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Doctoral Students Balancing the Roles and Relationships of Counselor Education

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Abstract

Aspiring counselor educators in Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited programs must learn to be counselors, teachers, supervisors, researchers, and leaders. These roles can overlap, creating multiple complex relationships during their programs. To examine these roles, we conducted a constructivist grounded theory investigation of how counselor education doctoral students (n = 9) balanced multiple roles and relationships and boundary crossings. We utilized chain referral sampling and continued until we reached theoretical saturation. We used semi-structured interviews conducted via videoconferencing (Zoom) for data collection and coded the interviews using two main phases: an initial phase and a focused coding phase. We used member checks by sending participants preliminary findings for feedback. The resulting theory describes two distinct stakeholders in the management of the multiple roles and relationships in counselor education: the students and the program. Students were responsible for balancing roles and responsibilities while considering professional growth, ethics, and boundary setting. The program was responsible for providing a growth-fostering environment and mentorship. Ultimately, the process of navigating multiple roles and relationships (MRRs) involves early discussion of MRRs, intentionality of program placement, assistance with boundaries and ethical decisions, and exposure to remediation and gatekeeping.

Keywords

counselor education, doctoral students, multiple roles and relationships, CACREP accredited programs, grounded theory

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Aspiring counselor educators in Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited programs must learn to be counselors, teachers, supervisors, researchers, and leaders. These roles can overlap, creating multiple complex relationships during their programs. To examine these roles, we conducted a constructivist grounded theory investigation of how counselor education doctoral students (n = 9) balanced multiple roles and relationships and boundary crossings. We utilized chain referral sampling and continued until we reached theoretical saturation. We used semi-structured interviews conducted via videoconferencing (Zoom) for data collection and coded the interviews using two main phases: an initial phase and a focused coding phase. We used member checks by sending participants preliminary findings for feedback. The resulting theory describes two distinct stakeholders in the management of the multiple roles and relationships in counselor education: the students and the program. Students were responsible for balancing roles and responsibilities while considering professional growth, ethics, and boundary setting. The program was responsible for providing a growth-fostering environment and mentorship. Ultimately, the process of navigating multiple roles and relationships (MRRs) involves early discussion of MRRs, intentionality of program placement, assistance with boundaries and ethical decisions, and exposure to remediation and gatekeeping.

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Counselor education doctoral students (CEDs) prepare for distinct yet interconnected roles in counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and leadership and advocacy, including completing supervised internships in at least three counselor education roles (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016). A cycle of learning, practicing, and receiving feedback in these five core areas is essential to developing a unified professional identity as a counselor educator (Dollarhide et al., 2012; Limberg et al., 2013). However, this process places CEDs in a position that requires them to navigate multiple roles and relationships (MRRs) which may create developmental challenges. This article will discuss the development of professional identity in counselor education, the experience and impact of multiple relationships and roles (MRRs) in CEDs, and the parallel process between CEDs and master's level counseling students. We will then discuss the method and results of a constructivist grounded theory investigation of how CEDs navigate MRRs.

Counselor education doctoral programs are significantly different from many other doctoral programs due to the complexity of required roles and expectations within the five core areas. It is important to note that all five areas of preparation were not part of the 1977

Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) doctoral guidelines; these standards were later adopted by CACREP and then revised in 1988 (Barrio Minton, 2020). Preparation in all five areas was not required until 2009, making the counselor education pedagogical approach to all five areas and roles relatively new in some doctoral programs. Integration of multiple identities is the first transformational task in the developmental pathway from counselor-to-counselor educator. Limberg et al. (2013) recognized that this transformation needed first-hand experience in all areas of preparation. For example, teaching or co-teaching courses, designing curriculum, and grading. How programs introduced each area appears to be essential to skill development, with incremental introduction alongside mentoring optimal for student development.

Multiple Relationships and Roles

In an investigation regarding components of high-quality programs in counselor education, Preston et al. (2020) found the most salient components to be faculty–student mentoring relationships and formal curricular experiences in all areas of counselor education identity. Participants also reported value in extra-curricular activities such as "attending conferences, sharing in publications, co-teaching classes, and providing opportunities for service" (Preston et al., 2020, p. 462). These formal curricular experiences and extra-curricular activities ultimately expose students to MRRs.

MRRs are expected to happen in doctoral programs in counselor education due to the nature of their structure and purpose (CACREP, 2016). MRRs are defined as having two or more concurrent roles with clients, students, or supervisees (American Counseling Association, 2014; Gu et al., 2010). MRRs can represent potential for both harm and benefit for all students involved, but the overall consensus is that MRRs are inevitable (Herlihy & Corey, 2014). MRRs and boundary crossings have been heavily researched in clinical settings (e.g., Speight, 2012; Welfel, 2013; Zur, 2014). Some authors warn counselors to avoid MRRs at all costs (e.g., Remley & Herlihy, 2022; Welfel, 2013) to avoid benign roles that become sexual or exploitative. Others see MRRs as possibly beneficial and growth-fostering if boundaries and ethical decision models are applied well (e.g., Herlihy & Corey, 2014, Speight, 2012; Zur; 2014). Herlihy and Corey (2014) argued that MMRs cannot be avoided in clinical and counselor education settings. In some cases, rigid boundaries around MMRs can cause harm or limit development.

Exposure to MRRs may feel ethically dubious for new CEDs who have developed their counselor identities, likely learning the importance of boundaries in their counseling work. The new counselor education context may leave doctoral students feeling as if they "straddle different worlds, often with minimum guidance about the potential pitfalls of their positions" (Scarborough et al., 2006, p. 51). Thus, CEDs need to learn strategies for managing boundaries, power, and ethical issues during their orientation and again as new roles and responsibilities arise. Nevertheless, some programs fail to help students learn how to manage boundary violations (Dickens et al., 2016).

Navigation of MRRs is further complicated due to CEDs' positioning as students who navigate power differentials with both faculty members and master's students (DeDiego & Burgin, 2016). Dickens et al. (2016) completed an interpretative phenomenological analysis of CEDs' experiences with MRRs and corroborated DeDiego and Burgin's (2016) conclusions regarding the negative impact of power differentials on student development. Students expressed a need for education on MRRs and strategies for managing such roles; while MRRs present challenges, experiences balancing MRRs appear to foster CEDs' growth (Dickens et al., 2016). Dickens et al. (2016) provided an essential foundation for understanding MRRs with faculty members in counselor education programs. However, student-student relationships are

also a component of high-quality programs in counselor education (Preston et al., 2020). To date, there is little understanding of how CEDs explore MRRs within student-student relationships, including master's students in the same program.

Parallel Process

Counselor education programs ask CEDs to learn MRRs at the same time, triggering a developmental process for each role parallel to the process observed in counselor development (Dollarhide et al., 2012). CEDs are often tasked to provide teaching and supervision to master's students who look at them as a source of expertise and knowledge (Dollarhide et al., 2012; Limberg et al., 2013). Moreover, CEDs often question their capacity as leaders (Moore, 2021) and researchers (Lamar & Helm, 2017; Limberg et al., 2020). At the same time, CEDs are working to build a sense of legitimacy and new knowledge, encountering doubt and learning curves, and working to tolerate ambiguity.

The professional identity process between master's students and CEDs is similar, even if the preparation focus is different (Dollarhide et al., 2013). Thus, CEDs and master's students go through a parallel process of developmental growth (Destler, 2017). This process could influence the student-student relationships and eventually assist the professional identity development of CEDs (Thacker & Diambra, 2019). CEDs need to learn how to balance all areas of CE while processing and overcoming barriers and using the professional development parallel process as an element of growth. The purpose of this study was to understand how CEDs navigate multiple relationships and roles (MRRs) with counselors-in-training.

Methods

We used constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) to explore our research question: what is the theory that explains how CEDs navigate multiple relationships and roles in counselor education programs? Constructivist grounded theory allowed us to consider multiple perspectives of CEDs and construct knowledge with participants. Constructivist grounded theory also allowed for both flexibility and trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) while providing thick and rich descriptions of the CEDs experience. The constructivist grounded theory had the goal of developing a theory of understanding how CEDs navigate and balance multiple roles and relationships while adhering to ethical responsibilities of gatekeeping (American Counseling Association, 2014). The field lacks a model to explain the developmental aspects of experiencing parallel process (Destler, 2017) while navigating MRRs.

Researchers

All researchers and coders examined their identities and positionality regarding MRRs in counselor education before data collection. At the time of data collection and analysis, the first author identified as a Latina CED with five years of counseling experience. She was inspired by her experiences as a CED and the difficulty she found in engaging with MRRs. Therefore, she engaged in studying the CEDs' roles and responsibilities and how other CEDs managed MRRs. The second author was a professor of counselor education who identified as a cisgender female who was both White and Latina and had extensively studied counselor education professional identity development and pedagogical approaches. We recruited two additional coders, for a total of three coders, who had completed advanced coursework, engagement in qualitative research, identified themselves as CEDs, and had experiences with MRRs. The second author was not involved in the data analysis. All coders engaged in

reflexivity via memo-writing and ongoing consultation to manage subjectivity throughout the data analysis process.

Participants

The study included nine participants who were all CEDs (see Table 1). Participants had been in their program from one to five years, with most in their third year or beyond. Participants represented every region of the U.S., with a higher emphasis on the southeast region; all participants attended a different doctoral program.

Table 1
Participant demographics

Demographic	Number (Percentage)
Region Northeast	
Southeast	4 (44.5%)
Midwest	1 (11.1%)
West	1 (11.1%)
	2 (22.2%)
Gender	
Female	6 (66.7%)
Male	3 (33.35%)
Race	
Asian	1 (11.1%)
White	7 (77.8%)
Black/AA	1 (11.1%)
Age	
25-35	6 (66.7%)
35-55	3 (33.3%)

Procedures

Following Institutional Review Board approval, we utilized chain referral sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) to identify participants who (a) identified as CEDs in CACREP-accredited programs, and (b) had completed at least one credit hour of a doctoral internship in which they were required to supervise or teach master's-level students in the same program. Participants were recruited for this study via professional listservs relevant to counseling students (e.g., CESNET, COUNGRAD, DIVERGRAD) and the National Board for Certified Counselors Foundation Minority Fellowship listserv. Participants did not receive any incentives to participate. Ultimately, we wanted to recruit a diverse sample of participants from various regions and universities who added richness or contradiction to a developing theory (Morse, 2007).

We continued chain-referral sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) until we reached theoretical saturation, which occurred after nine participant interviews (Charmaz, 2014). Recruitment emails included a link for a pre-screening survey and a request for demographic and contact information. A total of 15 potential participants completed the screening survey. All potential participants met criteria. Of these, ten responded to follow-up emails with informed consent documents and instructions for scheduling interviews. Ultimately, nine participants were needed to complete the interviews and then a follow-up email. This sample size was consistent with published qualitative grounded theory studies in counselor education where the sample size ranged between eight and 23 interviews (e.g., Bohecker et al., 2016;

Dollarhide et al., 2013; Jorgensen & Duncan, 2015; Wagner & Hill, 2015). Charmaz (2014) also argued that high-quality data and homogeneity of sample size allowed researchers to reach saturation with a small number of participants.

Data Collection

We used semi-structured interviews conducted via videoconferencing (Zoom) for data collection. Interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes and were audio recorded. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with an interview guide using standard questions for all participants. However, during interviews, participants were allowed to process and explore questions freely (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), aligning with the purpose of constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014). The interview guide included eight questions about background, experiences of multiple relationships, and resources used (see Appendix A). The interview guide also included follow-up prompts to ensure we collected rich data (see Appendix A).

These questions were developed to explore the developmental process of navigating MRRs, including understanding the nature and consequences of MRRs, but also resources available and needs relating to CEDs being required to have MRRs as part of their learning process in graduate programs. Consistent with the constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014), we adjusted the interview guide after each participant interview to prompt questions that supported the emerging theory. For example, the theme of professional versus non-professional MRRs emerged after three interviews. At this point in the participant interviews, we adapted one of the questions to highlight the distinction between professional versus non-professional relationships.

Analysis

This study used constructivist grounded theory guidelines for data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Constructivist grounded theory coding involves two main phases: (a) an initial phase involving line-by-line coding using In Vivo and Process coding (Saldaña, 2016); and (b) a round of Focused Coding (Saldaña, 2016), using the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize the data (Charmaz, 2014). Coding was completed after each interview and then we compared analyses within each interview and across interviews using constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Each time our research team met, we processed emerging codes, categories, and themes (Saldaña, 2016), along with any gaps in the interviews to identify an emerging theory.

The emerging theory derived from the coding process centered on considerations of power and responsibility in navigating interactions between roles in counselor education. Many codes in the first round of In Vivo coding highlighted the power differential between CEDs and faculty. Concepts represented within the initial coding that informed development of the resulting theory included issues of authority, hierarchy, boundaries, and empowerment. As the resulting theory evolved through second and third rounds of coding, the need for a dynamic theory representing various interactions occurring during a CED educational experience emerged. These interactions supported development of positive or negative developmental experiences in navigating various roles for CEDs. Final codes in the coding process created the foundation for the resulting theory of interaction between CEDs and a counselor education program. These interactions revolve around early implementation of structure and support for CEDs, and later use of ethical and professional knowledge to navigate MRRs with counselors-in-training.

To establish triangulation with inter-rater reliability, we discussed discrepancies and sought agreement as a team. After reaching theoretical saturation, we used theoretical coding, which entailed using themes and categories identified in the prior phase and analyzing them to form a coherent story and theory (Charmaz, 2014). See Appendix B for a breakdown of the codes found in each coding phase.

Rigor

We followed Guba and Lincoln (1989)'s criteria for rigor. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, de-identified, and sent to participants to make comments, edits, and provide supplementary information. This step was to ensure participant voices were best captured during the interview and allow participants an additional layer of consent to add or omit parts of the interview. All nine participants responded that no changes were needed. We used member checks by sending participants preliminary findings (categories and themes) and asking for feedback. Seven out of nine participants agreed with the preliminary findings, indicating no changes were needed. Two participants did not provide feedback for preliminary findings.

To further establish rigor in this inquiry, we first developed positionality statements before starting the inquiry. We employed memo-writing prior to and after each interview, as well as during data coding and analysis to process questions, connections, concerns, and ideas. We used triangulation with two other coders through the first and second phases of the analysis process to establish inter-rater reliability (Saldaña, 2016). The selected two coders had advanced knowledge of counselor education programs and qualitative inquiry. The primary PI and two other coders met after initial coding to compare the analysis of the data and agree on codes, categories, and themes (Saldaña, 2016).

Findings

In this research study, we aimed to create a theory that explains how CEDs navigate MMRs in counselor education programs. Our findings display that the responsibility of navigating MRRs does not fall solely on CEDs. Instead, the resulting theory was that there are two distinct stakeholders: the students and the program (see Figure 1). Students were responsible for balancing roles and responsibilities while considering professional growth, ethics, and boundary setting. They argued that the program was responsible for providing a growth-fostering environment and mentorship. In this section, we explained how students balanced MRRs and how counselor education programs aid or hinder the navigation of MRRs. To provide examples, we will use direct quotes of participants using pseudonyms.

Students Balancing Roles and Responsibilities

This section of the theory is directly related to our research question on how CEDs navigated MMRs in counselor education programs. All participants discussed how MRRs were unavoidable due to the nature of the training. Coming to this realization, participants shared that they acknowledged it and learned to balance the roles and responsibilities of each role in the counselor education program. Joanne stated, "I think that they [MRRs] are unavoidable...I have been the welcoming committee, the supervisor, the mentor, and the teacher, for sure. I did a research study with several second-year master's students." Although balancing of MRRs was necessary, it incited negative feelings at times. Kennedy related feelings of confusion as a maze:

> It's a maze that we have to navigate…we have these multiple relationships, it's
> a small program, very tight-knit cohort style, so oftentimes the master's students
> will want to have events and activities and invite doc students, and, you know,
> where does that fall?

Joanne used the metaphor of the Grand Canyon to explain the difficulty of balancing the MRRs. For Joanne and Kennedy, the pictures of a maze and Grand Canyon represented frustration, confusion, and insecurity over the management of roles.

Participants noted that they grew in professional identity development and ethical decision-making and boundary setting while balancing the roles and responsibilities of CE. Still, they found barriers to fulfilling their roles. Being exposed to MRRs was a necessary task for participants' counselor educator professional identity formation. It was because of the exposure to all the counselor education roles that participants felt more prepared for their future as counselor educators. Preston explained, "It's an opportunity to learn for myself, maybe...how I am going to be as a counselor educator and how I'm potentially going to navigate those roles and see feedback from students or other peers." Similarly, Rook explored "It's very much been fostering who I am and who I think is a counselor educator, who I want to be in the classroom." Alongside solidifying their counselor education identity, participants noted that management of MRRs was tricky when it came to ethics and boundaries.

As participants' identities as counselor educators developed, so did their ethical decision-making and understanding of boundary setting. Kenny explained "the complexity of what it is that we are doing, but also being very strong and confident in what I, in my own ethics, in my own values, of what I see is kinda right or appropriate." Nicole also explored that ethics and boundaries went together and cannot be separated. Participants discussed implementing boundary setting to assist in managing challenges that came with MRRs. Rock explained, "I think some of that being able to manage those roles is to make sure I have those clear boundaries." Likewise, Henry processed those boundaries must be consistent "Decide what boundaries you're comfortable with and live with those." Having to manage several roles and responsibilities while considering ethics and boundary crossings placed some limits on their ability to participate in certain rules.

Participants experienced barriers in fulfilling counselor education roles, especially regarding teaching and supervision. Given their standing as doctoral students, some participants felt that they did not have the authority or space for gatekeeping or rigid boundary setting. Preston felt confused over his positionality. He explained,

> [The students] want a less professional relationship with me… I see it
> sometimes as problematic. I guess maybe I haven't figured out how to
> necessarily navigate that. Nor, do I think I have the power and privilege to be a
> professor and to have extra sets of boundaries or privilege and ability to navigate
> that.

Henry argued that while part of the role of a supervisor was to be a gatekeeper, he felt a lack of empowerment to fulfill this role with the student, as well as with the professors who are involved: "We're told that we're supposed to be responsible, but we have no authority." All participants discussed similar feelings of being unsure about their hierarchy in the program and their authority to gatekeep. Many discussed not being part of remediation processes and yet still finding themselves expected to continue to teach and/or supervise the student, often feeling stuck. Joanne explained, "…all these challenges of being put in uncomfortable situations, where not really knowing how to navigate between faculty and students when a student goes to remediation." Brook argued there should be some level of empowerment to exercise

counselor education roles: "We are put in this position that we have to grade, and we have to teach, and we need to be put in the position that we can exercise [our roles]."

Participants also experienced their program's rules and regulations as barriers to fulfilling their roles. Due to her MRRs as a teacher and a supervisor, Brook found herself unable to fulfill her role as a supervisor. The "clients" of her supervisees were her students, and she felt uncomfortable listening to their recordings. Brook explained: "We would agree that I wouldn't watch the tapes because those were my students… I felt like my supervisees were at a disadvantage because they wanted me to watch their tapes and give them feedback and I said no."

Although participants took responsibility for their own professional development experiences, they also argued that programs should have responsibilities over helping students to balance counselor education roles. This interaction between the responsibility of the CEDs and of the program play out in the resulting theory. Intentionality and early support for CEDs as they begin to explore MRRs led to more positive developmental experiences. As a result, CEDs developed stronger professional identity and ability to navigate ethical decision-making. However, without intentionality and support, CEDs found barriers to developmental growth.

Program Responsibility

Discussion of the program responsibility was mostly present during the portion of the interview that discussed the effects of MRRs and resources for management (see Appendix A). The emerging theory highlighted the expectations and responsibilities that CEDs had of their training within a counselor education doctoral program. The theory illustrated the interdependent nature of the program and CED in the developmental growth process. Program responsibilities of structure and support were clear, however, CEDs recognized their own responsibilities in taking a position of authority with counselors-in-training. Without program interventions to empower CEDs, such CEDs were limited in the ability to then enact their own responsibility to ensure ethical practice and developmental growth for the counselors-in-training with whom CEDs worked.

CEDs are responsible for managing and balancing MRRs, applying ethical decision models, and establishing boundaries. CACREP (2016) guides programs on how to foster counselor education identity and outlines the types of experiences CEDs must have in roles as a counselor, teacher, supervisor, researcher, and leader. Participants expressed a desire that programs consider ways to ensure that MRRs are growth-fostering and not limiting or developmentally harmful. Subthemes include the intentionality of the program, early discussion of expectations, and consultation and supervision.

Participants argued that multiple overlapping roles often led to the inability to fulfill certain responsibilities, specifically when it came to teaching and supervision. Participants argued that programs should minimize these barriers through intentionality, specifically considering how the placement of internship experiences, assistantships, or other roles conflicts or overlaps other roles CEDS are already fulfilling. Nicole processed, "If you are supervising somebody, I don't think you should be teaching them." Likewise, participants called for intentionality in not only the selection of roles but also how those roles were introduced. Preston explained, "There are a lot of expectations of what they [program faculty] want you to do, but, um, it's really something that I don't really feel is, controlled isn't the right word, is facilitated." Considering these challenges, participants requested the facilitation of conversations and guidance about balancing the counselor education roles.

All participants discussed how programs must also be intentional about having early discussions about expectations and management of MRRs. They argued that the discussion must happen at either orientation or before the first internship placement. Joanne explained,

I think that it would have been really helpful to have a heads-up kind of conversation entering supervision for the first time… here is what's going to happen when you start to get connected with and invested in these students. And you're gonna find yourself feeling torn, and you're gonna find yourself feeling pulled in different directions.

Courage said, "I wish that our faculty would've done a better job of modeling what those appropriate relationships looked like and actually having built in more into our classes discussions, hmm, surrounding MRRs because it wasn't really talked about much." Conversations and modeling of the balance of MRRs were often requested for participants who described struggling to manage roles. In contrast, those who were more successful at balancing roles and responsibilities credited ongoing consultation and supervision.

Supervision and consultation were essential for the participants' successful management of MRRs. Kennedy disclosed how two faculty members were fundamental to her development even outside of internship supervision,

The major resource for me has been faculty, there are two that I consider to be my mentors and advisors when I am having these issues, I can be very honest with them and then not having to filter what I am thinking and what I am feeling.

In contrast, participants who did not perceive themselves as receiving enough supervision, mentorship, or consultation about MRRs struggled with their management. Henry processed, "Navigating those relationships is difficult at times and it would've been nice to have someone that you could really sit down and talk to about how you navigate those." Consultation did not have to exclusively come from faculty members; peer consultation also assisted in the management of MRRs. Courage processed the importance of consulting someone she could trust by saying, "Developmentally it was like, Okay I need this peer support group to bounce things off of."

Interpreting the themes and categories found in this study, how CEDs successfully manage and balance MRRs starts with their program (see Figure 1). When the program is conscious and intentional about internship and role placing, has early discussion about MRRs, and provide constant consultation and mentoring, students are more successful. However, the program's responsibility alone does not complete the puzzle. To successfully manage and balance MRRs, students also must do their own work in understanding that MRRs are necessary for their professional growth, behave ethically, enforce healthy boundaries, and manage barriers that come with MRRs (see Figure 1).

A combination of efforts between the program and the student will increase the likelihood of success in balancing MRRs. This dynamic exchange of support and responsibility informed the resulting theoretical model (see Figure 1). Interpreting the themes and categories found in this study, how CEDs successfully manage and balance MRRs starts with their program. When the program is conscious and intentional about internship and role placing, has early discussion about MRRs, and provides constant consultation and mentoring, students are more successful. However, the program's responsibility alone does not complete the puzzle. To successfully manage and balance MRRs, students also must do their own work in understanding that MRRs are necessary for their professional growth, behave ethically, enforce healthy boundaries, and manage barriers that come with MRRs (see Figure 1). A combination of efforts between the program and the student will increase the likelihood of success in balancing MRRs.

Figure 1

Dual Responsibility Model of Balancing Counselor Education Roles
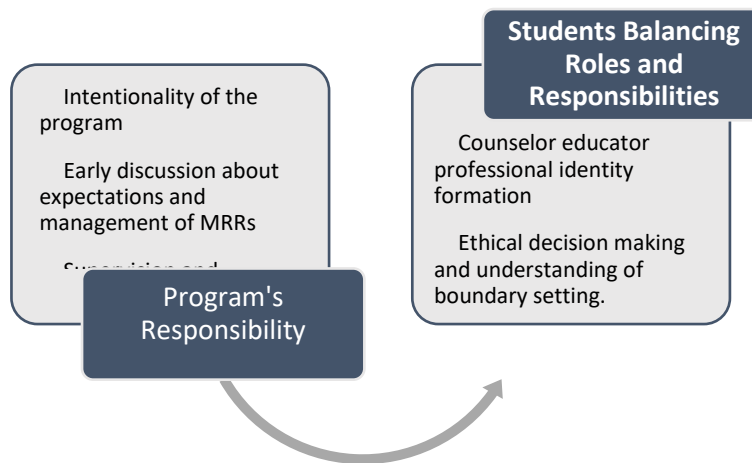
Discussion

This research resulted in the development of the Dual Responsibility Model of Balancing Counselor Education Roles. This model outlined two distinct responsible parties in learning how to manage MRRs of counselor education programs: the students and the program. On the student side, findings aligned with Dollarhide et al. (2012) and Limberg et al. (2013), who recognized that counselor education identity development required first-hand experiences with all areas of training. Participants recognized that being exposed to all counselor education roles was necessary for their growth as counselor educators. However, like prior authors (e.g., Dickens et al., 2016; Herlihy & Corey, 2014), participants argued that MRRs couldn't be avoided. These findings generally support the idea, based on CACREP (2016) guidelines related to doctoral and master's programs in counselor education, that MRRs among students within different programs are, in fact, inevitable.

Most participants found managing MRRs to be overwhelming and confusing. To be successful, they had to establish healthy boundaries and use ethical decision-making models. The principle of using boundaries and ethical decision-making models to manage MRRs aligns with previous literature (Herlihy & Corey, 2014) and the American Counseling Association (2014) Code of Ethics. Participants described adherence to ethical guidelines and principles; however, participant experiences also highlighted the complex nature of ethical decisions. For some participants, MRRs interfered with the responsibilities of their various roles. For example, a participant described navigating an issue of a student enrolled in an undergraduate course they taught for their graduate assistantship also being a client of the master's student that they supervised. Therefore, they had to navigate issues of their undergraduate student also being a client they observed in clinical supervision. This MRR represented an ethical dilemma for the doctoral student. These findings support previous literature (e.g., DeDiego & Burgin, 2016; Dickens et al., 2016) that highlighted how MRRs may have negative consequences in the developmental process of students. Additionally, Limberg et al. (2013) noticed that teaching and supervision were the most salient roles in the counselor education identity process, and yet those were the two roles that participants noted having the most difficulty fulfilling due to MRRs.

One last aspect of student responsibility came from feeling a lack of empowerment to fulfill certain roles. Participants noted they had no authority to practice gatekeeping or

participate in remediation processes, which aligns with existing literature (Rapp et al., 2018). Participants felt they were practicing certain roles (especially teaching and supervision) blindly without all the necessary information needed. This is partially supported and consistent with the findings of DeDiego and Burgin (2016); however, unique to this study was the desire for participants to be in the loop regarding remediation. Although the inclusion of doctoral students in remediation processes might not always be possible due to privacy laws, participants discussed the need for empowerment over remediation that involves their role with the students. Further, training doctoral students in remediation and gatekeeping represents a vital skill needed after completing a doctoral degree (Freeman et al., 2020; Rapp et al., 2018; Smarinsky et al., 2023).

The finding of issues of power within the structure of the graduate program has not been previously found in research in counselor education identity development or CEDs management of MMRs. Participants were put in positions requiring evaluation of and authority over master's students. However, they felt a lack of empowerment when it came to hierarchy in the program overall. Participants felt unsure whether they were respected by master's students or if they truly had the hierarchical power to make decisions such as grading and curriculum changes. Some CEDs questioned their capacity as leaders due to this and other dynamics. This seemed to mimic the concept of impostor syndrome as an internal barrier to professional development (Moore et al., 2021; Smarinsky et al., 2023). The theory from this grounded study research aligns with concepts related to student development in which students are initially uncertain and dependent on others for modeling, feedback, and support (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Limberg et al., 2013); through experiences, students build a sense of legitimacy and independence as part of their professional identity development.

Participants were aware of the likelihood of MRRs in their future careers as counselor educators based on modeling and transparency of their faculty. As part of the Dual Responsibility Model of Balancing Counselor Education Roles, programs are charged with intentional consideration of how they are introducing MRRs due to the nature and structure of graduate programs at various levels. This idea is supported by previous literature (Dickens et al., 2016; Smarinsky et al., 2023). Participants urged programs to clarify their roles and provide more guidance on expectations for how those overlapping roles should be managed. In some cases, participant examples illustrated the need for consideration of andragogy related to teaching about roles of counselor educators. Participants experienced connection and interaction between roles (e.g., teacher and supervisor) in practice but felt that roles were explored and taught separately in coursework. The dynamic nature of how roles interact are an important aspect of educator preparation. These interactions and conflicts create job-related stress and ethical dilemmas that may contribute to burnout for counselor educators (DeDiego et al., 2023; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013).

Implications

All roles in counselor education are inherent to the process of training future clinicians and educators. At face value, MRRs should not present ethical conflicts; however, the experience of navigating MRRs may be problematic. The Dual Responsibility Model of Balancing Counselor Education Roles (see Figure 1) calls for intentionality in considering how the structure and design of counselor education programs might create MRRs. Doctoral programs should present the topic of MRRs during orientation and have ongoing discussions of navigating such MRRs throughout the program. This would serve the purpose of preparing doctoral students to navigate MRRs. As part of program evaluation, counselor education programs might consider the implications of MRRs and gather student feedback about

experiences in navigating these conflicting roles from the perspectives of both master's and doctoral students.

As part of doctoral program student handbooks, programs should outline expectations and strategies for how to manage challenging situations and tools for ethical decision making when conflicts arise. Programs could consider drafting an MRR policy to guide relationships between student counselors and CEDs. Part of this might be guidelines for when reporting of ethical issues is required and to whom these should be reported. According to the Dual Responsibility Model of Balancing Counselor Education Roles, although CEDs must be exposed to MRRs, programs should attempt to reduce or strategically manage role conflict with the sequence of training experiences. Moreover, programs should examine CED developmental needs and assist in the integration of counselor educator identities by providing ongoing supervision and consultation inside and outside of class. With the integration of overlapping roles in counselor educator training, CEDs may consider how they will navigate future role conflicts as they navigate them within a graduate program as students. CEDs may consider including these considerations and policies of navigating ethical decision-making in their teaching philosophy statements.

Finally, Freeman et al. (2020) proposed a developmental experiential workshop where the CEDs process scenarios of gatekeeping and remediation. Although counselor education programs may not be able to include CEDs in actual remediation procedures due to privacy laws, CEDs could benefit from a deeper understanding of gatekeeping and remediation practices. When CEDs are teaching and supervising master's students who are on remediation plans related to problems of professional competencies, faculty members should provide concrete guidance regarding roles, responsibilities, and procedures for doctoral students supporting the student through the remediation.

Future Research

Although there is a growing body of literature regarding remediation in counselor education (e.g., Freeman et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2020; Rapp et al., 2018; Salpietro et al., 2021), attention is absent to the roles of CEDs who may be involved with remediation indirectly as co-instructors or supervisors. Additional research is needed to provide best practices for the inclusion of CEDs in remediation procedures. Most research has been focused on doctoral student development in the exposure of MRRs (DeDiego & Burgin, 2016; Dickens et al., 2016; Minor et al., 2012; Scarborough et al., 2006). Nonetheless, there is no research on the exposure to MRRs impact counselors-in-training development.

Lastly, more research is needed to explore the intentionality of programs in assigning internship roles and if there is an optimal developmental sequence for progressively immersing doctoral students into more complex roles. Additionally, how doctoral program coordinators choose doctoral students' internship assignments or details of their decision-making process is unknown. Understanding how to appropriately place students in internship roles can further our understanding of student development in counselor education programs.

Limitations

Most participants had a limited clarity of what qualified as MRRs. This restricted their understanding of how their roles may or may not be related to our inquiry, potentially limiting the number of participants and ability to obtain vital information about how CEDS balance MRRs during interviews. Additionally, constructivist grounded theory allows the interview guide to change as the theory emerges (Charmaz, 2014). The nature of this process excludes early participants from sharing information related to questions developed later in the interview

process. However, to address this limitation we used member checks of themes and categories to capture the aggregate experience and reduce misrepresentation of the process or participant experience. As part of the research design, we completed only one semi-structured interview with each participant, limiting the opportunity for prolonged engagement and triangulation of data collection methods. In this study, we attempted to maximize data collection via member checks post-interview. Lastly, data collection was reliant on participants' self-reports.

The nature of the research focus introduced limitations of bias in participant self-selection and information shared during interviews. Self-selected bias represents a limitation in that participants with overly positive or negative experiences may have been more likely to volunteer for the study. Further, participants with overly negative experiences may have been reluctant to share such experiences for fear of repercussions within their graduate programs. Perceptions and recall of participant experiences with MRRs may have been different resulting in overemphasizing or misrepresenting parts of MRRs. Further, the sample was predominantly White females under the age of 35, limiting representation of diversity in the findings.

Appendix A
Interview Protocol

Interviewee Pseudonym:
Interviewer:
Topics Discussed:
Documents Obtained:

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

Introductory Protocol
In order to ensure we correctly represent your voice in this study, we would like to audiotape our conversations today. I sent you a consent form with information about this study. Do you have any questions? For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. The consent form that you must sign states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.
We have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, we have several questions that we would like to cover. You can stop at any time during the interview if you wish to do so.

Introduction
Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of doctoral counselor education students who encounter multiple relationships with master's students in the same program.
We are trying to learn more about multiple relationships and their impact on their development as counselor educators.

A. Interviewee Background
First, I would like to get to know you a bit better. Tell me a little bit about you.
How long have you been in your present program?
What attracted you to counseling education?
B. Multiple Relationships
1.   How do you view multiple relationships in counseling programs?

2.   What type of professional counseling relationships did you have with counseling master's students?

3.   What type of non-professional relationships did you have with counseling master's students?

4.   How was your experience with both professional and non-professional relationships with master's students?

C. Effects of Multiple Relationships

5.   How did navigating multiple relationships with the master's students affect your development?

D. Resources

6.   What resources did you have to navigate through such relationships?

7.   What advice do you have for new students who are starting to be faced with the challenge of multiple relationships?

E. Wrapping up

8.   Is there anything we haven't talked about regarding your experience with multiple professional and non-professional relationships with master's students that you would like to tell me about?

Appendix B

In Vivo Codes	Process Codes	Focused Coding	Final Codes
My Development as A Counselor Educator	Growing As a Counselor Educator	Professional Identity Formation	***Program's Responsibility***
Developed In a Negative Way	Establishing Boundaries	Ethical Practice and Boundary Setting	1. Intentionally of The Program
Intentionality Of the Program	Asking/Needing Mentorship and Supervision	Barriers	2. Early Discussions About Expectations and Management Of Mrrs
Lack Of Authority	Feeling Stuck in The Middle	Programs Responsibility	3. Supervision and Consultation
Weird Hierarchy	Lack Of Empowerment	Intentionality Of Placement	
Miss Opportunities to Develop	Making Ethical Decisions	Conversations About MRRs	***Students Balancing Roles and Responsibilities***
Role Models	Feeling Missing Out of Experiences	Mentors And Supervisors	1. Counselor Educator Professional Identity Formation.
My Ethics and Boundaries	Needing Clarity/Expectations		2. Ethical Decision-Making and Understanding of Boundary Setting
Supervisors	Needing Or Expecting Support		3. Barriers in Fulfilling Counselor Education Roles
Mentors	Facing Barriers		
Requirements			
Experience			

| Authority |
| Unsupported |
| More Clarity |
| Connect With People |
| Unavoidable |
| Straddling |

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