necessity of systemic changes tailored to the distinct challenges faced by doctoral students and counselor educators who are training and mentoring these students. This approach offers a more specialized and effective strategy for managing PPC at the doctoral level. Participants in this study discussed that counselor educators
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should consider the impact of their own cultural competencies and biases on their approach to managing PPC. By integrating systemic advocacy with personal and cultural competence, this study provides a comprehensive framework that addresses both institutional and individual biases, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of PPC management in counselor education programs.

Lastly, participants in this study emphasized that faculty should engage in research and scholarship focused on PPC at the doctoral level. By contributing to the growing body of knowledge in this area, counselor educators could help develop more effective strategies and practices for managing PPC among doctoral students. This study not only confirms the necessity of further research but also provides a unique framework that can serve as a foundation for future investigations, thereby significantly contributing to the academic discourse on PPC at the doctoral level. Collaborating with other researchers and professionals could provide valuable insights and foster a community of practice dedicated to addressing PPC among doctoral students. Krinke (2021) highlighted the need for more research into the complexities of gatekeeping at the doctoral level, particularly regarding the multiple roles doctoral students must juggle. By engaging in and promoting research on PPC at the doctoral level, counselor educators could not only enhance their practices but also contribute to the broader understanding and management of PPC in counselor education.

Implications for Doctoral Students

This research provides several implications for doctoral students in CES programs, closely aligning with the findings of prior studies while introducing novel insights specific to this student group. Participants in this study emphasized the need for doctoral students to be aware of the professional competencies expected of them and engage in continuous self-reflection.
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Previous research by Brown-Rice and Furr (2019) supports this, identifying both academic and nonacademic PPC, such as academic dishonesty and emotional regulation issues. This highlights the need for students to understand and manage these competencies proactively. By understanding the types of PPC and the processes involved in addressing them, doctoral students could better manage their professional development. Unlike previous studies, this research provides a detailed framework tailored to doctoral students, offering valuable insights on types of PPC that doctoral students could present with, ways that they could utilize mentorship for their professional development, and what faculty expect from future counselor educators.

This study emphasizes the importance of seeking and responding to feedback, a key factor in doctoral students’ professional growth. Participants noted that doctoral students should actively seek feedback from their mentors and peers to identify areas for improvement and address any emerging PPC early. In the qualitative study, Krinke (2021) emphasized that continuous evaluation and open conversations about PPC are critical for professional growth and development of doctoral students. This study expands on Krinke’s (2021) findings by specifically highlighting the importance of a growth-oriented mindset and the proactive engagement of doctoral students in the remediation process. Participants in this study encouraged doctoral students to be open to feedback, actively participate in remediation plans, and utilize available resources to improve their competencies. This proactive engagement aligns with the structured approaches suggested by CACREP (2024) for continuous and systemic evaluation.

Furthermore, this research suggests that by fostering a sense of community among doctoral students is essential for addressing PPC and promoting professional growth. When doctoral students build strong relationships with their faculty and peers, they could engage in collaborative and supportive relationships that create a network of support crucial for navigating
the challenges of doctoral education. Previous research by Dollarhide et al. (2013) supports this, highlighting the importance of peer relationships in the development of legitimacy and support within the program. This study corroborates these findings, suggesting that strong connections with peers not only enhances academic and professional development but also creates a supportive environment where students feel validated and understood. These relationships could facilitate the exchange of constructive feedback, provide emotional support during challenging times, and promote a sense of belonging within the academic community. By actively participating in this network of support, doctoral students could mitigate feelings of isolation, enhance their resilience, and ultimately improve their overall academic and professional outcomes.

Participants in this study emphasized that doctoral students should uphold professional standards and strive to become competent counselor educators. Results from this research suggest that doctoral students might benefit from professional development that provides additional training and education both to manage their own issues of PPC and to prepare them for their future roles as counselor educators. For example, attending workshops, conferences, and other professional development activities could help them stay updated on best practices and emerging trends in the field of addressing PPC and gatekeeping. This proactive approach could enhance their competencies and better prepare them for future professional roles. Previous research by Brown-Rice and Furr (2019) and Krinke (2021) support this, identifying the importance of understanding and addressing academic and nonacademic PPC issues and the necessity of specific and distinct remediation plans tailored to doctoral students’ roles and responsibilities. This study builds upon these findings by explicitly highlighting the existing gaps and shortcomings in tailored remediation and evaluation procedures for doctoral students. It
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emphasizes the urgent need for ongoing professional development tailored specifically for
doctoral students to effectively address these unique challenges.

Additionally, this study highlights the importance of cultural competence and awareness
among doctoral students. Doctoral students should engage in ongoing cultural competence
training and self-assessment to ensure they are sensitive to their own identities and the identities
of their faculty, peers, and the communities they serve. Unlike previous research, this study is the
first to provide a platform for faculty to address dispositional PPC among doctoral students, such
as racism, discrimination, and bias against counselor educators of color. Participants openly
discussed instances where doctoral students treated faculty of color differently compared to
White faculty based on diverse and marginalized identities. This further warrants the need for
doctoral students to work on their cultural competence and awareness. This commitment to
cultural competence could enhance their effectiveness as future counselor educators. Goodrich
and Shin (2013) stressed the significance of understanding diverse identities and fostering
inclusive environments, which could help reduce the negative impact of PPC on the learning
atmosphere within a program.

Lastly, the results of this study point to the importance of doctoral students advocating for
themselves within their programs. This includes voicing their needs for support, resources, and
opportunities for growth. By being proactive, doctoral students could help shape a more
supportive and effective learning environment for themselves and their peers. Brown-Rice and
Furr (2019) found that doctoral students often experienced frustration and resentment towards
peers with PPC, which disrupted the learning environment. In contrast to previous studies that
highlighted these limitations, this study offers a different approach by encouraging students to
consider how they can take proactive steps to improve their learning environments. Participants
suggested that doctoral students familiarize themselves with handbooks, policies, and procedures related to PPC and gatekeeping, seek additional support early on, be open to feedback, and take responsibility for their personal learning. This proactive engagement could foster a more positive and productive academic setting, enabling students to navigate their programs more effectively.

Additionally, advocacy involves not only addressing immediate concerns but also participating in the development and refinement of program policies. Participants in the study stressed the importance of changing their departments’ policies and remediation process from a punitive stance to a more supportive approach. This is a novel finding, as no previous research has specifically addressed the shift from punitive to supportive approaches in managing PPC at the doctoral level. Doctoral students’ voices are invaluable in such changes. Doctoral students should engage in discussions with faculty and administration to ensure that their voices are heard in decision-making processes. This collaborative approach could lead to more comprehensive and effective strategies for managing PPC and supporting doctoral students’ overall well-being and professional growth. By taking an active role in their education and training, doctoral students could help foster a culture of continuous improvement and mutual support within CES programs.

**Implications for CES Programs**

This study has significant implications for CES programs, as no previous research has extensively and rigorously studied PPC at the doctoral level or provided a direct platform for counselor educators to share their experiences and processes in addressing PPC among doctoral students. The CES field has been lacking tremendously in this area. Participants in this study remarked on the lack of standardized procedures in place at the doctoral level, stressing the importance of developing standardized procedures and evaluation tools. Participants reflected on
the procedures available for addressing PPC and engaging in gatekeeping among master-level students, suggesting CES programs should adopt similar practices. The need for clear guidelines and standards aligns with research findings from Bryant et al. (2013), which emphasized the necessity of clarity and transparency in handling PPC among counselor trainees. This study builds on Bryant et al (2013) by extending the need for standardized policies and procedures specifically to doctoral students, filling a gap where no previous comprehensive framework existed. Counselor educators explicitly stated what has been missing, offering them a platform to express their needs for effectively managing PPC at the doctoral level, which no study has done before. These policies should outline the steps for identifying, assessing, and remediating PPC, ensuring consistency and transparency in the process. Participants in this study emphasized that this specificity should be applied to doctoral students and their respective professional roles in counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy. Krinke (2021) discussed the need for a tailored approach to addressing PPC at the doctoral level, highlighting the diverse doctoral roles. Shuermann et al. (2018) found that faculty stressed the importance of a structured approach to gatekeeping master-level students to safeguard clients from potential harm. By establishing standardized policies and procedures for doctoral students, CES programs could ensure consistency and transparency, which is essential for maintaining high professional standards.

Additionally, Shuermann et al. (2018) highlighted that faculty often struggle with the interpersonal aspects of gatekeeping, such as evaluating self-awareness, openness to feedback, and interpersonal interactions. Participants in this study echoed these findings, reflecting on how dispositional PPC is difficult to identify and address due to its subjective nature. To address these challenges, CES programs need to allocate adequate resources for training faculty in PPC
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management and supporting doctoral students through the remediation process. This includes investing in professional development workshops and training sessions that focus on these critical areas. Providing faculty with the necessary tools and support could enhance their ability to manage PPC effectively. This study is the first to offer specific recommendations for faculty training tailored to the unique context of doctoral education, emphasizing the need for resources and tools to address dispositional PPC effectively.

One potential tool that faculty could utilize in their feedback, evaluation, and remediation is something similar to the master-level student’s assessment of counseling skills, dispositions, and competence, the Counselor Competencies Scale – Revised (CCS-R; Lambie et al., 2018). While this tool doesn’t evaluate doctoral students’ five professional roles, it does address nonacademic PPC, including emotional regulation, openness to feedback, and professional boundaries (Lambie et al., 2018). Participants in this study unanimously stressed the importance of having an assessment or evaluative tool specific to doctoral students’ professional roles in counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy. Participants’ perspectives were reinforced by Krinke’s (2021) recommendation for a tailored approach to evaluating doctoral students. This study uniquely highlights the necessity for such tailored evaluative tools, specifically designed for the diverse roles and responsibilities of doctoral students. It is the only study that explicitly stated the lack of evaluative tools to assess roles such as researcher or leader, which are often overlooked. Furthermore, there is no existing tool that measures all five roles plus dispositions and other nonacademic PPC among doctoral students, underscoring a significant gap that this research addresses.

This study also highlights the importance of recognizing marginalization and power in addressing PPC among doctoral students. CES programs should incorporate diversity, equity, and
inclusion (DEI) training into their curriculum and adopt gatekeeping practices that aim to evaluate all students fairly and equitably. Goodrich and Shin (2013) advocated for culturally responsive interventions in gatekeeping, emphasizing the need to evaluate trainee behaviors through a culturally appropriate lens. By establishing a norm and platform for inclusion of DEI, both faculty and doctoral students could address marginalized identities, power dynamics, and systemic barriers that influence PPC management. Participants in this study discussed how they actively aim towards dismantling power dynamics between themselves and their doctoral students to effectively manage PPC issues and try to reach a successful resolution. Participants further highlighted the need for counselor educators to build awareness regarding the hierarchical relationships in academia to better support marginalized doctoral students. Unlike any previous study, this research is the first to openly discuss power dynamics in academia, marginalized identities, and diversity in relation to PPC at the doctoral level. Creating an environment where students and faculty could discuss diverse identities, power imbalances, and the hierarchical nature of academia fosters a supportive atmosphere, allowing for more effective PPC management at the doctoral level. Faculty could engage in open discussions and consultations with colleagues regardless of rank, authority, and power, working together toward the common goal of managing PPC effectively and supporting future counselor educators.

Lastly, CES programs should address the implicit expectations that create barriers in managing PPC among doctoral students. Participants in this study discussed how these implicit expectations, often unspoken but understood within academic cultures, can hinder faculty effectiveness in handling PPC issues. Examples of implicit expectations provided by participants included the expectation that they follow instructions or orders from tenured faculty and program administrators, the expectation that they consult on PPC issues with more experienced
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colleagues, and the expectation that they maintain a level of personal independence to resolve issues on their own. This research is the first to openly discuss the specific types of implicit expectations that exist for faculty in regards to PPC at the doctoral level. Results from this study suggest that by making these expectations explicit and clear, CES programs could assist faculty in better managing PPC. This includes clearly outlining the expectations for faculty roles, the procedures for addressing PPC, and the resources available to support faculty in this process. DeCino and colleagues (2020) stressed these factors in their research on counselor educators’ emotionally intense experiences of gatekeeping master-level students. Participants in their study identified the importance of having clear written policies, support from colleagues, and collaborative work with administrators such as deans, lawyers, and provosts (DeCino et al., 2020). While DeCino et al. (2020) provided valuable insights, this study uniquely captures the direct voices of counselor educators, who openly suggest the need for clear expectations and written policies from all parties involved in the gatekeeping process. Clarifying these implicit expectations would help faculty navigate their responsibilities with greater confidence and reduce the ambiguities that could impede effective PPC management, a concern raised by participants in this study.

Implications for CACREP Standards

This study underscores a significant gap in the CACREP standards, revealing the necessity for more specific guidelines regarding the identification, assessment, and remediation of PPC at the doctoral level. Previous research has often focused on PPC among master-level students, but no study has rigorously examined these issues at the doctoral level, providing direct insights from counselor educators themselves. Participants in this study emphasized the importance of clear guidelines and criteria to identify and manage PPC effectively. CACREP
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should provide clearer definitions and criteria for doctoral students’ roles in counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and advocacy/leadership. The definition of PPC has evolved over time, moving from discriminatory language such as “impairment” to more objective terms like “problematic” (Elman & Forrest, 2007; Goodrich & Shin, 2013; Homrich, 2009; Kaslow et al., 2007). However, compared to the clear professional standards and definitions in the field of psychology, the counseling field is far behind. This study corroborates the need to develop a clear and comprehensive definition of PPC specifically for doctoral students in CES programs (Kaslow et al., 2007; Homrich, 2009). Additionally, precise standards would guide programs in setting clear expectations and ensure consistency across different institutions. Krinke (2021) highlighted the importance of specificity in how faculty address PPC at the doctoral level.

Findings from this study explicitly point out the discrepancy between master-level and doctoral-level standards, revealing significant gaps in CES programs. This gap underscores the need for CACREP to implement a system for regular updates and reviews of their standards to incorporate new research findings and best practices for managing PPC at the doctoral level. Research on master-level students’ PPC has provided valuable insights into the gatekeeping process, including specific phases of gatekeeping (Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010), remedial interventions (Herderson & Deferene, 2017), and dispositional behaviors (Freeman et al., 2018). Participants in this study expressed confidence in addressing PPC among master-level students due to clearly outlined procedures and standards, highlighting the need for similar clarity at the doctoral level. This research explicitly addresses the need for CACREP to maintain relevant and effective standards in managing the evolving challenges in CES programs. Regular updates would ensure that the standards reflect the latest developments in the field, including advancements in understanding PPC and the most effective methods for addressing it. This
system could involve feedback loops from counselor educators to continuously refine and enhance the standards.

One possibility stemming from this study’s results is to have CACREP mandate enhanced training for faculty on managing PPC at a doctoral level. This training would include recognizing early signs of PPC, implementing remediation plans, and understanding the legal and ethical implications of dismissing students. Foster et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of clear gatekeeping policies and making these policies accessible to students. Participants in this study underscored the need for changes at the organizational level, specifically calling on CACREP and professional associations like the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) to take action. This study uniquely captures faculty explicitly calling for systemic changes to support them, highlighting that such support has not been available before. By collaborating with ACES to provide mandatory training sessions, faculty would be equipped with more strategies and methods for effectively managing PPC issues among doctoral students. Such collaborations would also facilitate the sharing of best practices and the development of comprehensive training resources.

Lastly, CACREP could emphasize the importance of culturally responsive practices in their standards. Given that this is the first study to explicitly address marginalization, power, and PPC at the doctoral level, CACREP could consider ways to integrate specific standards for faculty to measure doctoral students’ cultural competence. On a systemic level, incorporating a section on cultural competence would better support faculty in managing PPC issues at the doctoral level. Given the diverse backgrounds of doctoral students and faculty, it is crucial that faculty are equipped to manage PPC in culturally sensitive ways that acknowledge cultural differences and promote equity. This study expands on the research findings by Goodrich and
Shin (2013), suggesting that integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training into the standards would help ensure that all students are evaluated fairly and that faculty are prepared to address PPC in a culturally competent manner.

By incorporating these recommended enhancements, CACREP could ensure that their standards provide a robust framework for addressing PPC at the doctoral level. This study has offered novel and valuable insights into the specific challenges and needs of managing PPC among doctoral students, filling a significant gap in the existing literature. Implementing these recommendations would support both faculty and students in maintaining high professional standards and fostering a more effective and inclusive educational environment. These improvements would help create a culture of continuous growth and accountability within CES programs, ultimately leading to the graduation of highly competent and culturally aware counselor educators. Ensuring that all aspects of PPC are addressed comprehensively would also help protect the integrity of the counseling profession and safeguard the well-being of students, faculty, and communities.

**Implications for Professional Associations**

Professional associations, such as ACES play a crucial role in advocating for policies that support effective management of PPC at the doctoral level. When changes are implemented at the broader, professional level, faculty could leverage these improvements to enhance their management of PPC. Participants in this study emphasized the importance of receiving more guidance and support from ACES as they rely on the best practices, standards, and policies communicated through this professional association. This study uniquely provided a platform for counselor educators to express their needs and challenges in managing PPC among doctoral students, which has not been extensively addressed in previous research.
One suggestion that emerged from this study is for ACES to collaborate with educational institutions and accreditation bodies like CACREP to develop comprehensive guidelines and resources for faculty and students. This collaboration would ensure that all systems are aligned in their approach to managing PPC, providing faculty with a unified framework to handle these issues effectively. Participants in this study emphasized the need for clearer guidelines and standardized procedures to manage PPC effectively at the doctoral level, echoing the broader calls for clarity and specificity in the existing literature (Brown-rice & Furr, 2019; DeCino et al., 2020; Krinke, 2021; Shuermann et al., 2018). This study stands out by directly capturing the voices of counselor educators and highlighting their specific needs for standardized procedures at the doctoral level, a gap that has not been filled by previous research.

Another suggestion is for ACES to offer continuing education programs focused on the latest research and best practices in managing PPC. These programs could help faculty stay updated on effective strategies and enhance their skills in addressing PPC among doctoral students. By serving as a platform for supporting experienced, new, and future counselor educators, ACES could address the significant topic of handling PPC at the doctoral level, recognizing the inherent power and responsibility within the CES profession. This approach aligns with the need for continuous professional development and the importance of keeping faculty informed about current best practices, as highlighted by Brynat et al. (2018), Freman et al. (2018), Hernderson and Defrene (2017), and Ziomek-Daigle and Christensen (2010). Unlike previous research that primarily focuses on master-level students, this study is the first to explicitly call out the need for more focused professional development opportunities for managing PPC at the doctoral level, reflecting a novel and critical contribution to the field. Some faculty in this study noted the lack of opportunities for professional development even at the
ACES conferences, where many educational sessions focus on master-level students and not doctoral students, reinforcing the idea of needing more educational opportunities and research on best practices in managing PPC at the doctoral level.

ACES could also allocate funding for research on PPC among doctoral students in counselor education. Supporting studies that explore various aspects of PPC could contribute to a deeper understanding and more effective management strategies. Chapter One highlighted the lack of research on PPC and gatekeeping at the doctoral level compared to master-level programs (Brown, 2013; Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013; Bryant et al., 2013; Freeman et al., 2019; Glance et al., 2012; Goodrich & Shin, 2013; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014; Shuermann et al., 2018). This gap was noted by Brown-Rice and Furr (2019), who were the first to extensively investigate PPC among doctoral students, identifying the need for more focused research in this area. ACES could better support counselor educators as researchers and advocates by offering more opportunities for research on this crucial topic. Participants in this study unanimously identified the lack of research on doctoral students, PPC issues at the doctoral level, and gatekeeping which in turn creates barriers for faculty to effectively address and manage PPC issues. This study’s findings highlight the urgent need for more research in this area and provide a clear direction for future investigations, a contribution that is both novel and essential for advancing the CES field.

Another suggestion is for ACES to develop mentorship and peer support networks for faculty. This study is unique in providing a platform where counselor educators could openly reveal their external barriers, internal struggles, and vulnerabilities in addressing PPC among doctoral students, a topic largely absent in previous research. Participants in this study highlighted how beneficial it was to discuss their experiences and processes of addressing PPC at
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the doctoral level. These networks would provide a platform for sharing experiences, discussing challenges, and offering guidance on best practices in managing PPC. Such networks would foster a sense of community and mutual support among counselor educators, enhancing their ability to address PPC effectively. Participants in this study repeatedly emphasized the value of mentorship and peer support. This study further expands on the findings from DeCino et al. (2020) and Dollarhide et al. (2013), who highlighted the importance of a supportive team of colleagues and collaborative work with administrators, and peer relationships in the development of legitimacy and support within CES programs. By providing a focused examination of these aspects at the doctoral level, this study offers a deeper understanding and more specific recommendations for fostering effective mentorship and peer support networks.

Lastly, ACES could advocate for policy changes that address systemic issues contributing to PPC. This study is the first to directly capture counselor educators’ calls for organizational-level support and policy changes, providing a novel and critical perspective that can drive meaningful improvements in the field. Participants discussed the need for systemic support and resources, reflecting the broader literature’s emphasis on institutional and policy-level interventions to enhance faculty effectiveness and student outcomes (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2015, 2019; Decino et al., 2020; Goodrich & Shin, 2013; Shen-Miller et al., 2015; Shuermann et al., 2018). Establishing clear policies and providing sufficient resources could empower faculty to handle PPC issues at the doctoral level more effectively, creating a more supportive and structured environment for both faculty and students.

**Implications for Universities and Educational Systems**

The findings of this study highlight the need for more institutional support for faculty and CES programs. This research is the first to capture counselor educators’ direct experiences and
explicitly state the institutional barriers they face in educational systems, which hinder their ability to manage PPC at the doctoral level. Participants emphasized the desire for greater collaboration with university administrators to overcome these barriers. DeCino et al. (2020) also stressed the importance of such collaborative work. Educational systems should develop robust support systems, including mental health resources for doctoral students, professional development opportunities for both doctoral students and faculty, and peer support networks for faculty to manage the stress and emotional burden associated with addressing PPC. Additionally, universities should provide access to legal teams for faculty to consult on PPC issues, especially when evaluating dispositional PPC, which is challenging due to its subjective nature, as noted by Shuermann et al. (2018). Goodrich and Shin (2013) emphasized the importance of culturally responsive practices in managing PPC. Participants echoed this sentiment, advocating for DEI-focused professional development opportunities when working with doctoral students who hold diverse or marginalized identities. This study further expands on previous research by highlighting the specific institutional barriers and the need for systemic support that has not been extensively explored before.

Universities should encourage collaboration between departments to share best practices and resources in managing PPC. Creating forums or committees where faculty from different departments could discuss challenges and solutions related to PPC at a doctoral level could be highly beneficial by offering new approaches. Counselor education programs are unique in nature, where faculty operate not only as educators but also as counselors, fostering supportive, validating, and empathetic environments. This study is the first where faculty openly called themselves out on their empathy and how it may hinder their effectiveness in managing PPC among doctoral students. In contrast, other departments might be more formal and less
counselor-centered in their approaches to managing PPC at a doctoral level. For example, researchers in the field of psychology share more detailed and specific examples of students’ PPC (Homrich, 2009; Kaslow et al., 2007; Lamb et al., 1987) and explicitly state the impact of students’ PPC on their peers, impacting the closeness and conflict within relationships (Shen-Miller et al., 2015). Therefore, collaboration with other departments and sharing departmental approaches to handling PPC issues at the doctoral level could offer new perspectives for counselor educators.

This study is the first to openly name and address the barriers and challenges within the educational system that hinder the effective management of PPC at the doctoral level. This study revealed that many counselor educators struggle with external pressures from university administrators to maintain high enrollment numbers in master-level programs, which in turn requires admitting and retaining a specific number of doctoral students to support these programs. Participant Seven highlighted this issue, stating, “I do think that there’s a little bit of a kind of turning a blind eye to remediating doc students, so that you can keep your enrollment numbers high in your master’s program.” These external pressures limit faculty’s abilities to properly address PPC issues at a doctoral level and effectively gatekeep students. Universities should consider offering additional support to faculty, hiring more faculty or adjunct instructors, or otherwise reducing the pressure on faculty so they can effectively manage PPC issues at a doctoral level without fear of repercussions. Universities should also recognize the implicit expectations placed on faculty that could lead to barriers in addressing PPC among doctoral students. Making these expectations more explicit and clear could help faculty better manage PPC issues and provide more clarity in the procedures and policies when handling doctoral students’ issues. By offering clear guidelines and reducing ambiguous expectations, universities
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could create a more supportive environment for faculty to address PPC effectively. Participants
in this study repeatedly mentioned the challenges posed by unclear expectations and the need for
transparent policies, a sentiment that resonates with the findings of Krinke (2021) on the
necessity of explicit guidelines for managing PPC. This study further expands on previous
research, providing a comprehensive understanding of the pressures faced by faculty in
managing PPC at the doctoral level.

Lastly, universities should provide ongoing training and resources for faculty to stay
updated on best practices in managing PPC. This includes workshops, seminars, and access to
current research on PPC. By investing in the continuous professional development of faculty,
universities can ensure that counselor educators are well-equipped to handle the complexities of
PPC among doctoral students. While previous research has emphasized the importance of
continuous training for faculty to manage PPC effectively (Shuermann et al., 2018), this study is
the first to explicitly highlight the need for sustained and specialized professional development
tailored specifically for faculty working with doctoral students. Participants in this study stressed
the need for ongoing professional development to enhance their skills and knowledge in
addressing these issues, underscoring a critical gap in existing training programs. This novel
insight provides a fresh perspective on how educational systems can better support faculty in
managing PPC at the doctoral level.

Future Research

The exploration of PPC among doctoral students in CES programs has provided critical
insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of addressing these issues. However, this study
also opens several avenues for future research to further understand and address these challenges.
This section outlines potential areas for future investigation that could build on the findings of
WEAVING THE WEB

This study, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of CES programs, support faculty and doctoral students, and contribute to the broader field of counselor education.

This study primarily examines the experiences and processes of counselor educators addressing PPC issues among doctoral students. The findings highlighted faculty perspectives on how doctoral students with PPC issues impact their peers, potentially influencing the shared learning environment. Future research could examine doctoral students’ experiences with having peers who display PPC issues in their program. By conducting this research, CES programs, faculty, and doctoral students could gain a better understanding of how exactly doctoral students with PPC impact their peers. Additionally, examining master-level students’ experiences with doctoral students who present PPC issues could provide insights into the broader repercussions and impacts of these issues.

The current literature in the field of counseling lacks direct input from students who have experienced PPC during their training. Conducting a study that focuses on the perspectives of doctoral students who have encountered PPC issues would provide valuable insights into their experiences and viewpoints. Such research would amplify voices that are often overlooked, allowing the counseling field to better understand the challenges and needs of these students. By directly exploring their perspectives, the CES field could gain rich insights into how the management of PPC might need to be adapted, offering important considerations for both faculty and doctoral students themselves.

While this study captured diverse voices of counselor educators with varying work experiences, future research could prioritize a specific group of counselor educators. For example, future research could select a specific rank, such as tenured faculty or assistant professors, or faculty in positions of more authority, such as department chairs and program
WEAVING THE WEB
directors. Insights from faculty holding different ranks in academia could reveal various processes of addressing PPC and ways to enhance the management of PPC.

Future research should develop of an assessment tool similar to the Counselor Competencies Scale-Revised (CCS-R) for doctoral students in CES programs. The CCS-R effectively evaluates the professional competencies of counselors-in-training at the master-level (Lambie et al., 2018), but doctoral students need an instrument that addresses their complex roles in counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy, as well as evaluation of professional dispositions. Creating and validating this tool would provide faculty with a structured framework to systemically evaluate and support the professional growth of doctoral students, ensuring comprehensive coverage of their advanced responsibilities. This specialized tool would facilitate early identification of PPC, enable timely interventions, and foster a culture of continuous improvement and accountability within CES programs.

Additionally, future studies could explore the unique context of remote CES programs. Specifically, more information is needed on how remote CES programs manage PPC, considering the structure of their programs. By examining the approaches used in remote CES programs, research could develop a more comprehensive understanding of effective strategies or identify gaps in remote CES programs.

Furthermore, further research is needed to explore how PPC at a doctoral level is addressed among marginalized and diverse doctoral students in CES programs. Understanding the unique challenges and barriers faced by these students could inform more inclusive and equitable practices. Researchers could provide valuable information for faculty and doctoral students on how to detect PPC issues, seek support and mentorship, and advocate for better learning environments.
Lastly, future research could quantify the outcomes of different PPC interventions employed by counselor educators. This could include studying the impact of faculty development programs on managing PPC among doctoral students and the effectiveness of institutional policies and support systems in managing PPC. Such research would provide empirical data to support best practices and identify areas needing improvement.

In summary, future research in the field of CES should aim to deepen the understanding of PPC among doctoral students and enhance the strategies employed to manage these issues. Future research could contribute to creating more effective, inclusive, and supportive environments for doctoral students and faculty by exploring the impact on doctoral peers, conducting focused studies on specific faculty groups, remote CES programs, and marginalized and diverse groups, and employing quantitative approaches to study PPC interventions. This ongoing research is crucial for advancing the field and ensuring that CES programs continue to graduate competent and ethical counselor educators.

**Conclusion**

Understanding and addressing PPC among doctoral students in CES programs is a critical issue that impacts the quality of counselor education, the professional development of students, and the overall effectiveness of CES programs. This research explored an under-researched area, providing valuable insights into the multifaceted approaches counselor educators use to manage PPC. As the field of counselor education continues to evolve, ensuring that doctoral students are adequately prepared to meet professional standards is paramount. This study contributes to this ongoing effort by offering a comprehensive framework for addressing PPC, thereby enhancing the preparedness and effectiveness of future counselor educators and supporting faculty in their roles.
This study delved into the complex and multifaceted nature of managing PPC among doctoral students in CES programs, developing a grounded theory titled “Weaving the Web: Faculty’s Multilayered Approach to Problems of Professional Competence (PPC).” The study revealed that faculty address PPC through a comprehensive, multilayered process, symbolized by a spider weaving a web, encompassing understanding doctoral students’ experiences, recognizing the complexities of PPC, addressing issues of marginalization and power, responding to PPC, and enhancing PPC management. This intricate process underscores the need for counselor educators to adopt a holistic and nuanced approach, integrating professional development, mentorship, collaboration, and systemic advocacy. By integrating individual, relational, and systemic factors, this theory provides valuable guidance for counselor educators, CES programs, and related stakeholders to enhance their practices and create a more effective and supportive learning environment. The findings and implications of this study underscore the importance of ongoing research, professional development, and systemic changes to ensure the successful preparation and development of future counselor educators.
References

American Counseling Association (ACA; 2014). Code of Ethics.

https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf


Figure 1: Conceptual Map of First-Round Analysis
Figure 2: Conceptual Map of Second-Round Analysis
Figure 3 Weaving the Web: Faculty’s Multilayered Approach to PPC
Figure 4: Zooming in on Categories
Appendix A: The University of Montana IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research
APPLICATION FOR IRB REVIEW

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@montana.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: Counselor Educator’s Experience and Process of Addressing Problems of Professional Competence (PPC) Among Doctoral Students. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Principal Investigator: Sabina Sabyrkulova | UM Position: Doctoral candidate |
| Department: Counseling | Office location: EDB50 |
| Work Phone: 406-544-4786 | Cell Phone: 406-544-4786 |

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)

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<th>CO-PI</th>
<th>Faculty Supervisor</th>
<th>Research Assistant/ Other</th>
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<td>Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jayna.mumbauer@mcmaster.ca">jayna.mumbauer@mcmaster.ca</a></td>
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3. Project Funding (If federally funded, additional requirements may apply.)

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IRB Determination:

For UM-IRB Use Only

Note to PI: Use any attached IRB-approved forms (signed/date) 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.

Final Approval by IRB Chair/Manager: [Signature] Date: 12/17/23 Expires: N/A
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Counselor Educator’s Experience and Process of Attending to Problems of Professional Competence (PPC) Among Doctoral Students

Investigator(s):
Sabina Sabyrkulova is the principal investigator for this dissertation study. Sabina is a Ph. D candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at the University of Montana, Missoula, MT. Sabina can be contacted by phone at (406) 544-4786 or email at sabina.sabyrkulova@umontana.edu. The supervisor for this research study is Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano, PhD, a professor of Counselor Education in the Department of Counseling. Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano can be contacted by phone (770) 757-1309 or email at jayna.mumbauer@msou.umb.edu. Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano’s office is located in the Phyllis J Washington College of Education and Human Sciences building in room 336 at the University of Montana.

Inclusion Criteria:
To be eligible to be a part of this study, participants must be:
- Adults who are 18 years or older.
- Identify as a counselor educator in a CACREP-accredited program Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program.
- Must have completed one year in CES doctoral program.
- Encountered an event/experience of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) either personally or reported by another student.

Exclusion Criteria:
One exclusion criterion includes the CES doctoral programs that are not CACREP-accredited.

Purpose:
The purpose of this proposed study is to uncover counselor educators’ experiences and processes of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students in the CES programs. You have been invited to participate because the investigator of this study hopes to address the missing gap in current literature in how counselor educators particularly attend to and address PPC among doctoral students. The investigator is under the assumption that counselor educators’ experiences and processes of addressing PPC could be complex and require certain considerations. There may be implications for future research on how to attend to address PPC to influence doctoral students’ experiences and potentially improve evaluation and/or gatekeeping processes.

Procedures:
If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an interview about your experience and processes of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students. Participants will not disclose or share any names or other types of
information that could reveal a student’s identity or any other individuals. The study will require participation in two interviews lasting approximately one hour each. Your initials here indicate your permission to record the interview. Interview recordings will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected hard drive, and later transcribed. Identifying information will be removed from the transcription. After reviewing the transcripts for analysis, I will request your feedback about the initial results to ensure that I have accurately captured your experiences.

Payment for Participation:
As an incentive for participating in this study, you will receive $25 gift card.

Risks/Discomforts:
Mild discomfort may result from discussing your experiences with problems of professional competence (PPC) in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program. You have the right to stop at any time with no negative consequences.

Benefits:
Your participation in this study may help inform directions that counselor educators and doctoral students may explore related to problems of professional competence (PPC) during a training and show the need for future research in this area. However, there is no promise that you will receive any benefit from taking part in this study.

Confidentiality:
Participants will not disclose or share any names or other types of information that could reveal a student’s identity or any other individuals. Your records will be kept confidential and will not be released without your consent except as required by law. Your identity will be kept private. The data will be stored on a password-protected hard drive. Your signed consent form will be stored in a locked cabinet separate from the data. The recording will be transcribed without any information that could identify you. All data from the current study 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 in, or you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason.

Questions:
If you have any questions about the research now or at any point during study, please feel free to contact Sabina Sabrykulova at (406) 544-4786 or sabina.sabrykulova@umontana.edu. Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano, Ph. D., the supervising professors of the Department of Counseling can be contacted at (770) 757-1309 or email at jayna.mumbauer@msoum.edu.

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

The University of Montana IRB
Expiration Date N/A
Date Approved 12/3/2021
Chair/Admin [Signature]
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 Participant

Participant’s Signature

Date

The University of Montana IRB
Expiration Date
Date Approved 12/7/23
Chair/Admin
Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

CALLING FOR PARTICIPANTS FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

“Counselor Educator’s Experience and Process of Addressing Problems of Professional Competence (PPC) Among Doctoral Students”

This study intends to (a) better understand counselor educators’ experiences and processes of attending to PPC among doctoral students in the Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) Programs, (b) address the missing gap in current research, and (c) offer implications for future research.

INCLUSION CRITERIA:  
- 18-years-old  
- Identify as a counselor educator in CACREP-accredited program  
- Must have completed at least one year in CES program  
- Encounter an event/experience of attending to PPC personally or reported by others

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:  
- Non-CACREP-accredited CES programs

If you are interested in this study please reach out to Sabina Sabyrkulova at: 
sabina.sabyrkulova@umontana.edu

The University of Montana
Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Email

Dear Dr. [Participant’s Name]

I trust this email finds you well. My name is Sabina Sabyrkulova, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at the University of Montana. While perusing the CACREP directory, I came across your contact information and hope it is appropriate to approach you with a request.

I am in the process of recruiting participants for my dissertation study titled "Counselor Educator's Experience and Process of Addressing Problems of Professional Competence (PPC) Among Doctoral Students." I am specifically seeking counselor educators with a minimum of one year of experience who have encountered an event or experience related to PPC among doctoral students. I am deeply passionate about this research because, as a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision program, I have personally encountered the absence of comprehensive information on the experiences and processes of counselor educators addressing PPC among doctoral students in the existing literature. This research represents an opportunity to bridge this gap in knowledge. By understanding and documenting your experiences, esteemed professionals like yourself can significantly contribute to the advancement of counselor education and supervision. Your insights will not only enrich the current discourse but may also guide future researchers and educators in effectively addressing these challenges. More details about the study can be found by following this link: [https://umt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9TwGvgGnL3yjPJY](https://umt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9TwGvgGnL3yjPJY)

To express my gratitude for their insights and time, I am offering a $25 gift card to participants. I am reaching out to esteemed professionals like yourself to kindly request assistance in disseminating information about my research among your colleagues in the counselor education field.

Below, I have outlined the key details of the study for your reference:

**Title:** Counselor Educator's Experience and Process of Addressing Problems of Professional Competence (PPC) Among Doctoral Students

**Researcher:** Sabina Sabyrkulova, Doctoral Candidate  
**Supervisor:** Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano, PhD

**Purpose:** This qualitative research aims to uncover counselor educators' experiences and processes in addressing PPC among doctoral students. By participating, you can contribute to filling a gap in the current literature and potentially influence future research on addressing PPC to enhance doctoral students' experiences.

**Participant Criteria:**
- Adults over the age of 18
- Identify as a counselor educator in a CACREP-accredited CES program
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- Must have worked at least one year as a faculty member in a CES program
- Encounter with an event/experience of addressing PPC either personally or reported by another student

**Token of Appreciation:** $25 gift card for each participant

**Interview Format:** Approximately 60-minute Zoom interviews, with the possibility of a second round. All interviews will be recorded.

**Next Steps:**
- Complete a brief demographic questionnaire: [https://umt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9TwGvgGnL3yjPJY](https://umt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9TwGvgGnL3yjPJY)
- Once the questionnaire is completed, I will reach out to schedule an interview.

**Contact Information:**
Sabina Sabyrkulova: 406-544-4786 | sabina.sabyrkulova@umontana.edu
Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano: (770) 757-1309 | jayna.mumbauer@mso.umt.edu

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my request and your potential assistance in spreading the word about this research study. If you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to reach out.

Best regards,
Sabina Sabyrkulova
Appendix D: Qualtrics Informed Consent Form and Demographics Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

Thank you for expressing your interest in my dissertation research study, “Counselor Educator’s Experience and Process of Addressing Problems of Professional Competence (PPC) Among Doctoral Students”. Your participation is invaluable, and I am grateful for your willingness to contribute to this important research.

In the next few moments, you will be guided through the participant information and informed consent process. This segment is designed to provide you with all the necessary details about the study, outlining the purpose, procedures, and potential benefits and risks associated with your involvement. Please, know that you always have a right to withdraw from the study.

Following the informed consent process, you will be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire. This information helps ensure a diverse and representative sample, contributing to the robustness of the study's findings.

Rest assured that your responses and personal information will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. All data collected will be anonymized, and your privacy will be strictly protected.

Once again, thank you for your interest and willingness to be a part of this research journey. Your participation is essential, and I am eager to learn from your valuable insights.
Default Question Block

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

**Study Title:** Counselor Educator’s Experience and Process of Addressing Problems of Professional Competence (PPC) Among Doctoral Students

**Investigator(s):** Sabina Sabyrkulova is the principal investigator for this dissertation study. Sabina is a Ph. D candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at the University of Montana, Missoula, MT. Sabina can be contacted by phone at (406) 544-4786 or email at sabina.sabyrkulova@umontana.edu. The supervisor for this research study is Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano, PhD, a professor of Counselor Education in the Department of Counseling. Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano can be contacted by phone (770) 757-1309 or email at jayna.mumbauer@msu.umn.edu. Dr. Mumbauer-Pisano’s office is located in the Phyllis J Washington College of Education and Human Sciences building in room 336 at the University of Montana. Inclusion

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**Criteria:** To be eligible to be a part of this study, participants must be:

- Adults over the age of 18
- Identify as a Counselor Educator in a CACREP-accredited program Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program
- Must have completed one year in CES doctoral program
- Encountered an event/experience of attending problems of professional competence (PPC) either personally or reported by another student

**Exclusion Criteria:** One exclusion criterion includes the CES doctoral programs that are not CACREP-accredited.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this proposed study is to uncover counselor educators' experiences and processes of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students in the CES programs. You have been invited to participate because the investigator of this study hopes to address the missing gap in current literature in how counselor educators particularly attend to and address PPC among doctoral students. The investigator is under the assumption that counselor educators' experiences and processes of addressing PPC could be complex and require certain considerations. There may be
implications for future research on how to attend to address PPC to influence doctoral students’ experiences and potentially improve evaluation and/or gatekeeping processes.

Procedures: If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an interview about your experience and processes of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students. The study will require participation in two interviews lasting approximately one hour each. Interview recordings will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected hard drive, and later transcribed. Identifying information will be removed from the transcription. After reviewing the transcripts for analysis, I will request your feedback about the initial results to ensure that I have accurately captured your experiences.

Payment for Participation: As an incentive for participating in this study, you will receive $25 gift card.

Risks/Discomforts: Mild discomfort may result from discussing your experiences with problems of professional competence (PPC) in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program. You have the right to stop at any time with no negative consequences.
Benefits: Your participation in this study may help inform directions that counselor educators and doctoral students may explore related to problems of professional competence (PPC) during a training and show the need for future research in this area. However, there is no promise that you will receive any benefit from taking part in this study.

Confidentiality: Your records will be kept confidential and will not be released without your consent except as required by law. Your identity will be kept private. The data will be stored on a password-protected hard drive. Your signed consent form will be stored in a locked cabinet separate from the data. The recording will be transcribed without any information that could identify you. All data from the current study 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 in, or you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason.

Questions: If you have any questions about the research now or at any point during study, please feel free to contact Sabina Sabyrkulova at (406) 544-4786 or sabina.sabyrkulova@umontana.edu. Dr. Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano, Ph. D., the supervising professors of the Department
of Counseling can be contacted at (770) 757-1309 or email at jayna.mumbauer@msu.umt.edu.

**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.

Please identify your age

- □ 18-25
- □ 25-35
- □ 35-45
- □ 45-55
- □ 55+

Please identify your racial and ethnic identity:
Please identify your gender identity:

Do you hold any marginalized identities? If so, please list your identities here. (e.g., LGBTQI+, disability status)

Please identify your university position (e.g., assistant professor, professor, chair)

Please identify years of work experience:
Program format:

○ In-person
○ Remote

Please include your name


Please include your contact information


What is your preferred way of being contacted?

○ Email
○ Text message
○ Phone call
Appendix E: First Round Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date of the interview: ______________________________________________________

Participant Pseudonym: ____________________________________________________

Interview Setting: _________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this research study. There are a few items I want to share before we start our interview.

- I will be asking questions about your experience and process of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program.
- I will ask you to not disclose or share any names or other types of information that could reveal a student’s identity or any other individuals.
- I am recording our interview to capture accurately and completely what you share. The recordings will be encrypted, and password protected.
- Interviews will be confidential and no identifying information will be included in the transcriptions. When quoted your identity and specific identifying information will not be included.
- You may withdraw from or stop the interview at any time for any reason without consequence.
- There are no correct answers to the questions I will be asking. I just hope to gain understanding of your open and honest thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experiences with problems of professional competence (PPC) among your doctoral students.
2. What are some of the ways you identified PPC? What happened after these concerns were identified?
3. Where have you encountered external and internal barriers (thoughts, emotions, etc.) in the PPC process?
4. How did you know you reached a resolution? Are there times you didn’t reach a resolution? What significant moments stand out to you about these processes?
5. Could you tell me about how your management of PPC has changed since these encounters?
6. After having these experiences, what advice or suggestion would you give to other counselor educators mentoring doctoral students and doctoral students themselves?
7. How does identity intersect with PPC for both faculty and doctoral students?
8. What information do we need from counselor educators to inform how we gatekeep doctoral students?
Appendix F: Second Round Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date of the interview: _______________________________________________________

Participant Pseudonym: _____________________________________________________

Interview Setting: __________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this research study. There are a few items I want to share before we start our interview.

- I will be asking questions about your experience and process of addressing problems of professional competence (PPC) among doctoral students in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program.
- I will ask you to not disclose or share any names or other types of information that could reveal a student's identity or any other individuals.
- I am recording our interview to capture accurately and completely what you share. The recordings will be encrypted, and password protected.
- Interviews will be confidential and no identifying information will be included in the transcriptions. When quoted your identity and specific identifying information will not be included.
- You may withdraw from or stop the interview at any time for any reason without consequence.
- There are no correct answers to the questions I will be asking. I just hope to gain understanding of your open and honest thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Interview Questions

1. How does mentorship and guidance or lack of it influence your gatekeeping process or process of addressing PPC? (mentorship and guidance for faculty).
2. Tell me about a time you weren’t able to address PPC concerns?
3. How do you navigate power dynamics when addressing PPC with doctoral students and when consulting on PPC concerns with colleagues?
4. In the first interview, we discussed the internal and external barriers when addressing PPC issues. Can you describe what happened after you encountered these barriers with PPC, both external and internal?
5. How do you handle unresolved PPC issues?
Appendix G: Member Check Email for Participants

Hello [Name of Participant],

I hope this email finds you well and that you are having a wonderful summer. I am pleased to share that I am in the final stages of my dissertation research titled "Counselor Educator's Experience and Process of Addressing Problems of Professional Competence (PPC) Among Doctoral Students." I am now in the final stages of my study, and I am reaching out to you for a crucial step in the process: the member check. Your feedback is invaluable to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings. To engage in a member check, I have prepared a document that includes:

1. An introduction to the major categories.
2. Definitions of the categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions that emerged in this research.
3. Conceptual map figures.
4. A figure or image representing the process of addressing PPC among doctoral students.
5. An explanation or description of the visual representation.

While the definitions of categories and related aspects are detailed, they are provided primarily for your reference. Your insights and feedback on the overarching framework and its components are what I value most.

Once you review the document, I would greatly appreciate it if you could answer the following questions:

- What are your overall impressions of the theory/framework?
- Is there anything that resonates with you in particular?
- Is there anything that needs to be added, changed, or removed?
- Is there anything that I got wrong?

I would be more than happy to receive your responses via email or schedule a meeting to discuss your feedback. Given the timeline and deadline for my defense, I would be extremely grateful if you could provide your feedback by next Monday, July 1st. Your timely response will be immensely helpful for me to proceed with my research.

Thank you so much for taking the time to assist me with this important step. Your feedback is crucial to the completion of my research, and I am immensely grateful for your participation and contribution. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Warm regards,
Sabina
Appendix H: Document Sent for Member Check

Counselor Educator’s Experience and Process of Addressing Problems of Professional Competence Among Doctoral Students

Member Check Outline:

1. Introduction to Five Categories
2. Definitions for categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions. These definitions are provided primarily for your reference.
3. Figure 1 – Conceptual Map of First-Round Analysis
4. Figure 2 – Conceptual Map of Second-Round Analysis
5. Figure 3 – Weaving the Web: Faculty’s Multilayered Approach to PPC
6. Explanation of the process
7. Figure 4 – Zooming in on categories

Introduction:
Five categories emerged from two rounds of analyses: (1) understanding doctoral experiences, (2) complexities of PPC, (3) marginalization, power, and PPC, (4) faculty’s response to PPC, and (5) enhancing management of PPC. Each category holds subcategories, properties, and some have dimensions.

Definitions:
Please refer to the following definitions for a comprehensive understanding of each category, subcategory, property, and dimension that emerged in this research. These definitions are provided for your reference to facilitate a deeper insight into the findings and to ensure accuracy in your feedback.

Understanding Doctoral Experiences: encompasses a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted challenges, expectations, motivations, and power dynamics inherent in the pursuit of doctoral education, with a keen focus on addressing PPC among doctoral students. It involves scrutinizing the personal, programmatic, and aspirational dimensions of doctoral students’ journeys, acknowledging the influence of individual stressors, academic requirements, professional aspirations, and the conferred authority of a doctoral degree.

- Challenges: represents the diverse array of obstacles and difficulties encountered by doctoral students throughout their academic journeys. These challenges manifest on both personal and programmatic levels, influencing students’ emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall professional competence.
  - Personal stressors: encompass a diverse range of individual-level factors and life circumstances that contribute to heightened stress, emotional strain, and difficulties in managing academic responsibilities within doctoral programs. These personal stressors may include health issues, family responsibilities, societal pressures, cultural experiences, and instances of imposter syndrome, wherein students perceive themselves as inadequate or undeserving of their academic achievements. Personal
stressors influence doctoral students’ ability to engage effectively in coursework and other doctoral responsibilities, potentially leading to the development of PPC.

- Program stressors: encompass institutional and systemic challenges within doctoral programs that contribute to heightened anxiety, frustration, and difficulties in navigating academic requirements and expectations. These stressors arise from various sources, including program policies, administrative procedures, advisor relationships, and academic demands, ultimately impacting doctoral students’ experiences and well-being, and potentially exacerbating PPC among doctoral students.

- Expectations and Mentorship: encompass the explicit and implicit criteria, behaviors, and achievements expected from doctoral students within their academic and professional pursuits, along with the multifaceted relationships and support structures between faculty mentors and doctoral students. Expectations and mentorships offer faculty opportunities to detect signs of PPC issues sooner, intervening proactively to reduce the likelihood of further progression of such challenges. By providing structured support and guidance, mentors can help students navigate the rigors of doctoral education, address stressors, and cultivate resilience, ultimately contributing to a healthier academic environment and mitigating the risk of PPC among doctoral students.

- Doctoral Performance Criteria: encompass the explicit and implicit criteria, behaviors, and achievements expected from doctoral students within their academic and professional pursuits.

- Mentorship and Guidance: encompass the multifaceted relationships and support structures between faculty mentors and doctoral students, aimed at fostering academic, professional, and personal development. Additionally, mentorship and guidance provide faculty with opportunities to detect signs of PPC issues sooner and intervene proactively, thereby reducing the likelihood of further progression of such challenges.

- Blurred Boundaries: refers to the phenomenon wherein the delineation between professional roles and personal relationships becomes ambiguous or indistinct within the mentorship dynamic between counselor educators and doctoral students. This ambiguity can manifest in various ways, including over-identification with doctoral students’ experiences, engaging in casual or collegial interactions that may compromise the evaluative or supervisory nature of the relationship, and the reluctance to enforce appropriate boundaries due to perceived closeness or familiarity.

- Counselor to Counselor Educator: highlights the challenges and distinctions between the roles of practicing counselors and counselor educators. This property underscores the unique difficulties faced by doctoral students transitioning from a clinical setting to an academic environment, where the skills and dispositions required for success may differ significantly. Counselor educators often need to balance acknowledging the clinical expertise of their students with providing feedback and guidance necessary for academic and professional growth in an educational context. They rely on their counseling skills to offer constructive feedback to their doctoral students.

- Displaying Empathy and Compassion: refers to the practice of counselor educators empathizing with doctoral students’ challenges and demonstrating compassion in their interactions. This involves understanding students’ struggles, acknowledging their emotional states, and offering support and understanding without compromising
academic standards. While displaying empathy and compassion could be a positive factor, faculty reported sometimes being blinded by such empathy and compassion when it came to PPC issues among doctoral students.

- **Students’ Intentions and Power:** delves into the motivations, aspirations, and the consequential influence that accompanies the attainment of a doctoral degree.
  - *Doctoral Motives:* involves understanding the underlying motivations and aspirations driving doctoral students in their academic pursuits. Delving into students’ motives allows faculty to gain insights into how to support students effectively, thereby mitigating the risk of PPC and fostering a healthier academic environment.
  - *PhD Power and Responsibility:* encompasses the recognition of the inherent authority and influence bestowed upon individuals upon obtaining a doctoral degree, emphasizing the ethical responsibilities associated with such power dynamics. This concept not only acknowledges the significant impact of doctoral education on individuals’ perceived authority but also underscores the importance of understanding and addressing potential misuse of power and ethical violations within academic and professional contexts.

**Complexities of PPC:** refers to faculty’s experiences and processes in identifying, evaluating, and trying to resolve PPC issues.

- **Types of PPC:** encompasses the diverse array of PPC concerns encountered by faculty members within CES doctoral programs.
  - *Academic PPC:* encompasses a range of issues including plagiarism, insufficient knowledge of APA format, late submissions, inadequate academic paper writing at the doctoral level, failure to pass comprehensive exams, and difficulties in completing the dissertation.
  - *Dispositional PPC:* refers to challenges stemming from doctoral students’ behavioral tendencies and interpersonal interactions within professional contexts. These challenges may include deficits in clinical skills, forming coalitions against faculty, boundary crossing, interpersonal conflicts, failure to fulfill doctoral responsibilities, lack of responsiveness, inadequate communication, resistance to feedback, concerns related to mental health, and differential treatment of faculty based on race.
  - *Clinical PPC:* encompasses faculty members identifying concerns related to clinical PPC by observing and evaluating doctoral students’ pre-existing identity as counselors in professional settings such as doctoral practicum and internship classes. During supervision of doctoral students in these classes, faculty identified specific problematic behaviors, including poor utilization of counseling skills, inadequate client conceptualization, personalization in sessions, and ethical dilemmas such as providing advice.
  - *Major PPC:* encompasses significant issues that contravene academic standards, such as failing to pass comprehensive exams, neglecting graduate assistantship responsibilities, and engaging in academic dishonesty. *Major PPC* may involve *academic PPC, dispositional PPC,* or *clinical PPC,* raising ethical concerns and require intervention or remediation, often as part of a gatekeeping process within academic or professional settings.

- **Methods for Addressing PPC:** involve the strategies and procedures employed by faculty to identify, assess, and intervene in instances of PPC among doctoral students.
- **Encounter:** defined as the faculty member’s direct experience or observation of PPC concerns in doctoral students, which prompts them to take action or intervene accordingly.
- **Feedback:** defined as direct communication between faculty and doctoral students, aimed at conveying observations and evaluations of PPC issues, with the goal of fostering positive change or improvement in behavior and skills.
- **Evaluation:** defined as the systematic assessment conducted by faculty to measure doctoral students’ progress across various domains during their training. This process involves ongoing monitoring of academic and dispositional aspects of student performance, as well as identification and assessment of major PPC issues.
- **Remediation:** involves intervening with doctoral students who exhibit PPC issues as part of gatekeeping measures. It includes offering interventions such as a professional development plan, specific changes, or, in severe cases, dismissal from the program. The aim is to provide suggestions or recommendations from faculty to demonstrate behavioral changes needed to be observed in doctoral students.

- **Outcomes of PPC:** encompasses the various results that emerge from faculty and doctoral students addressing specific instances of PPC. These outcomes were contingent upon the types of PPC encountered and the methods employed to address them.
  - **Assessment of Change/Improvement:** involves measuring shifts in a doctoral student’s behavior regarding PPC issues following feedback and monitoring signs of overall improvement. It entails proactively observing PPC issues, establishing measurable goals, and facilitating behavioral changes to promote growth-oriented learning and autonomy.
  - **Resolution:** refers to achieving a positive outcome or addressing PPC issues effectively through feedback, intervention, or acknowledgment, resulting in a favorable change or improvement in behavior or situation.
  - **Decision to Leave a Program:** refers to the voluntary departure of doctoral students from a CES program, sometimes with faculty recommendation, as a result of recognizing their struggles or a mismatch between their competence and program requirements.
  - **Lack of Resolution:** refers to the inability to achieve a satisfactory conclusion or resolution regarding a doctoral student’s PPC despite efforts by faculty to address these issues through intervention and feedback. This term is used when faculty members are unable to effectively resolve or mitigate the PPC issues exhibited by the student, often resulting in ongoing concerns or challenges within the academic program.
  - **Impact on Others:** refers to the consequences experienced by individuals such as doctoral peers, master-level counseling students, and future students due to the PPC issues of doctoral students. These consequences may manifest as negative, distressing, or harmful outcomes resulting from the actions or behaviors of doctoral students with PPC issues.
  - **Dismissal:** refers to the faculty’s decision to expel a doctoral student from a CES program due to major PPC issues, thereby preventing the student from completing their Ph.D. degree.
  - **Appeal and Legal Processes:** pertains to the formal procedures and legal avenues available to doctoral students who challenge decisions such as program dismissal or
remediation. This property highlights the structured processes involved in appeals, including involvement of formal committees, administrative reviews, and potential legal considerations. It underscores the significant impact of appeals on both students and programs, affecting relationships, academic progress, and institutional decisions.

- **Forward-Looking Perspectives on Competence**: underscores participants’ optimism and anticipation regarding the future resolution and developmental progress of doctoral students in CES. This property reflects the belief among counselor educators that issues of professional competence among doctoral students may naturally resolve over time through various stages of professional development or external interventions.

Favorable and Unfavorable: the dimension of favorable and unfavorable represents the characteristics of each PPC outcome along a continuum. Favorable outcomes denote situations where some form of resolution was achieved regarding PPC issues, such as observing changes in doctoral students’ behavior, their decision to leave the program, or their dismissal. On the other hand, unfavorable outcomes indicate scenarios where a doctoral student did not benefit from a remediation plan, became fatigued and weary from that experience, or perceived faculty decisions regarding remediation or dismissal unfavorably.

**Marginalization, Power, and PPC**: encompass the recognition and consideration of the diverse backgrounds of doctoral students and faculty members during discussions, evaluations, and interventions related to PPC. This involves being sensitive to the intersectionality of identities and acknowledging power dynamics within academia.

- **Diversity and Marginalization**: encompass the recognition and consideration of the various intersecting aspects of individuals’ identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, particularly within academic and PPC contexts. It involves understanding how these multiple identities intersect and influence experiences, perspectives, and opportunities, while also acknowledging the marginalization experienced by certain identity groups. Faculty members engage in self-reflection on personal identities, including the ways in which their identities intersect within their work with students.

- **Power Dynamics in Academia**: encompasses the recognition of power differentials among doctoral students and faculty within programs. It refers to the influence wielded by individuals in positions of authority and how this affects the management of PPC and the overall program experience. This includes instances where tenured faculty members or those in positions of authority exert influence within academic settings.

- **Authority, Power, and Rank in Academia**: explores the influence wielded by individuals in positions of authority within academic settings, particularly in the context of managing PPC among doctoral students. It encompasses the hierarchical structures, decision-making processes, and the impact of power dynamics on both students and faculty. This property highlights how authority figures, such as program chairs and tenured faculty, shape the experiences and outcomes of PPC management through their decisions and influence, often reflecting broader systemic issues of power and marginalization within academia.
**Dismantling Power:** refers to the conscious efforts by faculty and administrators to reduce or eliminate power differentials between themselves and doctoral students. This involves creating an environment of mutual respect, open dialogue, and collaboration, where hierarchical barriers are minimized to foster a more inclusive and equitable academic experience. The focus is on facilitating open communication, understanding diverse perspectives, and ensuring that authority is exercised in a culturally responsive and non-oppressive manner.

**Implicit Expectations of Faculty:** refers to the implicit and often unspoken norms and responsibilities that faculty members are expected to adhere to within the academic environment. These expectations are not formally documented but are understood and followed, shaping the behaviors and actions of faculty members in their roles. These can include expectations around mentorship, consultation, independence, and handling students’ PPC issues.

**Faculty’s Response to PPC:** delves into how faculty members navigate and respond to PPC issues observed in doctoral students. It encompasses the challenges they face internally and externally while addressing these issues, prompting personal introspection and seeking assistance from colleagues within the department.

- **Barriers:** PPC encompass the internal and external challenges that hinder the effective management of PPC issues among doctoral students. These barriers impede faculty members’ roles as counselor educators, affecting their ability to address and resolve PPC concerns.

- **Assumptions of Competency:** refers to the tendency among CES faculty to presume that doctoral students have already undergone sufficient evaluation and possess the requisite professionalism or experience from their prior master’s-level education to excel in their doctoral roles. This assumption may lead faculty to expect students to comprehend programmatic expectations, exhibit professionalism, and adhere to specific codes of conduct without explicit guidance.

- **Differences in Addressing PPC:** defined as the differences observed among faculty members and tenured track faculty in their approaches to managing PPC issues. These differences may manifest in various ways, such as adhering to the instructions and expectations set by tenured track faculty and administrative staff or holding differing views on PPC compared to colleagues. Faculty members often find themselves navigating these differences, which can lead to discussions and at times disagreements.

- **Gateslipping:** refers to the phenomenon where faculty members recognize opportunities to address PPC directly or intervene in the gatekeeping process but fail to do so at the time, resulting in missed opportunities to manage PPC concerns effectively when they arise.

- **Lack of Standardized Procedures:** understood as the difficulty encountered by faculty when assessing certain types of PPC issues, particularly dispositional ones, due to the absence of clear guidelines and standardized protocols. This lack of clarity often results in subjective assessments and the potential for bias, as faculty may rely on personal discretion or favoritism in addressing these issues.

- **Internal Barriers:** be characterized as the personal challenges and emotional obstacles that faculty members face when addressing and managing PPC among doctoral
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students. These barriers encompass a range of internal experiences, including feelings of self-doubt, imposter syndrome, ethical dilemmas, fear of legal repercussions, and the emotional strain of remediation efforts. Additionally, faculty may grapple with concerns about managing workload, institutional pressures, and the impact of their actions on students and the department. These internal barriers highlight the complex interplay between personal emotions, professional responsibilities, and institutional contexts in the management of PPC issues.

- **Reports of PPC from External Sources:** encompasses instances where faculty receive information about PPC concerning doctoral students from doctoral peers, students, and community members. While such reports provide valuable external feedback on PPC issues observed in doctoral students, they also present challenges for faculty members. Confidentiality considerations, professional protocols, and differing perspectives between external sources and academic institutions can complicate the navigation of these reports. Due to confidentiality constraints, faculty members may be unable to disclose information about specific cases to other students seeking immediate resolution.

- **Institutional Structural Barriers:** refers to structural and organizational challenges that hinder faculty members’ ability to effectively address and manage PPC issues within their academic programs. These challenges may include pressures from higher administration to prioritize student enrollment over quality, limited institutional support for gatekeeping processes, inadequate faculty resources and workload considerations, reliance on adjunct faculty, and structural flaws in program delivery that impact the quality of education and student outcomes.

- **Ambiguous Sharing Norms:** refers to the lack of clearly defined guidelines or expectations regarding the permissible scope and timing of discussions related to student competency issues. This ambiguity manifests in counselor education settings where faculty members experience uncertainty about when and how to discuss PPC concerns during official meetings. Consequently, these ambiguous norms hinder open dialogue and proactive strategies for effectively supporting doctoral students facing PPC within CES programs.

- **Time-Intensive Process:** refers to the significant time, effort, and deliberation required in counselor education programs to address issues such as PPC or related gatekeeping measures. This process often spans months to years, involving extensive faculty involvement, discussions, and decision-making stages.

- **Collaboration and Support:** entail the cohesive efforts and mutual assistance among colleagues to address PPC issues encountered by faculty members. This collaborative approach involves seeking consensus on recognizing and addressing PPC issues, consulting with colleagues for guidance and validation, and fostering a supportive environment conducive to effective remediation and gatekeeping processes. Faculty members rely on the collective expertise and shared values within their professional community to navigate PPC-related challenges and ensure consistent, well-coordinated responses to student concerns.

- **Mentorship for Counselor Educators:** refers to the dynamic and ongoing guidance provided by experienced faculty to their less experienced colleagues. This mentorship helps counselor educators navigate professional challenges, develop their skills, and manage issues related to student competence and program culture.
- **Responsibility Transition**: refers to the process by which faculty members communicate and pass along unresolved issues related to PPC among doctoral students to other faculty members. This involves sharing concerns, maintaining communication, and ensuring continuity in addressing the issues without merely deferring responsibility.

- **Receiving Support from Colleagues**: the same definition as collaboration and support subcategory. Originally, this was already included in the subcategory, however, due to participants’ emphasis of receiving support from colleagues, I felt the need to emphasize this as a separate property.

- **United Front**: denotes counselor educators’ cohesive and aligned stance within a program, where they collectively agree on recognizing and addressing PPC among doctoral students. This unity fosters a supportive environment characterized by consistent approaches and mutual understanding among faculty members. While a united front isn’t always the case, participants expressed a clear benefit when everyone’s values and vision aligned.

- **Self-Reflection**: defined as the deliberate and introspective process undertaken by faculty members to contemplate their roles as counselor educators when confronted with PPC issues.

- **Counselor Educator Identity**: refers to the multifaceted role embraced by faculty members within counseling education programs, encompassing educator, advocate, and mentor. It involves a deep commitment to upholding professional standards, advocating for the counseling profession, and ensuring the well-being of both students and clients. This identity integrates aspects of teaching, supervision, gatekeeping, and clinical practice, reflecting a holistic understanding of the responsibilities inherent in training future counselors. Faculty members discussed the importance to act on their gatekeeper role in order to safeguard the profession.

- **Past PPC Experiences**: refers to faculty members’ reflection on previous encounters with PPC and their strategies for addressing them. Through exposure, experience, and critical reflection, faculty members enhance their efficiency, professionalism, and intervention skills when dealing with PPC issues.

- **Personal Doctoral Experiences**: involves faculty members recalling and critically examining their own journeys during doctoral studies, particularly in relation to encountering challenges related to professional competence. This reflection encompasses various aspects, including exposure to modeling behavior from faculty, experiences with mentorship, evaluations based on professional dispositions, and the transition from doctoral student to counselor educator. It entails an introspective examination of how these experiences have shaped their understanding and approach to addressing PPC in their current roles as educators.

- **Transition from Doctoral Student to Counselor Educator**: refers to the journey and adaptation process counselor educators undergo as they shift from their roles as doctoral students to faculty members. This involves overcoming initial challenges, gaining confidence in their new roles, and developing a broader perspective on professional practices and responsibilities.

- **Finding Closure/Acceptance**: refers to the process where counselor educators reflect on their roles and actions within their professional context, striving to reconcile
unresolved issues or decisions by acknowledging their efforts, accepting limitations, and aligning personal values with institutional practices.

- **Personal and Professional Self-Work:** refers to the ongoing process wherein counselor educators engage in introspection, seek mentorship, and employ coping strategies to address internal and external barriers related to their roles. This involves personal growth, reflection on professional practices, seeking support, and translating challenges into opportunities for improvement and scholarship.

- **Individual Perspectives on PPC:** pertains to how counselor educators perceive and interpret issues related to professional competence among doctoral students. This property highlights the varied viewpoints and personal approaches that educators adopt when addressing and understanding PPC challenges within academic settings.

**Enhancing Management of PPC:** involves the identification and rectification of deficiencies within Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs and their handling of PPC issues. This process enables faculty members to refine their approaches to addressing PPC among doctoral students within their respective roles, enhance the evaluation processes for both students and programs, and advocate for the establishment of clear and specific standards and expectations for students.

- **Addressing Missing Gaps:** involves faculty identifying and rectifying deficiencies within CES programs, particularly those that hinder effective support for faculty in managing PPC and conducting gatekeeping interventions with doctoral students.

  - **Ambiguous Definitions:** encompasses faculty navigating broad and vague language regarding professional dispositions, professional competence, and PPC. The lack of clarity in language leads to personal interpretations and uncertainty regarding the expectations of doctoral students in relation to PPC.

  - **Insufficient Research:** refers to the inadequacy of scholarly inquiry and empirical investigations concerning PPC among doctoral students in CES programs. It denotes the limited availability of research literature, theoretical frameworks, or empirical studies specifically dedicated to understanding and addressing PPC issues at the doctoral level. The absence of comprehensive research in this area hampers the development of evidence-based interventions and standardized approaches, leaving faculty with a dearth of empirical guidance to effectively manage and support doctoral students experiencing PPC concerns.

  - **Lack of Specificity:** refers to the absence or inadequacy of clear, detailed, and explicit guidelines, policies, or expectations within CES programs regarding professional dispositions, competencies, and procedures related to addressing PPC among doctoral students. It encompasses instances where program documents, such as student handbooks or policies, lack precision and detailed guidance, leading to ambiguity, interpretation gaps, and inconsistent application by faculty members.

- **Improving PPC Approaches:** involves faculty members identifying deficiencies in current practices for addressing PPC among doctoral students. This subcategory encompasses specific recommendations or strategies aimed at enhancing PPC management within CES programs at the doctoral level.
- **Improving Documentation**: involves implementing systematic methods for recording and tracking instances of PPC among doctoral students. This practice includes documenting patterns of behavior, maintaining records of discussions and interventions, and ensuring transparency and accountability in the evaluation process.

- **Preemptive Action**: involves actively anticipating, identifying, and addressing PPC issues among doctoral students before they escalate. This approach underscores the importance of timely intervention and continuous improvement, promoting a proactive stance towards problem-solving and support.

- **Considering Standards**: involves faculty members incorporating established professional guidelines, program requirements, and accreditation standards into their approaches for addressing PPC among doctoral students. This entails aligning interventions, assessments, and evaluations with recognized standards to ensure adherence to programmatic expectations and professional norms.

- **Updating Policies**: involves reviewing, revising, and implementing changes to institutional guidelines, protocols, and operational frameworks to address PPC among doctoral students. This process aims to enhance clarity, consistency, and effectiveness in managing PPC issues by ensuring that policies align with current best practices, accreditation standards, and programmatic goals.

- **Educating Doctoral students About PPC Expectations**: involves providing comprehensive guidance and information to doctoral students regarding professional competence standards, remediation processes, and ethical responsibilities within CES programs. This educational initiative aims to foster a clear understanding of program expectations and ethical principles, ensuring doctoral students are well-informed and prepared to meet the demands of their academic and professional endeavors.

- **Need for Faculty Mentorship**: mentorship refers to the essential support and guidance required by faculty members, particularly new ones, to navigate the complexities of PPC issues and their roles in counselor education programs. Effective mentorship is highlighted as crucial for professional development, understanding institutional cultures, and managing doctoral student remediation.

- **Preventing Harm/Risk**: refers to the proactive measures taken by faculty to address behaviors or concerns among doctoral students that have the potential to cause harm, whether to individuals within the program or beyond.

Punitive and Supportive: This dimension encapsulates the dichotomy between punitive and supportive approaches observed in addressing PPC among doctoral students, as identified by faculty. A punitive approach, characterized by strict consequences and a focus on shortcomings, may hinder students’ ability to meet expectations and foster meaningful change, potentially leading to further challenges. In contrast, a supportive approach emphasizes students’ development, growth, and individual needs, aiming to provide guidance, encouragement, and resources to facilitate positive outcomes and address PPC effectively.

- **Program Evaluation**: encompasses a comprehensive assessment of the design, organization, and operational aspects of the CES program. This evaluation delves into elements such as curriculum structure, program policies, cohort models, faculty-student interactions, and administrative practices, all of which significantly shape the learning environment, student experiences, and overall effectiveness of the program. By
scrutinizing these facets, program evaluation aims to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement within the CES program.

- **CES program and Structure**: refers to the overarching design, organization, and operational aspects of the CES program. It encompasses elements such as curriculum structure, program policies, cohort models, faculty-student interactions, and administrative practices, all of which significantly influence the learning environment, student experiences, and overall effectiveness of the program. By examining these aspects within the context of addressing PPC issues among doctoral students, structural or procedural factors within the CES program may contribute to or mitigate PPC occurrences, thereby informing strategies for improvement and intervention.

- **Doctoral versus Master-Level Students**: refers to the distinct characteristics, training trajectories, supervisory dynamics, and gatekeeping responsibilities observed within counseling programs. It encompasses the nuanced differences in educational standards, developmental expectations, and professional dispositions between doctoral students and master’s students. This property sheds light on the unique challenges and opportunities present within doctoral training programs compared to master’s-level programs.
**Figure 1: Conceptual Map of First-Round Analysis**

**Description:** This figure illustrates the major categories identified in the research. Each category includes subcategories, properties, and dimensions that emerged in this research.
Figure 2: Conceptual Map of Second-Round Analysis

Description: This figure illustrates the relationships between the major categories identified in the research. The arrows indicate the direction and nature of these relationships. Categories have been restructured, with one category renamed and properties added for clarity.
Figure 3: Weaving the Web: Faculty’s Multilayered Approach to PPC

Description: This visual represents the intricate process of addressing PPC among doctoral students, highlighting the various steps and their interconnectedness.

Key for Figure 3:
First layer after the spider – **five categories**
Second, third, fourth, and fifth layers – **subcategories**
Dismantling power – property
White layers – internal process
Black layers – external process
The Web
WEAVING THE WEB

The theory of faculty addressing PPC among doctoral students is depicted in an image resembling a spider weaving a web. This web captures the intricate and interconnected nature of the faculty’s multilayered approach to PPC. The image illustrates the dynamic and cyclical process of understanding doctoral experiences, identifying the complexities of PPC, recognizing the impact of marginalization and power, responding to PPC, and enhancing the management of PPC within CES programs.

Just like there are various species of spiders on Earth, no counselor educator is the same. Spiders have multiple spinnerets and eight legs, which are useful for web-building, similar to counselor educators holding multiple roles or identities within the professions – counselor, teacher, supervisor, researcher, and advocate/leader – that are helpful in addressing PPC issues. Spiders go through specific steps of weaving the web that include initial base line, creating the frame, strengthening the center, non-sticky spirals and adhesive spiral threads, and final touches (British Arachnological Society, n.d.).

The first step a spider takes in weaving the web is the initial base line. The spider releases a sticky thread and lets the wind carry it to a suitable surface, establishing the initial framework of the web (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Similarly, faculty begin their process of addressing PPC issues by understanding the experiences of doctoral students. This involves recognizing challenges, setting expectations, offering mentorship, and understanding students’ intentions and power within the academic context. This foundational understanding sets the stage for further actions.

The second step a spider takes in weaving the web is creating the frame. The spider creates a Y-shaped netting and adds more radials to form the basic structure of the web (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Similarly, faculty’s next step involves recognizing the
WEAVING THE WEB

complexities of PPC. Faculty identify the types of PPC (academic, dispositional, clinical, and major) and choose methods to address them. They manage the various outcomes of PPC, aiming for resolution or favorable outcomes, though sometimes they encounter unfavorable results. This step structures the initial framework of managing PPC.

The third step a spider takes in weaving the web is strengthening the center of the web by adding additional threads (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). The next step for faculty involves addressing marginalization, power, and PPC dynamics. Faculty recognize and address the influence of marginalization and power dynamics in managing PPC. They consider diverse and marginalized identities and make conscious efforts to dismantle power differentials. Faculty also navigate authority, power, and rank within academia and contend with implicit expectations, adding strength to their process.

The fourth step a spider takes in weaving the web is creating non-sticky and adhesive spiral threads. The spider creates a spiral of non-sticky threads to move around the web during construction and then creates adhesive spiral threads starting from the outside and working inwards, ensuring the web is functional and effective (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Faculty’s next step in addressing PPC involves their responses to PPC. Faculty respond to PPC by navigating internal and external barriers, seeking collaboration and support, and engaging in self-reflection. These actions allow faculty to move fluidly within their roles and address PPC more effectively, ensuring their efforts are cohesive and that they effectively manage PPC.

The fifth step that spider takes is making final touches to the web. The spider completes the web by adding final touches and waits for prey to come along (British Arachnological Society, n.d.). Faculty’s last step in the process involves enhancing management of PPC.
Faculty enhance the management of PPC by addressing missing gaps, improving PPC approaches, and engaging in program evaluation. These actions ensure that their efforts are cohesive and that they effectively manage PPC, benefiting both faculty and students. This ongoing process represents their commitment to enhancing management of PPC and supporting doctoral students’ success.

The weaving the web process illustrates the intricate, methodical, and multilayered approach faculty take in addressing PPC among doctoral students. The analogy of the web conveys the complexity and interconnectedness of the steps involved in understanding the process of addressing the PPC among doctoral students. Figure 3 demonstrates the meticulous, structured, and interconnected approach of spider weaving the web or faculty addressing PPC among doctoral students. Five categories are at the center of the web, subcategories are located after each category, and only one property, dismantling power, was included in the web. After each category, white layers represent the inner layers of the web or the internal process that faculty engage in their process of addressing PPC and the black layers represent the outer layers of the web or the external process that faculty engage in.
**Figure 4** Zooming in on Categories

- Marginalization, Power, & PPC
- Faculty’s Response to PPC
- Enhancing Management of PPC
- Complexity of PPC
- Understanding Doctoral Experiences
It is essential to point out that if CES programs improve their management of PPC, this improvement will influence all other four categories. Figure 4 demonstrates the influence and connection among the categories. Red arrows show the interconnectedness of the five categories while blue arrows illustrate how the category of enhancing the management of PPC impacts the other four categories. Doctoral students would have better experiences in CES programs, faculty would better manage the complexities of PPC, navigate marginalization and power dynamics more effectively, and respond to PPC more efficiently, thus better supporting both faculty and students.
Appendix I: Evolution of Conceptual Map - First Round of Analysis

Categories:

1. Complexities of PPC:
   - **Types of PPC**
     - Academic PPC
     - Nonacademic PPC
     - Clinical PPC
     - Major PPC
   - **Ways to Address PPC**
     - Evaluation
     - Feedback
     - Observation
     - Remediation
   - **Outcomes of PPC**
     - Assessment of change/improvement?
     - Decision to leave the Program
     - Dismissal
     - Impact on Others
     - No Resolution
     - Resolution
     Favorable ↔ Unfavorable

2. Cultural Awareness and PPC
   - **Identity Intersectionality** → *Maybe Marginalized Identities*
   - **Power in Academia**

3. Faculty’s Process with PPC
   - **Barriers**
     - Assumptions about levels of competence
     - Disparities in Addressing PPC
     - Gateslipping
     - Lack of standardized and clear procedures
     - Personal/Internal Barriers
     - Reports on PPC from others
     - Systems and Institutions
   - **Collaboration and Support**
   - **Self-Reflection** (should I include failing to address PPC here or keep in Barriers?)
     - Potentially add a property of reflecting on personal doctoral experience?
     - Counselor Educator Identity
     - Past Experiences with PPC
     - Personal Doctoral Experience

4. Improving Management of PPC
   - **Addressing Missing Gaps**
     - Lack of Clear Definitions
     - Lack of Research
WEAVING THE WEB

- Lack of Specificity
- Lack of Standardized Procedures

• **Improving PPC Approaches**
  - Documentation
  - Proactive Approach
  - Consideration of Standards/Guidelines
  - Updating policies and procedures
  - Intervening and Evaluating Sooner
  - Informing/Educating Doc Students
  - Punitive & Supportive

• **Program Evaluation**
  - CES programs and structure
  - Doctoral vs. master-level students

• Should “following standards and guidelines” go into the “ways to address PPC” subcategory? Might not be a good fit in here or be moved to “program evaluation?”
  To continue showing my process, I decided to move this to the “Program Evaluation” – it is a better fit there.

5. **Understanding Doctoral Experiences**

• **Challenges**
  - Personal Stressors
  - Program Stressors

• **Expectations and Mentorship**
  - Expectations and Standards of Doctoral Students
  - Mentorship and Guidance

• **Students’ Intentions and Power**
  - Doctoral Student’s Intention and Motives
  - PhD Opens Gates to Power
#1 Complexities of PPC

Types of PPC:
- Academic PPC
- Dispositional PPC
- Clinical PPC
- Major PPC

Methods for Addressing PPC:
- Encounter
- Feedback
- Evaluation
- Remediation

Outcomes of PPC:
- Assessment of change/improvement
- Resolution
- Decision to leave the program
- Lack of resolution
- Impact on others
- Dismissal
  Favorable & Unfavorable

Barriers:
- Assumptions of competency
- Differences in addressing PPC
- Gating/stranding
- Lack of standardized procedures
- Internal barriers
- Reports of PPC from external sources
- Institutional structural barriers

Collaboration & Support:

Self-Reflection:
- Counselor educator identity
- Reflection on past PPC experiences
- Personal doctoral experience

Addressing Missing Gaps:
- Ambiguous definitions
- Insufficient research
- Lack of specificity
- Absence of standardized procedures

Improving PPC Approaches:
- Improving documentation
- Being proactive
- Considering standards
- Updating policies
- Intervening earlier
- Educating doctoral students about
PPC expectations
  Punitive & Supportive

#2 Cultural Awareness and PPC

Diversity & Marginalization
Power Dynamics in Academia

#3 Faculty’s Response to PPC

Program Evaluation:
- CES program and structure
- Doctoral vs. master-level students

Challenges:
- Personal stressors
- Program stressors

Expectations & Mentorship:
- Doctoral performance criteria
- Mentorship and Guidance

#4 Enhancing Management of PPC

Students’ Intensities & Power:
- Doctoral motives
- PhD power and responsibility

#5 Understanding Doctoral Experiences

Counselor Educator’s Experience and Process of Addressing PPC Among Doctoral Students
Appendix J: Evolution of Conceptual Map - Second Round of Analysis

First Round and Second Round

1. **Complexities of PPC**
   - **Types of PPC:**
     - Academic PPC
     - Dispositional PPC
     - Clinical PPC
     - Major PPC
   - **Methods for Addressing PPC:**
     - Encounter
     - Feedback
     - Evaluation
     - Remediation
   - **Outcomes of PPC:**
     - Appeal and Legal Processes (10 quotes)
     - Assessment of change/improvement
     - Resolution
     - Decision to leave the program
     - Lack of resolution
     - Impact on others
     - Dismissal
     - Resolution through other sources/post-graduation (13 quotes) Hope of future resolution
     - Favorable & Unfavorable

2. **Cultural Awareness and PPC → change to Marginalization, Power, and PPC?**
   - **Diversity & Marginalization**
   - **Power Dynamics in Academia**
     - Abusing Power (4 quotes)
     - Authority and influence around PPC (30 quotes)
     - Dismantling power (19 quotes)
     - power and rank in academia
     - Unsaid expectations of faculty (21 quotes)

3. **Faculty’s Process to PPC**
   - **Barriers:**
     - Assumptions of competency
     - Differences in addressing PPC
     - Gateslapping
     - Lack of standardized procedures
     - No platform for faculty’s concerns (16 quotes) Ambiguous norms for sharing PPC concerns
     - Internal barriers
Reports of PPC from external sources
- Institutional structural barriers
  - Slow process (13 quotes)

**Collaboration and Support**
- Agreeing on PPC issues
- Following rules/expectations
- Mentorship for Counselor Educators
- Passing down PPC concerns/Transferring responsibility of PPC
- Receiving support from colleagues
- United front Sharing vision/beliefs on PPC and gatekeeping

**Self-Reflection:**
- Counselor educator identity
- Finding closure/acceptance (21 quotes)
- Reflection on past PPC experiences
- Personal & Professional self-work (80 quotes)
  - Personal doctoral experience
  - Personal Expectations (62 quotes) Individual perspective on PPC*
- Taking responsibility for mistakes (8 quotes) → merge with personal and professional self-work property, use this as an example.
- Transition from Doc student to Counselor Educator (17 quotes)

4. **Enhancing Management of PPC**

**Addressing Missing Gaps:**
- Ambiguous definitions
- Insufficient research
- Lack of specificity
- Absence of standardized procedures

**Improving PPC Approaches**
- Improving documentation
  - Preemptive action (or anticipatory measures) to represent “being proactive” and “intervening earlier”
  - Being proactive*
- Considering standards
- Updating policies
- Intervening earlier* merge together
  - Educating doctoral students about PPC experiences
  - Maintain Professional Boundaries (13 quotes)
  - Need for faculty mentorship (29 quotes)
  - Preventing harm/risk (14 quotes)

**Program Evaluation**
- CES program and structure
- Differences in program expectations (36 quotes)
- Doctoral vs. master-level students
5. Understanding Doctoral Experiences

- **Challenges**
  - Personal stressors
  - Program stressors

- **Expectations and mentorship**
  - Blurred boundaries with docs (9 quotes)
  - Counselor vs. Counselor Ed. (15 quotes)
  - Doctoral performance criteria
  - Mentorship and guidance
  - Showing empathy and compassion (10 quotes)

- **Students’ Intention and Power**
  - Doctoral motives
  - PhD power and responsibility

Change the structure:
1. Understanding Doctoral Experience
2. Complexities of PPC
3. Marginalization, Power, & PPC
4. Faculty’s Response to PPC
5. Enhancing Management of PPC
Appendix K: Evolution of Weaving the Web Visual Representation