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## Personal Boundary Issues in Counselor-Client, Professor-Student, and Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships in Counseling

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PERSONAL BOUNDARY ISSUES IN  
COUNSELOR-CLIENT, PROFESSOR-STUDENT,  
AND SUPERVISOR-SUPERVISEE  
RELATIONSHIPS IN COUNSELING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
the Counselor Education Program

by

Mark D. Thornton

B.A., Baldwin-Wallace College, 1998  
M.Ed., Xavier University, 2000

May 2003

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was designed to explore the acceptability of social, business, and romantic relationships in counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee relationships. In addition, the study sought to determine whether professors and doctoral students in CACREP-accredited counseling programs responded differently to ethical boundary issues, and whether the differences in relationships between professor-student, supervisor-supervisee, or counselor-client influenced their responses. The study examined and compared the responses of participants to boundary issues on three different surveys.

The results of the study revealed that personal relationships between counselors and clients were perceived to be less acceptable than relationships between professors and students and supervisors and supervisees. Personal relationships between professors and students were perceived acceptable at the same level as relationships between supervisors and supervisees with relationships between counselors and clients perceived as least acceptable.

This research study revealed a significant difference between perceptions of participants regarding the social, business, and romantic relationships. Participants perceived the social relationships to be most acceptable, the business relationships to be more acceptable at a moderate level, and the romantic relationships to be least acceptable.

Counselor educators and counseling doctoral students agreed regarding personal relationships in counseling in all but one of the six areas that were studied. A significant difference was found between counselor educators and counseling doctoral students in relation to the perceptions of personal social relationships. Counselor educators perceived personal social relationships between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees to be more acceptable than did counseling doctoral students.

This study found that, among counselor educators, as their ages increased, their mean score on the Counselor-Client Survey increased. This suggests that as the counselor educators' age increased, their perceptions that counselor-client personal relationships were acceptable increased as well. In addition, older counselor educators perceived romantic relationships to be more acceptable between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees.

This study provided information regarding the perceptions counselor educators and counseling doctoral students hold regarding the acceptability of personal relationships in counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee relationships. Additional research is needed to determine where the limits should be set for personal relationships (social, business, and romantic) between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Overview of Study**

The issue of establishing and maintaining personal boundaries among counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees has received considerable interest in recent times and has become a topic of debate among practitioners and educators alike (Bowman, Hatley, & Bowman, 1995; Glosoff, Corey, & Herlihy, 1996). Although much attention has been given to the ethical management of counselor-client multiple relationships, the ethical management of professor-student and supervisor-supervisee multiple relationships is ambiguous and essentially unexplored (Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997).

It was the intent of this study to explore personal boundary issues among counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees. The perceptions of counseling professors and doctoral counseling students related to the ethical appropriateness of vignettes depicting social, business, and romantic interactions were examined. The purpose of this study was to investigate and determine where professors and doctoral students in accredited counseling programs set boundaries in the three relationships: counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee.

### **Boundary Issues Highlighted in the Literature**

Kitchener (1988) has argued that all dual relationships have the possibility of being ethically challenging despite the roles of the participants. Areas of concern regarding boundary issues include, but are not limited to social interactions, business interactions, romantic interactions, mentoring interactions, and collegial interactions (Bowman et al., 1995; Glossoff et al., 1996). These personal boundary issues, as they relate to particular relationships, are applicable to professors and doctoral students, supervisors and supervisees, and counselor and clients.

### **Overview of Variables that May be Related to Boundary Issues**

Previous research on the topic of boundary issues has indicated which variables may provide demographic importance to the study (Bowman, et al., 1995). The independent variables that were employed in this study that seemed appropriate to personal boundary issues in the field of counseling, as dictated by previous research, consisted of age, gender, and position (professor or doctoral student). For the purpose of describing the participants, the following additional information was collected: race; ethnicity; number of years since the participant earned a master's degree in counseling or other related field; whether the participant was a supervisor or supervisee; and whether the participant held a license as a counselor or was a counselor intern. The respondents provided information regarding each of these independent variables by replying to items on one of the three forms of the Boundary Issues Survey (Appendices A, B, and C).

Participants were asked to respond to three vignettes related to boundary issues. They were then asked to indicate the degree to which they believe personal relationships

are acceptable. The boundary issues depicted in the vignettes were created based on previous research suggesting relationships involving social interactions, business interactions, and romantic interactions (Bowman et al., 1995). Each vignette has three versions (Appendices A, B, and C). Each version featured in the vignettes was depicted in the role of a professor and student, a supervisor and supervisee, and a counselor and client. There were three different interactions with three different roles with a total of nine different vignettes (Appendices A, B, and C).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Two of the qualities that seem to permeate numerous models of therapy and counseling relate to power and boundary issues. Corey (2001) has suggested that effective counselors are comfortable with and cognizant of their power and are able to accept and encourage others to feel powerful. Effective counselors, as well as those who maintain a position of power; recognize their influence on others, are content with their power, do not take advantage of vulnerability in a relationship or use their power to negatively or adversely affect others, acknowledge the power other individuals possess, and support others to utilize their power in healthy, functional ways (Corey). Likewise, power in the relationships of counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee is not used to influence those with less power or authority to behave in a manner that negates their own power and better serves those in the position of power. Professors, supervisors, and counselors should be aware of their power and should not use it in a way that suits their needs and, as a result, detrimentally affect the best interests of their clients, students, and supervisees.

Regarding appropriate boundaries, Corey (2001) contended that effective counselors make great efforts to be fully present with their clients and suggested that counselors leave their work at work and not bring it home with them. Likewise, capable counselors possess the ability to avoid inappropriate personal involvement with their clients and co-workers, which affords them balance in their lives (Corey). Establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries with others aids in preserving individual power while recognizing the power that others possess. Not unlike relationships between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees, maintaining appropriate boundaries remains an essential task for all parties involved so that objectivity is not lost, individuals are not taken advantage of, and power and equality are maintained by all.

Feminist theory in counseling is a major proponent of identifying and monitoring power differentials and its possible effects (Corey, 2001). This theory contends that even though there is a power differential within the counseling relationship, feminist therapists take great strides to eliminate or reduce the hierarchy of power and diminish arbitrary obstacles so as to establish a more equal relationship (Thomas, 1977). Feminist theory, stemming from a rebuttal of traditional male-dominated perspectives, is sensitive to the many ways individuals exert their power over others, particularly those who are vulnerable, and the effects of misusing power with others, particularly with those individuals who lack power. Generalizing this perspective to relationships beyond the counseling relationship, power within the relationship of the professor and student and the supervisor and supervisee has traditionally been based on a hierarchical system in which those in power have the ability to take advantage of those who are subordinate and

lack power. Following the concepts of feminist theory, the potential for harming those without power can be greatly diminished by reducing the power differential and supporting more equal relationships, while at the same time maintaining appropriate boundaries (Corey).

### **Importance of the Study**

Guidelines as to what constitutes multiple personal relationships among counseling professors and students and supervisors and supervisees, and to what degree they represent problems in the areas of social, business, and personal interactions, have yet to be clearly established among practitioners and educators (Bowman et al., 1995). Likewise, the issue of whether multiple relationships are acceptable between counselors and their clients has been debated in the professional literature. It has been contended that not only are personal relationships an integral part of the counseling relationship, but they are difficult to preclude (Herlihy & Corey, 1992). As a result of this ambiguity, it is the intent of this study to explore these issues more thoroughly with the expectation of developing a better understanding regarding personal boundaries in the three types of relationships found in the field of counseling (counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee).

Due in part to the lack of consensus among practitioners and educators, counselor education programs may not be appropriately addressing boundary issues within their curricula (Kimmerling, 1992). In order for education programs to properly prepare counselors, counselor educators, and leaders in the counseling field, there needs to be a clearer understanding of appropriate, ethical, personal boundaries. As the literature



indicates, there seems to be a lack of consensus regarding appropriate ethical boundaries and it was the intent of this study to increase knowledge and understanding regarding personal boundaries in counseling relationships (Bowman et al., 1995).

The results of this study provide important information concerning the perceptions of professors and doctoral students regarding boundary issues in the three types of relationships found in the counseling profession (counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee). The exploration of this subject matter should assist in establishing appropriate and effective guidelines for counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors. Likewise, clients, students, and supervisees would benefit if the findings lead to better practices in the area of managing personal boundaries in relationships found in the field of counseling.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the acceptability of social, business, and romantic relationships in counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee relationships. In addition, the study sought to determine whether professors and doctoral students in counseling graduate programs accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) respond differently to ethical boundary issues found in the field of counseling, and whether the nature of the personal relationships (social, business, romantic) makes a difference in their responses. It was the intent of the research to explore differences in responses to personal boundary issues among professors, among students, and between professors and students. Variance in the participant's perceptions as they relate to the ethical nature of relationships between

counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees was noted. The study considered the responses to personal boundary issues as they relate to participant descriptors of gender and age.

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1:

Does the type of professional relationship (professor-student, supervisor-supervisee, counselor-client) have an influence on the degree to which counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive personal relationships to be acceptable?

Research Question 2:

Does the nature of the personal relationship (social, business, romantic) have an influence on the degree to which counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive that relationship to be acceptable?

Research Question 3:

Do counselor educators perceive personal relationships to be acceptable differently from counseling doctoral students?

Research Question 4:

Do male and female counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive personal relationships differently?

Research Question 5:

Does the age of counselor educators and counseling doctoral students have an influence on the degree to which they perceive personal relationships to be acceptable?

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This study was limited to examining professors and doctoral students in those programs that award doctoral graduate degrees in counseling and are CACREP-accredited. Because the study was limited to participants who are professors and doctoral students in programs that are CACREP-accredited, other doctoral-level counseling programs may be different and the results may not be generalizable to those non-accredited counseling graduate programs.

This study was additionally limited by the data gathering technique employed in the survey instrument. Utilizing the Likert scale to examine the degree to which participants deemed the vignette ethically appropriate limited the possible range of responses for the participants. Because the scale ranges from one to five, with one representing complete disagreement and five representing complete agreement, participants may have chosen a response that did not completely represent their perceptions. Likewise, the nature of the vignettes was somewhat sensitive to socially acceptable responses and participants may have responded how they think they should have responded and not actually how they felt. As noted previously, the vignettes depict relationships that were ethically questionable and participants may have responded to what the ethical codes dictate, or seem to indicate, and not responded in accordance with how they actually perceived the relationship and interaction in each vignette.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

It was assumed that I identified the significant personal boundary issues from the literature. Those issues included social interactions, business interactions, and romantic

interactions. It was assumed that these three interactions played a significant role within relationships found in the field of counseling and that they were the personal boundary issues considered by most to be primary concerns within the counseling profession. Likewise, it was assumed that I identified the critical relationships in which counselor educators participate. Those relationships included counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee.

It was assumed that the survey instrument was clear, concise, and easily completed in a timely manner. It was assumed that participants responded openly and honestly to the survey and that they provided accurate demographic information. It was further assumed that respondents and non-respondents would not differ in their answers.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### Boundary Issues

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define instances in which individuals participating in multiple roles in the field of counseling struggle with the dilemma as to whether personal relationships are ethically acceptable.

#### Business Interactions

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define interactions where two people enter into a business arrangement in which each contributes financially and there is the potential of profit and the risk of loss.

#### CACREP

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define the Counsel of Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

### Client

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define an individual who is receiving counseling services from a counselor.

### Counseling Services

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define counseling, mental health care, and other related services, which are provided by a counselor to a client.

### Counselor

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define an individual who provides counseling services to a client.

### Doctoral Student

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define an individual who is currently enrolled in a counselor education doctoral program at a CACREP-accredited university.

### Dual or Multiple Relationship

For the purpose of this study, these terms were used to define a circumstance in which an individual concurrently or successively performs two or more roles with another individual.

### Personal Boundary

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define appropriate personal interactions between individuals that do not infringe upon ethical or moral obligations.

### Personal Relationships

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to identify social, business, and romantic relationships between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees.

### Power in a Relationship

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define situations in which one individual has authority or control over another individual.

### Professor

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define a full-time faculty member who teaches doctoral students in a CACREP-accredited counselor education program.

### Romantic Interaction

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define a relationship between two individuals that exceeds a social relationship and involves sexual or intimate feelings and behaviors.

### Social Interaction

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define a relationship that is amicable in nature, involves friendly interactions, and is not romantic.

### Supervisee

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define an individual functioning as a counselor and is supervised by a counselor supervisor or a counselor educator faculty member.

### Supervisor

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define an individual who directly supervises a counselor or a counseling student.

### Vignette

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define a brief description of a specific situation in which a particular relationship and interaction are portrayed.

### Vulnerability in a Relationship

For the purpose of this study, this term was used to define a situation where an individual is in a state where he or she can be easily taken advantage of by an individual who possesses power and authority.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter the literature review begins with multiple relationships in the field of counseling and how they are manifested. Multiple definitions of dual relationships are discussed and the varying perspectives regarding the ethical nature of dual relationships from the perspective of the counselor-client relationship, the professor-student relationship, and the supervisor-supervisee relationship are highlighted.

The chapter discusses the many variations of multiple relationships and the possible effects of such relationships as they relate to interactions between professors and students, supervisors and supervisees, and counselors and clients. Highlighted in the review of the literature are dual or multiple relationships and their association with the counseling profession, particularly within counselor education programs.

#### **Dual Relationships and Boundary Issues**

##### *Multiple Relationships Between Counselors and Clients*

The issue of counselors participating in dual relationships with clients has created controversy within the helping profession. The dilemma of whether it is ethical for a



counselor to undertake the role of a counselor with a neighbor, friend, relative, or colleague concurrently is an issue of great debate among practitioners and educators alike (Glossoff, et al., 1996; Remley & Herlihy, 2001). A dual or multiple relationship can be characterized as the simultaneous involvement of an individual in a variety of roles with another individual, including a professional role (Erickson, 2001). Erickson has defined a multiple relationship as holding another relationship with a client. It has also been defined as a relationship in which one individual, usually in a position of power or authority, concurrently or successively performs two or more roles with another individual (Burian & Slimp, 1993; Kitchener, 1988).

Although many professionals would argue that dual relationships have the potential to cause harm, others argue that not all types of dual relationships are harmful and, in some instances, they are difficult to avoid (Herlihy & Corey, 1992; Remley & Herlihy, 2001). Many have discussed multiple relationships from a variety of perspectives and have pointed out the common factors that tend to make multiple relationships troublesome. These factors include, but are not limited to (a) multiple relationships can be difficult to recognize; (b) they are not easily avoided at times; and (c) they have the potential to be harmful, but are not necessarily detrimental, and may occasionally be beneficial to the client (Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1993; Erickson, 2001; Herlihy & Corey; Remley & Herlihy; Welfel, 1998). Erickson and Sleek (1994) argued that multiple relationships with counseling clients are particularly difficult to avoid in rural settings when compared to larger communities. The difficulty with dual relationships is that at any time they can become capricious and confound the current professional relationship. Particularly when the second relationship

is not considered to be harmful, or even beneficial, safety measures need to be taken to ensure that the potential for harm is avoided (Erickson). Remley and Herlihy have contended that in chronological multiple relationships, rather than concurrent multiple relationships, possible difficulties can be challenging to anticipate. Just because the relationship occurs after a therapeutic relationship has terminated does not indicate that the potential for harm has been diminished. In relation to the potential for harm, the effects of a multiple relationship can range from exceptionally damaging to merely benevolent (Remley & Herlihy). For example, if a client has participated in a romantic relationship with a counselor, and the romantic relationship terminated in a hostile manner, the client may be detrimentally affected by the separation. Likewise, if a client has participated in an amicable, social relationship with a counselor, and the relationship flourished, it would seem consistent that the client would not be affected in a negative manner.

From a multicultural perspective, Helms and Cook (1999) have contended that it is appropriate to have contact with clients outside the counseling session. They focus on the issue of not causing harm to the client and have argued that a relationship away from the counseling room is not necessarily detrimental to the client. Rather, such interactions would be considered an extension of the counseling relationship.

Helms and Cook (1999) have advocated that counselors avoid becoming friends or acquaintances with clients, and have strongly objected to sexual relationships between counselors and clients. However, they have concluded "...that therapist-client relationships can be genuine with respect to race and culture, and that authenticity need not obliterate the boundaries of the participants' respective roles" (Helms & Cook, p.

196). For the counselor and the client to have an authentic relationship, appropriate boundaries need to be maintained while respecting the role of the counselor and the role of the client.

Whether dual relationships can be avoided or whether some are acceptable given that they are considered negligible have not been determined. However, the majority of professionals in the field of counseling would acknowledge that dual relationships encompassing more consequential roles related to employment or romantic endeavors are distinctly inappropriate. Despite the beliefs of some scholars, the fact remains that when a counselor participates in a dual relationship, the possibility of conflicting interests, a decrease in objectivity, and the potential for exploitation of clients still exist. Dual relationships between counselors and clients can be assigned to two basic categories: non-sexual dual relationships and sexual dual relationships (Herlihy & Corey, 1996; Remley & Herlihy, 2001). Within each category, there can be multiple relationships as well. For example, in a non-sexual dual relationship, the counselor and the client could participate in a business relationship. Likewise, in a sexual dual relationship, the counselor and the client could participate in a business relationship as well.

Because much of the scholarly literature in the mental health professions has centered on the detrimental effects of sexual relationships with clients (Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Herlihy & Corey, 1997), these findings do not imply that non-sexual relationships with clients lack the potential to cause harm to clients or counselors. Non-sexual multiple relationships between counselors and clients can be manifested in a variety of ways. Some possible scenarios might include the counselor (a) simultaneously acting in the role of a friend, neighbor, relative, teacher, or supervisor; (b) exchanging counseling

services for goods or other services; or (c) participating in financial interactions with a client other than for the services provided (Glosoff et al., 1996).

A multiple relationship that counselors participate in, that does not seem to negatively affect clients directly, occurs when counseling professors or supervisors mentor beginning counselors or counselors in training. Mentoring, a role considered to be an essential task of seasoned counselors, consists of an intimate working alliance, participation in joint research designs, and networking at both the professional and personal levels. In this type of relationship, it is critical for the professional to weigh the benefits against the possible risks due to the complex nature of dual relationships and the potential pitfalls involved. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the counselor to examine thoroughly the ramifications of a dual relationship prior to engaging in ethically questionable interactions. Consultation and peer mediation, with this or any other type of multiple relationship, are warranted and are the responsibility of the counselor to solicit (Glosoff et al., 1996).

Addressing the issue of multiple or dual relationships, the American Counseling Association (ACA, 1995) Code of Ethics warns counselors to avoid dual or multiple relationships whenever possible and suggests that counselors should be cognizant of the power differential within the relationship while avoiding taking advantage of the trust and dependency of their clients. The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT, 1998) similarly discourages multiple relationships and states that counselors should avoid taking advantage of the clients' trust and dependency while making every effort to avoid multiple relationships. The American Psychological Association (APA, 1995) additionally stresses the importance of recognizing that dual relationships, at times,

cannot be avoided and that in many settings and instances, it may not be practicable or realistic for psychologists to avoid nonprofessional interactions with clients.

Despite the different codes, as personal boundaries fluctuate over time, counselors are faced with handling these changes and it is their obligation to manage effectively the overlapping roles. It is the responsibility of the counselor to avoid multiple relationships that could exacerbate the potential for harm to a client. However, from an ethical stance, the occasional participation in a multiple relationship with a client can be warranted when the benefit to the client clearly outweighs the potential for harm (Remley & Herlihy, 2001). Nevertheless, it is the counselor's task to assess the possibility of this relationship adversely affecting the counselor's ability to maintain objectivity and equality (Glosoff, et al., 1996). The ethical dilemma and propensity to exploit the client is not associated with the duality of the relationship, but rather with the power differential between the counselor and the client. Tomm (1993) maintained that the dual nature of the relationship is not what leads the counselor to take advantage of the client, but rather the difference in power that leads to inappropriate behavior within the counseling relationship. As the discrepancy in power increases, whether actual or perceived, so too does the potential for exploitation or impaired judgment. Thus, for the benefit of the client and the counseling process, it is the duty of counselors to avoid relationships that could potentially hinder their professional judgment (Glosoff, et al., 1996).

Along with the potential for harm and power differentials, another component included in the complexity of non-sexual multiple relationships is exchanging counseling services for goods or other services, which is commonly referred to as bartering. This

type of system is usually employed when clients are unable to pay for services and counselors accept their fees in the form of goods or services. Although the arrangement seems harmless, the potential for conflict still exists. For example, the client may provide a service to the counselor for a counseling session and the counselor may not be satisfied with the service provided by the client. Likewise, the client may provide goods to the counselor for his or her counseling services and the client may not be satisfied with the counselor's services. Utilizing a bartering system may lead to resentment on the part of the counselor or the client and the counseling process could be hindered. Guidelines addressing this potential concern suggest that counselors should avoid receiving any goods or services from a client in exchange for counseling services due in part to the inherent possibility for conflict, exploitation, and the misinterpretation of the counseling relationship (ACA, 1995). Nevertheless, exchanging counseling services for goods or services is acceptable when the client is not being taken advantage of and it is at the request of the client. When a contract is written depicting the guidelines of the arrangement and the practice of bartering is an acceptable form of negotiating transactions among professionals in the community, exchanging goods and services for counseling services remains an appropriate means of carrying out business (Glossoff, et al., 1996).

Counselors sometimes experience sexual feelings towards their clients. The problem arises when the counselor chooses to act upon those feelings and attempts to procure a relationship with the client. Having romantic feelings toward a client and acting upon those romantic feelings represent two distinct, separate issues. Until recently, the majority of the participants in studies on therapist sexual attraction were

psychologists in private practice and university counseling centers, and social workers in community settings. Upon reviewing over 385 survey investigations, a summary of the results suggested that a large population of psychologists have experienced sexual attraction to at least one client, with male therapists indicating greater sexual attraction when compared to female therapists (Ladany et al., 1997). Although a small minority of the therapists occasionally contemplated a sexual relationship with their client, many experienced sexual fantasies about their clients. Therapists who were sexually attracted to their clients often encountered feelings of guilt, discomfort, and anxiety as a result of the attraction. Approximately half of the therapists surveyed found the sexual attraction to be beneficial to the therapeutic process, while the rest noted detrimental effects. Those who found the attraction beneficial to the therapeutic process noted that they felt more present with the clients to whom they were attracted and that they behaved in a more empathic manner with the same clients. Some of the therapists believed that the client was unaware of the therapists' attraction, and many more believed that the attraction was mutual. In regard to supervision and training, over half of the therapists involved solicited the assistance of supervision or consultation at least once with the belief that the relationship would be positive or collegial. The research indicated that about only half of the participants received little to no education and training regarding issues of sexual attraction (Ladany et al.).

In the past, sexual attraction toward clients was regarded as a component of countertransference, a reaction to the client's transference, or a particular problem with the counselor. Not until recently, however, were counselors' sexual feelings towards their clients considered a normal, although complex, dynamic involving common

reactions most counselors experience at some point in their careers (Ladany et al., 1997). Despite these feelings of attraction and confusion, counselors' participation in sexual dual relationships with clients is considered to be the ultimate ethical violation and, in some states, a legal violation as well (ACA, 1994; Glossoff, et al., 1996). Research has indicated that clients who have sexual relationships with their counselors tended to demonstrate behaviors similar to individuals who have been victims of incest, exhibiting powerful emotions of guilt, betrayal, and mistrust (Sonne & Pope, 1991). To further investigate this issue, Ladany et al. (1997) conducted research to examine the process of counselors' sexual attraction towards clients, the method in which counselors were able to employ supervision to aid them in managing feelings of attraction towards their clients, and the training they experienced in relation to feelings of sexual attraction. The study indicated that the therapists believed they were more attentive and invested in the clients to whom they were attracted, as compared to clients to whom they were not attracted, and that the attraction seemed to have caused a distraction, created distance, and decreased objectivity. In regards to supervision, roughly half of the participants divulged their feelings of attraction to their supervisor with the supervisors rarely initiating the conversation. Many of the therapists found it beneficial when their supervisors normalized the experience and furnished the opportunity to explore the sexual attraction in the safe environment of supervision. Ultimately, it was found that the therapists were dissatisfied with their training programs and believed that the issue of sexual attraction was not properly addressed (Ladany, et al.).

The ethical guidelines explicitly declare sexual relationships with clients as unethical and various regulations regarding licensure and state legislatures have begun to



enforce laws in conjunction with the ethical standards. Despite the rules and regulations, it is common for violations to occur as counselors participate in sexual relationships with their clients (Neukrug, Healy, & Herlihy, 1992). In reaction to earlier examples of counselors participating in sexual relationships with their clients, ethical guidelines were created specifically prohibiting sexual dual relationships with current clients as well as past clients. When referring to past clients, sexual relationships are not permitted until two years have elapsed since the counseling relationship was terminated. The guidelines also indicate that counselors are not permitted to treat individuals with whom they have had intimate relationships with in the past (ACA, 1995).

The issue regarding sexual relationships with former clients is still a topic of considerable debate among counseling professionals. Some counseling professionals would argue that just because the counseling relationship has ended does not imply that it is appropriate or beneficial to the counselor or the client to participate in a sexual relationship. Many professionals would contend that the potential for harm remains due in part to the continued power differential as well as the risk for exploitation. Many argue that sexual relationships between counselors and former clients is at no time ethical by virtue of the notion that the seeds of attraction were cultivated during the counseling relationship, where the flow of information tended to be one way with the counselors disclosing little about themselves (Glosoff et al., 1996). Supporting this position, Haas and Malouf (1995) found that even those clients who seem to have successfully completed treatment tend to work through some unresolved transference issues for a period of time following termination.

Although it is important to be cognizant of the potential for harm that exists because of the power differential and the remnants of transference, it is also important to take into account the variety of circumstances that occur within the counseling profession. Some professionals have argued that there is a difference between long-term treatment of pervasive personal issues and short-term academic, career, or developmental counseling (Glossoff et al., 1996). Forbidding all intimate relationships between counselors and former clients, for the simple fact that they were in a counselor-client relationship at one time, not only casts doubts on professionals' perspectives towards a client's ability to act autonomously and render appropriate decisions, but on the counseling process as well (Haas & Malouf, 1995).

While considering the many factors and influences that pertain to multiple relationships, the prominent influence affecting the ethical dilemma of sexual relationships, aside from the intensity of the counseling relationship, appears to be the issue of the amount of time that has elapsed since the end of the counseling relationship. Upon receiving valuable input from professionals in the field, a new standard was designed and implemented. As noted earlier, the ethical guideline forbids sexual relationships with former clients for a minimum period of two years preceding the termination of the counseling relationship (ACA, 1995). It is the responsibility of counselors, even after two years, to investigate critically and explore the circumstances surrounding the potential romantic relationship, examine their personal motivations for considering such a relationship, and make evident that exploitation of the former client has not occurred. Counselors must consider the former clients' perspectives, their motivation for engaging in a romantic relationship, and the possibility of clients suffering

from such a relationship (Glossoff et al., 1996). Because the counselor supposedly possesses the knowledge and authority to thoroughly examine all the influencing factors, ultimately it is the counselor's task to decide whether to progress with or terminate the romantic relationship. Only after the counselor has identified and examined all of the critical factors, the potential for harm has been negated, informed consent has been clearly demonstrated, and the minimum standards have been met ethically, is the counselor permitted to proceed with caution.

#### *Multiple Relationships Between Professors and Students*

Much like multiple relationships between counselors and clients, dual, or multiple relationships between professors and students from a variety of fields, including counseling, law, business, medicine, and other educational venues, have experienced increased attention in recent years and have become a topic of professional debate in higher education (Bowman et al., 1995). Although in some instances multiple relationships between professors and students may not be considered a legal issue, multiple relationships can potentially pose ethical concerns. Such relationships could pose as a legal concern, however, in that a student could sue a professor or university as a result of an inappropriate relationship. For example, the potential for harm could exist if a student felt damaged as a result of an inappropriate professor-student personal relationship and in turn, filed a law suit against that professor demanding compensation for damages.

In relation to the mental health field, much attention has been given to the ethical management of multiple or dual relationships between counselors and clients, but the ethics of professor-student relationships are unclear and largely unexplored (Biaggio et al., 1997). Dual or multiple relationships can be described as individuals participating in

other relationships in conjunction with a professional relationship with another individual at a particular time (Burian & Slimp, 1993). Kitchener (1988) has defined a multiple relationship as a relationship in which one individual concurrently or successively performs two or more roles with another individual. However a multiple or dual relationship is defined, Herlihy and Corey (1996) have categorized dual relationships as sexual and non-sexual. Sexual dual relationships may seem clear in that they are characterized by romantic interactions and sexual relations, whereas non-sexual dual relationships may not appear as obvious. Non-sexual dual relationships may be associated with or related to social, familial, financial, or business interactions in a personal and professional role (Herlihy & Corey).

Because the sexual dual relationship controversy in professor-student relationships has received broadened attention and has been deemed by some to be untenable, many universities and institutions across the country have adopted policies that prohibit professors and students from dating and having sexual relationships (Leatherman, 1993). To complicate matters related to professor-student relationships are the increased reports of sexual harassment, which have been defined as “unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power” (Blanshan, 1982, p. 16). As a result, both sexual harassment and multiple relationships share the same ethical issue; consent is diminished due to a difference in power (Bowman et al., 1995). When one individual possesses a position of power or authority over another individual and uses that power to persuade or influence that individual in a negative, self-serving fashion, the potential for harm is present as a result of the power differential. Another reason the potential for harm is considerable relates to the

individual who lacks power. The individual in the inferior position is unable to consent with reason to the requests made by the person in power and is more likely to ignore what he or she knows to be acceptable so as to meet the expectations of the individual with power.

Kitchener (1988) contended that all dual relationships possess the ability to be ethically problematic, particularly those involving sexual contact. She has offered three guidelines to assist in differentiating among relationships that are more likely to lead to harm and those that are less likely to lead to harm. The first guideline suggests that as the incompatibility of expectations intensifies, so too will the possibility for harm. When one person's expectations are high while the other person's expectations are low, the possibility for harm will be greater than if the expectations were neither are high or low, but somewhere in the middle for both people. The second guideline indicates that as the responsibilities associated with the distinct roles diverge, the possibility of a decrease in objectivity is likely and the threat of alienated alliances may increase. When the professional roles and the nonprofessional roles become dissimilar in nature, subjectivity may increase along with dissolution in the working association. The final guideline proposes that as the power and prestige between the professional and nonprofessional increase, so to does the possibility of the nonprofessional being exploited. As the professional possesses greater power and authority over the nonprofessional, the potential for harm towards the nonprofessional greatly increases (Kitchener).

Unfortunately, counselor education is not immune to these problems with power and authority and the issues related to dual relationships between professors and students is becoming a growing concern (Bowman et al., 1995). Areas of concern include, but are

not limited to mentoring, social interactions, monetary interactions, and friendships between professors and students, most of which appear to have been all but completely overlooked in the professional literature in counselor education. As a result, guidelines regarding what constitutes dual relationships and to what degree they may present a problem in relation to mentoring, social interactions, monetary interactions, and friendships have yet to be established (Bowman et al., 1995). Although mentoring relationships have the potential to be beneficial, they can also be plagued with problems due to their dual nature. One problem is that mentors may lose their objectivity and become personally involved with a particular student. As a result, other students may take offense to, or become envious of the intimate professor-student relationship and conclude that students in these mentoring relationships receive special treatment (Kimmerling, 1992).

Likewise, social interactions between students and professors can be both advantageous and detrimental to the student as well as to the professor. Models that predict student attrition indicate that extended periods of contact between students and professors tend to result in increased levels of determination, gratification, and attainment (Bean & Kuh, 1984; Pascarella, 1980; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975). Despite these findings, the more professors encourage their students to conduct themselves as equals, the more obscure are the boundaries between the professors as the teachers or even as the companions (Kimmerling, 1992). Particularly in graduate programs in counselor education, it seems inevitable that professors and students come in close contact, increasing the potential for dual relationships and subsequent abuse.

In an effort to explore and understand these dual relationship issues, Bowman et al. (1995) conducted a quantitative study to investigate professor and student perceptions related to mentoring, social interactions, monetary interactions, friendships, and romantic and sexual relationships. Although some trends emerged, the results indicated a lack of general agreement regarding acceptable relationships between counseling faculty members and graduate students. The primary trend in opinions that was evident related to gender differences with women clearly responding differently than men. Within both groups, women professors and women students were more likely to evaluate activities and relationships of an ethically questionable nature as unethical. Female professors perceived the attendance at public events as acquaintances and the sharing of private feelings with students as unethical. Female students noted that professors and students who depicted themselves as companions, professors and students who shared stories about others, professors and students who got inebriated together, and students who borrowed money from professors were all considered to be unethical (Bowman et al.).

The differences between students' and professors' opinions as to whether professor-student relationships were ethical in the Bowman et al. (1995) study were less remarkable. Some minor differences were evident when students indicated that it is unethical for professors to question or act upon information deemed biased, whether it was disclosed in a social setting or in a classroom environment. Conversely, professors considered it to be appropriate and ethical to address such situations. The results suggested that students seem to believe that they are caught in a bind when they are encouraged, as a part of their personal and professional development, to explore their

own values and prejudices, but the possibility of their ideals being used against them still seems evident (Bowman, et al.).

Lloyd (1992) stated that there appears to be a growing consensus within the counseling community that any type of dual relationship is inherently unethical. This view originated in reference to the relationship between counselors and clients and has apparently begun to overflow to professor-student relationships. Bowman et al. (1995) argued that relationships in academia function differently than counseling relationships in that professor-student relationships do not have counseling goals, do not have financial contracts between them, and in many cases, do not involve the disclosure of private information. It is the principal intent of professors to encourage, support, teach, and develop students into colleagues and professionals. It is for these, and many other reasons, that the extension of the counselor-client framework to relationships between professors and students appears not to be a valid method of delineating ethical behavior in these types of situations. Bowman et al. proposed, as a point of discussion for counselor educators, that rather than depicting dual relationships, which seem inescapable in many departments, as inherently unethical, attention would be better focused on the behavior of the individuals involved in the dual relationships.

Kolbert, Morgan, and Brendel (2002) conducted a qualitative study investigating the ethical appropriateness of multiple relationships in counselor education. The study, similar to the one completed by Bowman et al. (1995), suggested that both students and professors are aware of the intrinsic difference in power and allot responsibility for the preservation of appropriate boundaries to the professor (Kolbert et al.). The research indicates tangible differences between students' and professors' perceptions regarding



dual relationships in higher education. The results seem congruent with the findings of Holmes, Rupert, Ross, and Shapera (1999) in that professors would benefit from cautiously engaging in dual relationships with students that exceed the traditional boundaries of academic and professional roles. As a result of their findings, Kolbert et al. suggested that faculty should be more sensitive towards students' views, and incorporate programs that educate students on how to deal with violations, how to confront professors, where and how to seek appropriate mediation, and how to approach licensing boards. Supporting Kolbert et al., Johnson and Nelson (1999) have suggested that graduate programs create and enforce appropriate guidelines for dual relationships and vigorously educate professors and students about the nature, benefits, and risks of such relationships.

As a result of her research, Kitchener (1988) argued that professionals should be attentive to the possibility of conflict among the roles in which they participate and the expectations associated with them. This perspective implies that professionals should be conscious that different roles have the potential to influence others' expectations regarding their behaviors and these discrepancies in expectations could cause substantial discouragement and bewilderment. Professionals should be cognizant of the possibility for conflict among the responsibilities associated with each particular role the professional holds. To decrease the potential for harm, professionals should define clearly their role obligations and create procedures that preserve the interests of the consumer as first and foremost (Kitchener).

*Multiple Relationships Between Supervisors and Supervisees*

Dual relationships and boundary issues in the field of counseling are not exclusive to counselor-client and student-professor interactions. The supervisor-supervisee relationship is susceptible to problems regarding multiple relationships and boundary issues as well. The supervision association can be defined as a professional relationship between an experienced counselor (supervisor) and a counselor-in-training (supervisee) through which the supervisor takes full responsibility for the supervisee and the supervisee's clients (ACA, 1995). The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), a founding division of ACA, created the Ethical Guidelines for Counseling Supervisors for the purpose of assisting professionals in (a) observing the ethical and legal rights of client and supervisees; (b) meeting the training needs and professional goals of supervisees in a manner that is consistent with clients' interests and practical necessities; and (c) establishing guidelines, measures, and standards for executing appropriate programs (Falvey, 2002). When addressing multiple relationships, ACES guidelines state that supervisors who act in multiple roles with their supervisees should reduce the potential for conflict and, when possible, multiple roles should be split amongst many different supervisors. When this is not possible, a thorough description should be expressed to the supervisee regarding the expectations and responsibilities related to each of the supervisory roles (Falvey). Supervisors should not take part in any form of romantic or sexual interaction with a supervisee or participate in any form of social interaction that could have a negative impact on the supervisor-supervisee relationship. The supervisor should not establish with the supervisee any therapeutic relationship that would serve as a replacement to the supervisory relationship. It is the

responsibility of the supervisor to address issues that are affecting the supervisee as they relate to the impact the issues are having on the client and the supervisee's professional development (Falvey).

Another version of the supervision association exists where there is a relationship between an administrator and an employee when the administrator supervises and evaluates the performance of the employee. This type of supervisory relationship can be seen in counselor education where the chair of the program supervises the faculty within the program. Unlike the counseling supervisor, the administrative supervisor is not directly responsible for the students whom the faculty teaches (Falvey, 2002).

Much like counselor-client and student-professor relationships, supervisory relationships possess an inherent duality with a complexity involved that can foster a variety of concerns regarding appropriate boundaries (ACAeNews, 1999). Within the supervisor-supervisee relationship, boundaries can be difficult to define and maintain. Supervisors and supervisees may share a variety of roles, which include, but are not limited to co-workers, associates, age cohorts, instructors, and students. It is during the course of a supervisor-supervisee relationship, particularly in non-academic settings, that friendships tend to blossom and socializing outside the work setting seems acceptable, further blurring the boundaries (Cruikshanks, White, & Kimemia, 1999).

The standards in the ACA Code of Ethics (1995) that apply to faculty-student relationships are applicable to the supervisor-supervisee relationship as well. According to the code, the supervisor is responsible for defining and maintaining both the professional and personal relationship boundaries with the supervisee. It is the obligation of the supervisor to be cognizant of the power differential in the relationship and to

explain how the difference in power can possibly exploit the supervisee (ACA, 1995). As noted previously, the ACES Ethical Guidelines (2002) suggest that supervisors should avoid any type of social contact or interaction that may be potentially detrimental to the supervision relationship. A multiple relationship with a supervisee may hinder the ability of the supervisor to act objectively and professional judgement should not be rendered with the possibility of terminating the supervisory relationship. Both the APA (1995) Code of Ethics and ACES Ethical Guidelines clearly indicate that sexual contact is prohibited between supervisors and supervisees.

Much like ACES and ACA, the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC, 1997) addresses supervision and multiple relationships by stating that supervisors should “avoid all dual relationships with supervisees that may interfere with the supervisor’s professional judgment or exploit the supervisee” (Falvey, 2002, p. 143). NBCC concedes that not all multiple relationships are inappropriate, but any form of romantic or sexual interaction is regarded as a violation (Falvey). When addressing multiple relationships and supervision, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 1997) states that it is the responsibility of supervisors to respect the supervisee and to make great efforts so as not to misuse their position of power and authority while at the same time protecting the supervisees’ clients as well as the profession of social work (Falvey). The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT, 1998) sets forth guidelines addressing supervision and multiple relationships and states that the following characteristics are not acceptable in supervision: (a) supervision by a person that is considered a peer or of equal qualifications; (b) supervision by a current or former family member or any other individual where the features of the relationship would hinder or

prohibit the forming of a professional relationship; and (c) supervision by an administrator or executive performed to assess job performance and not the ability of the counselor to counsel clients effectively (Falvey).

Not unlike counselors and professors, supervisors having sexual feelings towards their supervisees and acting upon those feelings are two distinct, separate issues. Along with counselors and professors, supervisors, at some point in their careers, are likely to experience some sexual feelings towards their supervisees (Cruikshanks et al., 1999). The problem occurs when the supervisor acts upon those feelings and violates sexual boundaries. Violations of sexual boundaries consist of inappropriate behaviors, which include flirtation, soliciting dates, verbal or nonverbal behavior that may be perceived as sexually provocative (objective or subjective), sexual contact, and any other behavior that seems to indicate inappropriate sexual advances (ACA, 1995). Such sexual misconduct violations in counseling training programs stem as far back as the 1970s with rates reaching as high as 31% in supervision training programs (Jacobs, 1991; Pope, Levenson, & Schover, 1979). Female supervisees have been found more likely to be the recipients of sexual advances by professors and supervisors while male supervisors appear more likely to make sexual advances toward supervisees (Bonosky, 1995). Other research seems to indicate that female counseling supervisors more effectively manage sexual feelings toward supervisees when compared to male counseling supervisors, and it also seems that male supervisors experience sexual feelings in the supervision relationship more often than female supervisors. More recent findings imply that the greater the experience of sexual feelings in a particular instance, the less effectively supervisees are

being supervised, and the more likely a supervisor will violate sexual boundaries (Cruikshanks et al.).

As a result of their findings, Cruikshank et al. (1999) suggested that when managing sexual feelings in the supervisor-supervisee relationship, it should not be assumed that the attraction is assigned the same meaning in the context of supervision that it might be assigned in a non-supervisory, neutral context. If and when attraction arises within the supervisor-supervisee relationship, an attempt should be made to understand the parallel process in the client-counselor relationship. If the attraction were to interfere with the supervision process, the supervisor would benefit from seeking consultation and supervision. Ultimately, the occurrence should be that of a learning experience and it is the responsibility of the supervisor to model professionally appropriate behavior (Cruikshanks et al.).

### **Conclusion**

As noted previously, all of the ethical guidelines regarding multiple relationships between counselors and clients and supervisors and supervisees clearly state that sexual or romantic interactions are strictly prohibited. Although there are no clear, unified, all-encompassing ethical guidelines regarding multiple relationships, particularly sexual interactions for professors and students, the benefits and pitfalls of such relationships are clear. Other forms of multiple relationships within counselor-client, supervisor-supervisee, and professor-student relationships have been discussed and, although there are ethical guidelines addressing non-sexual multiple relationships, many have argued against avoiding all types of such relationships.

What remains clear among counselors and counselor educators is that the counseling profession remains divided on the subject of multiple relationships: when they are appropriate, when they are not appropriate, and how to effectively and fairly manage them within counseling, education, and supervision.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The research design and methodology employed in this study are discussed in this chapter. Included are the purposes of the study, the research questions, the research hypotheses, the sample, the variables under investigation, the instrumentation, information regarding the data collection methods, and data analysis procedures.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the acceptability of social, business, and romantic relationships in counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee relationships. In addition, the study sought to determine whether counselor educators and counseling doctoral students in CACREP counseling programs respond differently to ethical boundary issues, and whether the nature of the personal relationships (social, business, romantic) between counselor-client, professor-student, or supervisor-supervisee, influences their responses. The research study explored differences in responses to boundary issues among professors, among students, and between professors and students. The study considered the responses of participants to



boundary issues. A determination was made to include the demographic data of race, ethnicity, and number of years since they earned a master's degree in counseling or other related fields to see if these factors related to the manner in which participants viewed boundary issues. Other variables that were considered include whether the participant is a professor or student, supervisor or supervisee, or licensed counselor or counselor working toward licensure.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions considered by this study include the following:

Research Question 1:

Does the type of professional relationship (professor-student, supervisor-supervisee, counselor-client) have an influence on the degree to which counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive personal relationships to be acceptable?

Research Question 2:

Does the nature of the personal relationship (social, business, romantic) have an influence on the degree to which counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive that relationship to be acceptable?

Research Question 3:

Do counselor educators perceive the acceptability of personal relationships differently from counseling doctoral students?

Research Question 4:

Do male and female counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive the acceptability of personal relationships differently?

Research Question 5:

Does the age of counselor educators and counseling doctoral students have a relationship to the degree to which they perceive personal relationships to be acceptable?

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Research Question 1:**

**Does the type of professional relationship (professor-student, supervisor-supervisee, counselor-client) have an influence on the degree to which counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive personal relationships to be acceptable?**

Research Hypothesis 1-1:

Counselor educators and counseling doctoral students will perceive overall professional relationships to be most acceptable for supervisor-supervisee relationships, least acceptable for counselor-client relationships, and moderately acceptable for professor-student relationships.

Null Hypothesis 1-1:

Counselor educators and counseling doctoral students will not perceive overall professional relationships to be most acceptable for supervisor-supervisee relationships, least acceptable for counselor-client relationships, and moderately acceptable for professor-student relationships.

**Research Question 2:**

**Does the nature of the personal relationship (social, business, romantic) have an influence on the degree to which counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive that relationship to be acceptable?**

Research Hypothesis 2-1:

Counselor educators and counseling doctoral students will perceive business personal relationships to be most acceptable, romantic personal relationships to be least acceptable, and social personal relationships to be moderately acceptable for professor-student, supervisor-supervisee, and counselor-client relationships.

Null Hypothesis 2-1:

Counselor educators and counseling doctoral students will not perceive business personal relationships to be most acceptable, romantic personal relationships to be least acceptable, and social personal relationships to be moderately acceptable for professor-student, supervisor-supervisee, and counselor-client relationships.

**Research Question 3:**

**Do counselor educators perceive personal relationships to be acceptable differently from counseling doctoral students?**

Research Hypothesis 3-1:

Counselor educators will perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than counseling doctoral students for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

Null Hypothesis 3-1:

Counselor educators will not perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than counseling doctoral students for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

**Research Question 4:**

**Do male and female counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive personal relationships differently?**

Research Hypothesis 4-1:

Among counselor educators, females will perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than males for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

Null Hypothesis 4-1:

Among counselor educators, females will not perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than males for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

Research Hypothesis 4-2:

Among counseling doctoral students, females will perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than males for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

Null Hypothesis 4-2:

Among counseling doctoral students, females will not perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than males for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

**Research Question 5:**

**Does the age of counselor educators and counseling doctoral students have a relationship to the degree to which they perceive personal relationships to be acceptable?**

Research Hypothesis 5-1:

Among counselor educators, those who are older will perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than those who are younger for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

Null Hypothesis 5-1:

Among counselor educators, those who are older will not perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than those who are younger for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

Research Hypothesis 5-2:

Among counseling doctoral students, those who are older will perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than those who are younger for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

Null Hypothesis 5-2:

Among counseling doctoral students, those who are older will not perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than those who are younger for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships.

### **Sample**

Counselor educators and counseling doctoral students at 43 of the 44 CACREP-accredited universities in the United States were solicited to participate. The one university that was excluded from the sample was used in the pilot study. Those who

participated were randomly assigned to three separate groups and participants in each group received a survey different from the others. This was done to avoid contamination from one survey to another. The participants came from counseling doctoral programs within counselor education programs. Professors within the counselor education programs and students within the doctoral counseling programs constituted the sample. The sample size was large enough to produce reliable results.

In an effort to determine a suitable sample size, it has been suggested that the researcher consider the effect size, the power of the test, the groups of participants, and the level of significance (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1998). Power is defined as the probability of correctly rejecting the null hypothesis when it is false. Increasing the alpha level, or the level of significance, leads to a more powerful test because increasing the level of significance decreases the likelihood of making a Type II error, which is not rejecting a false hypothesis. Conversely, increasing the level of significance can increase the likelihood of making a Type I error, which is rejecting a true null hypothesis. Thus, it is the researcher's objective to reduce the risk of Type I and Type II errors. To accomplish this task, researchers tend to employ a significance level of .05, a level that the behavioral sciences have traditionally utilized to minimize such errors. Since Type I errors tend to be more detrimental than Type II errors, a ratio of 4:1 of ? to ? is the customary criterion with power being represented by the equation  $1 - \alpha$ . Thus, power will be set at  $1 - 4(.05)$ , or .80 for the study. With the ? set at .05, power set at .80, and the effect size considered large, each sample group should consist of at least 62 participants. Since this descriptive study was exploratory in nature and intended to explore perceptions of individuals, this traditional format was utilized. For the purpose of this study, the

alpha level was set at .05 due to the minimal consequences resulting from portraying a Type I Error. Likewise, with power being set at .80, constituting a large effect size, the consequences from portraying a Type II Error was minimized as well (Hinkle et al.). For this study, the sample consisted of 64 participants for each of the two groups with one group containing 58 participants.

## **Variables**

### *Independent Variables*

Previous research on the topic of boundary issues indicated which variables may provide demographic importance to the study (Bowman et al., 1995). The independent variables employed in this study, as suggested by earlier research, included age, gender, position (professor or doctoral student), whether licensed by the state as a counselor, and if acting in the role of the supervisor, supervisee, or both. For the purpose of describing the participants, the following demographic information was collected: race and number of years since earning master's degree in counseling or related field. The respondents provided personal data by replying to queries on the Boundary Issues Survey (Appendices A, B, and C).

### *Dependent Variables*

Respondents were asked to read three vignettes related to a specific relationship and boundary issue. There were three separate forms, each containing three particular vignettes. Form (A) has three vignettes depicted in the counselor-client role with each vignette characterized by a social relationship, business relationship, and romantic relationship (Appendix A). Form (B) has three vignettes depicted in the supervisor-



supervisee role with each vignette characterized by a social relationship, business relationship, and romantic relationship (Appendix B). Form (C) has three vignettes depicted in the professor-student role with each vignette characterized by a social relationship, business relationship, and romantic relationship (Appendix C). Essentially, each set of vignettes was fashioned in a similar manner so that they closely resemble each other with the only difference being the roles of the characters. For example, in the social vignettes, the situation is the basically the same on all three forms with the relationship of professor-student, supervisor-supervisee, and counselor-client changing across each vignette. The boundary issues depicted in the vignettes were created based on previous research suggesting relationships involving social interactions, business interactions, and romantic interactions (Bowman et al., 1995). As noted, each set of vignettes was depicted in the role of the professor and student, the supervisor and the supervisee, and the counselor and the client. There were three different interactions with three different roles with a total of nine different vignettes. The participants were asked to respond to a statement regarding the ethical appropriateness of each set of vignettes utilizing a Likert scale numbered one to five, one indicating complete disagreement with the statement and five indicating complete agreement with the statement.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument employed in this study was the Boundary Issues Survey. I developed this instrument for this particular study (Appendices A, B, and C).

### *Development of the Survey*

A review of the literature regarding boundary issues was completed before the development of this instrument began. Earlier research by Bowman et al. (1995) aided in the maturation and development of the Boundary Issues Survey. Although previous research investigated similar topics, the instruments used did not meet the particular needs of this study. As a result, the Boundary Issues Survey was developed to fulfill the distinct obligations of this research.

### *Pilot Study*

A pilot study was conducted at a CACREP-accredited university with the faculty of the counselor education program and the doctoral students in the counselor education program. The university in the pilot study was not included in the main study. I sent the information and the vignettes to the pilot study participants via electronic mail (e-mail). The information returned was routed through the university's computer and testing services system where it was sorted and compiled. By implementing this procedure, the participant e-mail addresses and other identifying information remained confidential and unknown to me. I implemented this format when surveying the intended sample.

The pilot study was intended to serve several purposes. The first purpose was to identify any particular problems with the formatting and implementation of e-mail as a form of gathering data. The pilot study assisted in assessing areas of concern as they related to the wording of the vignettes. The pilot study aided in the examination of the data gathering process and assisted in determining whether the survey worked as intended and whether the participants responded as expected. The final intention of the pilot study was to determine whether the planned data analysis system worked.

As a result of the pilot study, one problem did arise and the appropriate measures were taken to correct the area of concern so as to ensure proper procedures for the actual study. The issue that was evident as a result of the pilot study related to the vignettes and their ethical appropriateness. Feedback from pilot study participants indicated that the vignettes were distinctly ethically inappropriate and there was no variation among the respondents. To correct the issue, more ethically questionable vignettes were created, reviewed by the pilot study participants, and incorporated into the final study.

### **Data Collection**

The Human Subjects Review Board at the University of New Orleans was contacted prior to the onset of the study to request exemption based on the anonymity of the research participants (Appendix D). Approval was received from the board and the data collection process was initiated.

Prior to e-mailing information to all of the participants, e-mail addresses of the coordinators and chairs for each of the counseling departments of the 43 CACREP-accredited programs was gathered. This information was collected from the counseling web site ([www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)) under the CACREP directory. After identifying coordinators' and chairs' e-mail address, the coordinators and chairs were contacted requesting the e-mail addresses for all of the full-time professors within the counseling program and all of the current part-time and full-time doctoral counseling students in the program. The coordinators and chairs were also notified that they could disseminate the information to their faculty and students via e-mail and would not have to give me all the e-mail addresses for their faculty and students.

Upon receiving the necessary information and preferences, I sent an e-mail including a cover letter and one of the three forms of the Boundary Issues Survey to each of the participants at all of the accredited programs. The form of the survey sent to each participant was randomly assigned. The cover letter described the intent of the research, the confidential nature of the study, minimal risk of harm, the benefits of participating, and the potential results the study could produce (Appendix E). Two weeks later, I repeated the same process by e-mailing all the participants another cover letter and a follow-up reminder requesting those individuals who have not completed the survey to do so and e-mail it back as soon as possible (Appendix E).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the acceptability of social, business, and romantic relationships in counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee relationships. In addition, the study sought to determine whether professors and doctoral students in CACREP counseling programs respond differently to ethical boundary issues, and whether the differences in relationships between professor-student, supervisor-supervisee, or counselor-client influence their responses. Relationships in this study were characterized as social relationships, business relationships, or romantic relationships and the study explored differences in responses to boundary issues among professors, among students, and between professors and students. The study considered the responses of participants to boundary issues. A decision was made to analyze the demographic data related to race, ethnicity, and number of years since earning a master's degree in counseling or other related fields to determine whether these factors related to the manner in which participants viewed boundary issues. Other variables that were considered included whether the participant was a professor or student, supervisor or supervisee, or licensed counselor or counselor working toward licensure.

### **Characteristics of the Sample**

Although a great deal of interest has been focused on the ethical management of counselor-client multiple relationships, the ethical management of professor-student and supervisor-supervisee multiple relationships is uncertain and largely unexplored (Biaggio et al., 1997). In order to assess perceptions in regard to multiple relationships and personal boundary issues, counselor educators and counseling doctoral students from the 43 CACREP-accredited universities in the United States that offered doctoral degrees in Spring of 2003 were solicited to participate in the study. Of the 43 CACREP-accredited universities, 42 were solicited to take part in the study, and 33 distributed survey forms to faculty and doctoral students. The one university that was not solicited to take part in the study was the University of New Orleans. The University of New Orleans participated in the pilot study and assisted in the development of the survey. Those respondents who participated in the study came from counseling doctoral programs within counselor education programs. Professors within the counselor education programs and students within the doctoral counseling programs constituted the sample.

Participants were asked to indicate their gender. Descriptive data for the participants' responses are represented in Table 1.

**Table 1**Frequency Distribution by Gender

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	120	64.4
Male	65	35.1
No Response	1	.5
Total	N=186	100.0%

Men represented just over 35% of the participants. More than 64% of the respondents were women. Since women constitute nearly two-thirds of all counselors, this sample appears to represent counselors in general in relation to gender (Bowman et al., 1995).

Participants were asked to indicate their age. Descriptive data for the participants' responses are represented in Table 2.

**Table 2**Frequency Distribution by Age

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Age		
0	14	7.5
22	2	1.1
23	9	4.8
24	8	4.3
25	2	1.1
26	1	.5
27	2	1.1
28	10	5.4
29	5	2.7

30	1	.5
31	8	4.3
32	7	3.8
33	11	5.9
34	11	5.9
35	13	7.0
36	3	1.6
37	7	3.8
38	5	2.7
39	2	1.1
40	3	1.6
41	2	1.1
42	1	.5
44	10	5.4
45	1	.5
47	6	3.2
48	2	1.1
49	4	2.2
50	5	2.7
51	3	1.6
52	3	1.6
53	4	2.2
54	2	1.1
55	3	1.6
56	3	1.6
57	1	.5
58	1	.5
59	1	.5
60	2	1.1
61	2	1.1
62	1	.5
64	1	.5
65	2	1.1
66	1	.5
67	1	.5
No Response	0	0.0
Total	N=186	100.0%

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About half of the respondents were between the ages of 22 and 34, while the remaining portion of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 67.



Participants were asked to indicate their race. Descriptive data for the participants' responses are represented in table 3.

**Table 3**

Frequency Distribution by Race

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Race		
African American	15	8.1
Asian American	2	1.1
Caucasian	145	78.0
Hispanic American	4	2.2
Native American	1	.5
Other	16	8.6
No Response	3	1.6
Total	N=186	100.0%

Caucasians represented 78% of the participants surveyed, while about 20% of the respondents identified themselves from racial groups other than Caucasian.

Participants were asked to indicate their current position. Descriptive data for the participants' responses are represented in Table 4.

**Table 4**Frequency Distribution by Position

Characteristics	Frequency
<b>Position</b>	
Student	112
Professor	64
Supervisor	69
Supervisee	44
Licensed Counselor	54
In Supervision for Counselor Licensure	23

Of the 186 respondents, 112 of the participants identified themselves as students with 64 of the participants identifying themselves as professors. There were 69 supervisors and 44 supervisees among the respondents. A total of 23 respondents were currently in supervision toward counselor licensure and 54 of the respondents identified themselves as licensed counselors. It should be noted that the participants could be in more than one category.

Participants were asked to indicate the number of years since they earned a master's degree in counseling or related field. Descriptive data for the participants' responses are represented in Table 5.

**Table 5**Frequency Distribution by Experience

Years Since Earning a Master's Degree	Frequency	Percent
Experience		
0	43	23.1
1	6	3.2
2	10	5.4
3	10	5.4
4	4	2.2
5	18	9.7
6	4	2.2
7	8	4.3
8	14	7.5
9	5	2.7
10	6	3.2
12	3	1.6
13	6	3.2
14	4	2.2
15	3	1.6
17	4	2.2
19	1	.5
20	4	2.2
21	1	.5
25	2	1.1
27	1	.5
28	3	1.6
29	1	.5
30	5	2.7
32	1	.5
33	5	2.7
35	2	1.1
36	1	.5
37	1	.5
38	3	1.6
39	1	.5
42	1	.5
No Response	5	2.7
Total	N=186	100.0%

About half of the participants possessed experience of 6 years or less with the remaining half of the participants possessing between 7 and 42 years of experience. Since two-thirds of the participants were doctoral students, the results are not surprising.

Each of the 186 participants in the study was randomly assigned to one of three relationships involving boundary issues (counselor-client, professor-student, or supervisor-supervisee) to which they were asked to rate the appropriateness of the relationship. A portion of the 186 participants (n=64) was asked to indicate their perceptions related to the ethical appropriateness of vignettes depicted in the Counselor-Client Survey (Appendix A). The respondents utilized a five point Likert scale with response choices that ranged from (1) completely disagree to (5) completely agree. A score of (1) indicated the respondent completely disapproved of the relationship and a score of (5) indicated the respondent completely approved of the relationship. Descriptive data for the participants' responses are represented in Table 6.

**Table 6**

Mean Distribution by Counselor-Client Survey

(1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Completely Agree)

Characteristics	Mean	Standard Deviation
Relationship		
Social	2.8906	1.1834
Business	2.0313	1.2844
Romantic	2.1563	1.2372

N=64

Respondents to the Counselor-Client Survey perceived the Social relationship to be neutral, whereas the Romantic and Business relationships between counselors and clients were perceived as somewhat inappropriate.

A portion of the 186 participants (n=58) was asked to indicate their perceptions related to the ethical appropriateness of vignettes depicted in the Professor-Student Survey (Appendix C). The respondents utilized a five point Likert scale with response choices that ranged from (1) completely disagree to (5) completely agree. A score of (1) indicated the respondent completely disapproved of the relationship and a score of (5) indicated the respondent completely approved of the relationship. Descriptive data for the participants' responses are represented in Table 7.

**Table 7**

Mean Distribution by Professor-Student Survey

(1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Completely Agree)

Characteristics	Mean	Standard Deviation
Relationship		
Social	4.2241	.9919
Business	3.4828	1.3277
Romantic	2.6034	1.4622

N=58

Respondents to the Professor-Student Survey perceived the Social relationship to be somewhat acceptable, the Business relationship to be more neutral, and the Romantic relationship to be between neutral and somewhat unacceptable.

A portion of the 186 participants (n=64) was asked to indicate their perceptions related to the ethical appropriateness of vignettes depicted in the Supervisor-Supervisee Survey (Appendix B). The participants utilized a five point Likert scale with response choices that ranged from (1) completely disagree to (5) completely agree. A score of (1) indicated the respondent completely disapproved of the relationship and a score of (5) indicated the respondent completely approved of the relationship. Descriptive data for the participants' responses are represented in Table 8.

**Table 8**

Mean Distribution by Supervisor-Supervisee Survey

(1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree,

5 = Completely Agree)

Characteristics	Mean	Standard Deviation
Relationship		
Social	3.7500	1.1268
Business	2.9531	1.1876
Romantic	2.5625	1.3437
N=64		

Respondents to the Supervisor-Supervisee Survey perceived the social relationship to be somewhat acceptable, the business relationship to be neutral, and the romantic relationship to be between neutral and somewhat unacceptable

## **Data Analysis**

### Research Question 1

Does the type of professional relationship (counselor-client, professor-student, supervisor-supervisee) have an influence on the degree to which counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive personal relationships to be acceptable?

#### Test of Hypothesis 1-1

Hypothesis 1-1 stated that counselor educators and counseling doctoral students will perceive overall professional relationships to be most acceptable for supervisor-supervisee relationships, least acceptable for counselor-client relationships, and moderately acceptable for professor-student relationships. This hypothesis was examined by comparing the means of the variables to determine the influence each type of relationship (counselor-client, professor-student, supervisor-supervisee) had on the perceptions of counselor educators and counseling doctoral students.

The data are presented in Table 9, Table 10, and Table 11 regarding the perceptions of counselor educators and counseling doctoral students of the ethical appropriateness of the three types of professional relationships, (social, business, and romantic) between Counselor-Client, Professor-Student, and Supervisor-Supervisee.

**Table 9**Comparison of Means Based on Ethical Appropriateness of Relationship

(1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Completely Agree)

Characteristics	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Professional Relationship			
Counselor-Client	64	2.3594	.8934
Professor-Student	58	3.4368	.9896
Supervisor-Supervisee	64	3.0885	.9488

**Table 10**Test of Means Based on Ethical Appropriateness of Relationship with an ANOVA

	SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	35.500	2	17.750	19.756*	.000
Within Groups	161.724	180	.898		
Total	197.224	182			

\*  $p < .05$

**Table 11**Test of Means Based on Ethical Appropriateness of Relationship with a Tukey Post-HocTest

Survey	Survey	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Counselor-Client/Supervisor-Supervisee		.7031*	.16957	.000
Supervisor-Supervisee/Professor-Student		.3627	.17249	.092
Counselor-Client/Professor-Student		1.0658*	.17315	.000

\*  $p < .05$



By utilizing an ANOVA to examine the data, a significant difference was found among the three groups ( $F = 19.756, p < .05$ ). A Tukey Post Hoc test of the ANOVA revealed significant differences between Counselor-Client and Supervisor-Supervisee as well as significant differences between Counselor-Client and Professor-Student.

There were no significant differences in the way participants perceived the overall ethical appropriateness of relationships between professors and students and relationships between supervisors and supervisees. Relationships between counselors and clients were perceived to be less acceptable than relationships between professors and students and supervisors and supervisee. These findings partially support hypothesis 1-1. Professor-Student relationships were perceived as similarly acceptable to Supervisor-Supervisee relationships. As hypothesized, Counselor-Client relationships were perceived as least acceptable.

### Research Question 2

Does the nature of the personal relationship (social, business, romantic) have an influence on the degree to which counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive that relationship to be acceptable?

#### Test of Hypothesis 2-1

Hypothesis 2-1 stated that counselor educators and counseling doctoral students will perceive business personal relationships to be most acceptable, romantic personal relationships to be least acceptable, and social personal relationships to be moderately acceptable for counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee relationships. This hypothesis was examined by comparing the means to make evident

the influence each type of relationship (social personal, business personal, and romantic personal) had on the perceptions of counselor educators and counseling doctoral students.

The data is presented in Table 12 and Table 13 regarding the perceptions of counselor educators and counseling doctoral students of the ethical appropriateness of personal relationships.

**Table 12**

Comparison of Means Based on Ethical Appropriateness of Relationship

(1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Completely Agree)

Characteristics	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Relationship			
Social Relationship	186	3.6033	1.2370
Business Relationship	186	2.8043	1.3927
Romantic Relationship	186	2.4432	1.3546

**Table 13**

Comparison of Means Based on Ethical Appropriateness of Relationship Utilizing Paired

Samples T-Tests

Relationship	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair					
Social/Romantic	1.1576	1.53008	10.263*	183	.000
Business/Social	.7814	1.23426	8.565*	182	.000
Romantic/Business	.3641	1.51964	3.250*	183	.001

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Because each relationship was similar across the three surveys, Paired Samples T-Tests were utilized to make evident any significant differences between the relationships. The results indicate a significant difference between the romantic and business relationship ( $M=.3641$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that the participants perceived the business relationship to be more acceptable than the romantic relationship. A significant difference was found between the business and social relationship ( $M=.7814$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that the participants perceived the social relationship to more acceptable than the business relationship. The final significant difference found related to the social and romantic relationship ( $M=1.1576$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that the participants perceived the social relationship to be more acceptable than the romantic relationship.

When observing the mean score for the three relationships, participants perceived the overall ethical appropriateness of the social relationship to be the most acceptable, the business relationship to be moderately acceptable, and the romantic relationship to be the least acceptable. These findings partially support hypothesis 2-1. The social relationship was perceived as more acceptable than the business relationship. As hypothesized, the romantic relationship was perceived as least acceptable.

### Research Question 3

Do counselor educators perceive personal relationships to be acceptable differently from counseling doctoral students?

#### Test of Hypothesis 3-1

Hypothesis 3-1 stated that counselor educators would perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than counseling doctoral students for each of the

following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships. To test this hypothesis, independent t-tests were employed to determine whether the differences between counselor educators and counseling doctoral students regarding the appropriateness of the six relationships were statistically significant.

Data are presented in Table 14 regarding the differences between counselor educators and counseling doctoral students in relation to the six different relationships.

**Table 14**

Comparison of Means Based on Ethical Appropriateness of Personal and Professional

Relationship

(1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Completely Agree)

Characteristics	Counselor Educator	Counseling Student		Sig.
	Mean	Mean	df	
<b>Professional Relationship</b>				
Counselor-Client	2.3333	2.2619	55	.716
Professor-Student	3.3718	3.6111	55	.387
Supervisor-Supervisee	3.0476	3.0076	55	.570
<b>Personal Relationship</b>				
Social Relationship	3.8393*	3.4655*	55	.042
Business Relationship	2.7679	2.7778	55	.881
Romantic Relationship	2.3750	2.4188	55	.935

\*  $p < .05$

Counselor educators perceived personal relationships to be acceptable to the same degree as counseling doctoral students for five of the six relationships examined:

counselor-client relationships, professor-student relationships, supervisor-supervisee

relationships, business personal relationships, and romantic personal relationships. A significant difference was found between counselor educators and counseling doctoral students in regard to personal social relationships ( $F = 4.212, p < .05$ ). Counseling doctoral students perceived personal social relationships between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees to be less acceptable than did counselor educators.

#### Research Question 4

Do male and female counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceive personal relationships differently?

#### Test of Hypothesis 4-1

Hypothesis 4-1 stated that among counselor educators, females would perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than males for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships. To test this hypothesis, independent t-tests were employed to determine whether differences between male and female counselor educators, regarding the appropriateness each of the six relationships, were statistically significant.

The data are presented in Table 15 regarding the differences between male counselor educators and female counselor educators of the acceptability of the six different relationships.

**Table 15**

Comparison of Means Based on Ethical Appropriateness of Personal and Professional Relationship

(1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Completely Agree)

Characteristics	Male Counselor Educators Mean	Female Counselor Educators Mean	df	Sig.
<b>Professional Relationship</b>				
Counselor-Client	2.6190	2.1111	15	.106
Professor-Student	3.4048	3.3333	24	.872
Supervisor-Supervisee	3.0000	3.3333	11	.651
<b>Personal Relationship</b>				
Social Relationship	4.0357	3.5600	52	.109
Business Relationship	2.8214	2.7600	52	.880
Romantic Relationship	2.4643	2.3600	52	.791

\*  $p < .05$

The results indicated that no significant differences were found between female counselor educators and male counselor educators in regard to the acceptability of professional and personal relationships. Despite the finding that there were no significant differences observed, the means suggest that female counselor educators may generally perceive relationships between counselors and clients and professors and students to be less acceptable than male counselor educators.

Test of Hypothesis 4-2:

Hypothesis 4-2 stated that among counseling doctoral students, females will perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than males for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-

supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships. To test this hypothesis, independent t-tests were employed to determine whether differences between male and female counseling doctoral students, regarding the appropriateness of the six relationships, were statistically significant.

The data is presented in Table 16 regarding the differences between male counseling doctoral students and female counseling doctoral students of the acceptability of the six different relationships.

**Table 16**

Comparison of Means Based on Ethical Appropriateness of Personal and Professional

Relationship

(1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Completely Agree)

Characteristics	Male Counseling Doctoral Student Mean	Female Counseling Doctoral Student Mean	df	Sig.
Professional Relationship				
Counselor-Client	2.3333	2.2188	40	.739
Professor-Student	3.8333	3.5556	27	.515
Supervisor-Supervisee	2.9216	2.9872	27	.809
Personal Relationship				
Social Relationship	3.4333	3.4146	112	.946
Business Relationship	2.8667	2.6988	112	.563
Romantic Relationship	2.3000	2.4217	112	.667

\*  $p < .05$

The results indicated that no significant differences were found between female counseling doctoral students and male counseling doctoral students in regard to the acceptability of professional and personal relationships.

### Research Question 5

Does the age of counselor educators and counseling doctoral students have a relationship to the degree to which they perceive personal relationships to be acceptable?

#### Test of Hypothesis 5-1

Hypothesis 5-1 stated that among counselor educators, those who are older will perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than those who are younger for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships. To test this hypothesis, correlations were employed to determine whether any significant relationships existed between the age of counselor educators and their perceptions regarding the appropriateness of the six relationships.

Data are presented in Table 17 regarding the significant correlations between the age of the counselor educators and their perceptions related to the ethical appropriateness of the relationships.



**Table 17**Correlation Among Variables for Counselor Educators

Variables	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Age x Counselor-Client Relationship	16	.537*	.032
Age x Professor-Student Relationship	25	.148	.480
Age x Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship	13	.070	.819
Age x Social Relationship	54	.093	.505
Age x Business Relationship	54	.114	.413
Age x Romantic Relationship	54	.330*	.015

---

\*  $r < .05$  (2-tailed)

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the participants' age and their perceptions of the six types of relationships. Hypothesis 5-1 was not supported by the results.

A significant positive correlation was found for counselor-client relationships ( $r(14) = .537, p < .05$ ), indicating a relationship between the age of the counselor educators and their responses on the Counselor-Client Survey (Appendix A). As the age of counselor educators increased, their mean score on the Counselor-Client Survey increased as well, indicating that older counselor educators perceived counselor-client social, business, and romantic relationships to be more acceptable than did younger counselor educators.

A significant positive correlation was found for romantic relationships ( $r(52) = .330, p < .05$ ), indicating a relationship between the age of the counselor educators and their responses to the romantic relationships. As the age of the counselor educators increased, so too did their mean score for the romantic relationships, indicating that older counselor educators perceived romantic relationships between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees to be more acceptable than did younger counselor educators.

#### Test of Hypothesis 5-2

Hypothesis of 5-2 stated that among counseling doctoral students, those who are older will perceive personal relationships to be less acceptable than those who are younger for each of the following: (A) counselor-client relationships; (B) professor-student relationships; (C) supervisor-supervisee relationships; (D) social personal relationships; (E) business personal relationships; and (F) romantic personal relationships. To test this hypothesis, correlations were employed to determine whether any significant relationships existed between the age of the counseling doctoral students and their perceptions regarding the appropriateness of the six relationships.

The data are presented in Table 18 regarding the correlations between the age of the counseling doctoral students and their perceptions related to the ethical appropriateness of the relationships.

**Table 18**Correlation Among Variables for Counseling Doctoral Students

Variables	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Age x Counselor-Client Relationship	41	-.370*	.017
Age x Professor-Student Relationship	28	.408*	.031
Age x Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship	43	.025	.875
Age x Social Relationship	112	-.077	.422
Age x Business Relationship	112	-.092	.335
Age x Romantic Relationship	112	.102	.281

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\*  $r < .05$  (2-tailed)

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the participant's age and their perceptions of the six types of relationships. Hypothesis 5-2 was not supported by the results.

A significant negative correlation was found for counselor-client relationships ( $r(39) = -.370, p < .05$ ), indicating an inverse relationship between the age of the counseling doctoral students and their responses on the Counselor-Client Survey (Appendix A). As the age of counseling doctoral students increased, their mean score on the Counselor-Client Survey decreased, indicating that older counseling doctoral students perceived counselor-client social, business, and romantic relationships to be less acceptable than did younger counseling doctoral students.

A significant positive correlation was found for professor-student relationships ( $r(26) = .408, p < .05$ ), indicating a relationship between the age of the counseling doctoral students and their responses on the Professor-Student Survey (Appendix C). As the age of the counseling doctoral students increased, so too did their mean score on the Professor-Student Survey, indicating that older counseling doctoral students perceived social, business, and romantic relationships between professors and students to be more acceptable than did the younger counseling doctoral students.

### **Summary**

The demographic data indicated that the majority of the individuals participating in the research were female and enrolled as doctoral students. Nearly three-quarters of the participants were Caucasian and under the age of 44, with a large percentage of the respondents possessing up to 10 years of experience in the counseling field.

The inferential data demonstrated a significant difference between professors and students in relation to their perceptions of the acceptability of social relationships in that professors perceived social relationships to be more acceptable than did counseling doctoral students. Four significant correlations were found and they were all correlated with the age of the professors and students. Older counselor educators perceived counselor-client and romantic relationships to be more acceptable than did younger counselor educators. Older counseling doctoral students perceived counselor-client relationships to be less acceptable and professor-student relationships to be more acceptable than did younger counseling doctoral students.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

Before responding to the results of the tests of the hypotheses in this study, the information collected from the sample will be reviewed. This sample was drawn from full-time professors and doctoral students in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. An attempt was made to include the entire population. A total of 33 universities distributed survey forms to professors and students, and 186 individuals submitted survey forms. A small portion of the survey forms submitted possessed missing information.

In the event that the sample is a reflection of the population, perhaps some assumptions can be made about professors and students in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. In the sample, 112 participants were doctoral students and 64 were professors. Nearly two-thirds of the participants were women. Over three-quarters (78%) of the sample were Caucasian. From this study, it appears that professors and doctoral students in counseling are predominantly Caucasian women.

The results of the study revealed counselors view personal boundaries differently based on the individuals involved (counselor-client, professor-student, or supervisor-supervisee), and the nature of the relationship (social, business, or romantic). Significant differences existed in the way counselor educators and counseling doctoral students

perceived the overall ethical appropriateness of relationships between professors and students and relationships between supervisors and supervisees. Relationships between counselors and clients were perceived to be significantly less acceptable than relationships between professors and students and supervisors and supervisees. As hypothesized, relationships between counselors and clients were perceived as least acceptable.

These findings are supported by previous research suggesting that relationships between counselors and clients were perceived as distinctly inappropriate (Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Lloyd, 1992). The results may be indicative of the fact that relationships between professors and students and supervisors and supervisees are inherently different from relationships between counselors and clients. The participants, who were counselor educators and counseling doctoral students, may have viewed the professor-student relationship and the supervisor-supervisee relationship as more of a peer interaction that has less of a power differential, and the counselor-client relationship as more of a professional interaction that has a strong power differential. Counselor educators and the counseling doctoral students may have perceived the professor-student and the supervisor-supervisee personal relationships in which they often participate in as more acceptable than the counselor-client relationship because they participate in those types of relationships on a less regular basis.

A test of the mean scores for the three types of relationships revealed that counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceived the overall ethical appropriateness of the social relationship to be most acceptable, the business relationship to be moderately acceptable, and the romantic relationship to be the least acceptable. The

participants perceived a social relationship between professors and students, counselors and clients, and supervisors and supervisees to be more acceptable than a business or romantic relationship. About two-thirds of the responses were related to professor-student and supervisor-supervisee relationships, and only one-third of the responses were related to counselor-client relationships. An explanation for these results may be that counselor educators and counseling doctoral students often participate in social relationships, and as a result, they view social interactions as more acceptable than romantic relationships between professor and students and supervisors and supervisees. Perhaps participants believed that social interactions between professors and students and between supervisors and supervisees cannot not be avoided, yet business relationships are not necessary and should be avoided.

The results of this study indicate that counselor educators perceived personal relationships to be acceptable to the same degree as counseling doctoral students for five of the six relationships: counselor-client relationships, professor-student relationships, supervisor-supervisee relationships, business personal relationships, and romantic personal relationships. Although the results did not indicate significant differences, they are congruent with Bowman et al., (1995) findings that a lack of general agreement exists among counseling faculty and graduate students in regard to acceptable relationships. A significant difference was found between counselor educators and counseling doctoral students in relation to the personal social relationships. Counselor educators perceived personal social relationships between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees to be more acceptable than did counseling doctoral students. These findings could be related to the notion that professors, who tend to be older and

possess more experience, may view multiple relationships from a more practical perspective, in that they are seen as inevitable and must be managed appropriately. On the other hand, students, who tend to be younger and lack experience, may view multiple relationships from a more idealistic perspective - that they must always be avoided.

The study found that among counselor educators, there were no significant differences between males' and females' perceptions regarding the six personal relationships: counselor-client relationships, professor-student relationships, supervisor-supervisee relationships, social personal relationships, business personal relationships, and romantic personal relationships. In spite of the fact that no significant differences were found between the two groups, trends in the means suggested that female counselor educators may perceive relationships between professors and students and counselors and clients to be less acceptable than male counselor educators. The non-significant differences in the means of this study and the trends observed are supported by previous research indicating that female professors were more likely than male professors to perceive social events and personal interactions in counseling relationships as unethical (Bowman et al., 1995). Perhaps the means between the male and female participants were found not to be significant due to a Type I error in that women constituted two-thirds of the sample.

No significant differences were found among counseling doctoral students between females' perceptions and males' perceptions regarding the six different relationships.

The study found that, among counselor educators, a significant positive correlation existed between the age of the participants and their mean score on the



Counselor-Client Survey (Appendix A). As the age of the counselor educators increased, so too did their mean score on the Counselor-Client Survey. This finding suggests that younger counselor educators perceived counselor-client social, business, and romantic relationships to be less acceptable than older counselor educators. An explanation for these findings may be that younger professors, who tend to lack experience, may view multiple relationships between counselors and clients from a more idealistic perspective (they must always be avoided), whereas older professors, who tend to possess more experience, may view multiple relationships between counselors and clients from a more realistic perspective (they are inevitable and must be managed appropriately).

The results of this study indicate that, among counselor educators, a significant positive correlation existed between the age of the participants and their mean score for the romantic relationships. As the age of the counselor educators increased, so too did their mean score for the romantic relationships. This suggests that younger counselor educators perceived romantic relationships between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees to be less acceptable than older counselor educators. Again, this could be related to the age and experience of the counselor educator. Those who are older and have practiced for a longer period of time may have seen that romantic relationships do sometimes occur between counselors and their former clients, professors and their former students, and supervisors and their former supervisees. Having observed such romantic relationships, perhaps older counselor educators view them as more acceptable. Another possible explanation for these findings may be that younger professors, who were more recently trained, may have received more instruction in these ethical issues than professors who were trained a long time ago.

This research study's findings were that among counseling doctoral students, a significant negative correlation existed between the age of the participants and their mean score on the Counselor-Client Survey (Appendix A). As the age of the counseling doctoral students increased, their mean score on the Counselor-Client Survey decreased. This suggests that younger counseling doctoral students perceived Counselor-Client social, business, and romantic relationships to be more acceptable than older counseling doctoral students. A rationale for this result may be that among student peers, older students may see counselor-client relationships as more formal and distant than younger students who may want to be more "friendly" with their clients.

The study found that, among counseling doctoral students, a significant positive correlation existed between the age of the participants and their mean score on the Professor-Student Survey (Appendix C). As the age of the counseling doctoral students increased, so too did their mean score on the Professor-Student Survey. This suggests that younger counseling doctoral students perceived social, business, and romantic relationships between professors and students to be less acceptable than older counseling doctoral students. A possible explanation for these findings could be that older students may identify with their professors and view them more like peers, whereas younger students probably view professors more as authority figures, rather than peers.

The results of this study are related to the conceptual framework that this research is based upon. Feminist theory, which speaks directly to the ideas of appropriate boundaries and the ethical management of multiple relationships, contends that power within the relationship of counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee has been based on a hierarchical system in which those in power have the ability to take

advantage of those who are subordinate and lack power (Corey, 2001). The theory maintains that to diminish the potential for harm in such relationships, the power differential must be reduced while at the same time maintaining appropriate boundaries. Thus, it is the responsibility of the counselors, professors, and supervisors to demonstrate and monitor appropriate boundaries and multiple relationships so as to safeguard clients, students, and supervisees from being adversely affected by inappropriate relationships.

### **Implications for Counselor Educators**

The findings of this study demonstrated that there is a lack of agreement as to the acceptability of personal relationships in counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee relationships. In addition, counselor educators, particularly those who are older, appear to view personal relationships as more acceptable than others. Kitchener (1988) argued that all multiple relationships possess the ability of being ethically challenging regardless of the roles of the participants. As the research indicates, clear boundaries in relationships in counseling have not yet been established and the need to address this issue within counselor education programs seems evident. Counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceived relationships between professors and students and supervisors and supervisees to be the more acceptable than between counselors and clients, suggesting that these individuals are participating in multiple relationships and that boundaries are not being clearly defined. Accordingly, counselor education programs should appropriately address this issue within their curricula and professors should participate in and model appropriate relationships with students. As Holmes et al., (1999) suggested, professors would benefit from cautiously engaging in

multiple relationships with students that go beyond traditional boundaries of academic and professional roles.

This study found that counselor educators and counseling doctoral students perceived social relationships between professors and students, counselors and clients, and supervisors and supervisees to be more acceptable than business relationships, and business relationships to be more acceptable than romantic relationships. Professors and students in counselor education programs often socialize outside the classroom. Perhaps such socialization is appropriate and is necessary as students move toward becoming counselor educators or doctoral level professors themselves. On the other hand, as Kitchener (1988) has argued, appropriate boundaries are not being established and maintained. It is the responsibility of counselor educators to demonstrate appropriate ethical behavior and monitor the ethical behavior of their students. Supporting this perspective, Johnson and Nelson (1999) have suggested that graduate programs develop and enforce appropriate guidelines regarding multiple relationships and vigorously educate professors and students about both the positive and negative aspects of multiple relationships.

### **Implications for Further Research**

For future research, a more thorough investigation of social relationships between counselor educators and counseling doctoral students may yield insight into what is ethical behavior. Because this study indicated that social relationships within counselor education programs were perceived as acceptable, further research may reveal to what degree relationships are perceived as acceptable and why the relationships are perceived

as acceptable. Further investigation of the relationship between the age of the participants and their perceptions of the ethical appropriateness of the relationships may produce additional insights into age differences in the way in which boundary issues are viewed.

Replication of this study utilizing non-CACREP universities as the sample might generate different results. Those results could then be compared with the results from this study to determine whether any differences exist between the faculty members and doctoral students of the CACREP and non-CACREP-accredited doctoral programs. Replication of this study utilizing participants who are not counselor educators or counseling doctoral students may also yield different results. Perhaps counseling practitioners view boundary issues differently from professors and doctoral students

Qualitative studies of boundary issues and multiple relationships within the counseling profession might produce valuable information. Such studies may assist in the development and formation of new hypotheses regarding boundaries in counseling relationships.

### **Limitations of Study**

This study was limited to examining professors and doctoral students in those programs that award doctoral graduate degrees in counseling and are CACREP-accredited. Because the study was limited to participants whom are professors and doctoral students in programs that are CACREP-accredited, professors and students in other doctoral-level counseling programs may respond differently and the results may not be generalizable to others.

This study was additionally limited by the data gathering technique employed in the survey instrument. Utilizing a Likert scale to examine the degree to which the participants deemed the vignettes ethically appropriate limited the possible range of responses for the participants. Because the scale ranged from one to five, with one representing complete disagreement and five representing complete agreement, participants may have chosen a response that did not completely represent their perceptions.

Likewise, the nature of the vignettes was somewhat sensitive to socially acceptable responses and participants may have responded the way they thought they should have responded, and not actually how they felt. As noted previously, the vignettes depict relationships that were ethically questionable and participants may have responded to what the ethical codes dictate, or seem to dictate, and not responded in accordance with how they actually perceived the relationships and interactions in each vignette.

### **Conclusion**

This study was descriptive in nature and explored multiple relationships and personal boundary issues within the counseling profession. The study sought to determine whether counselor educators and counseling doctoral students in CACREP-accredited programs respond differently to ethical boundary issues and whether the differences in the multiple relationships influenced their responses. The results provide additional information regarding relationships in counseling and the study was successful in identifying differences in perceptions among the participants.

The findings suggest that the participants believed that counselor-client personal relationships are less acceptable than personal relationships between professors and students, or between supervisors and supervisees. This was not an unexpected result in that the counselor-client relationship is different from a relationship between professors and students or supervisors and supervisees.

The study revealed that the participants perceived social relationships among counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees to be the most acceptable, business relationships to be moderately acceptable, and romantic relationships to be least acceptable. It is interesting that participants viewed social relationships to be more acceptable than business relationships. It was expected that participants would view romantic relationships as the least acceptable.

Counselor educators generally agreed on the acceptability of the personal relationships examined in this study. The only difference that occurred was that counselor educators viewed the social relationships between counselors and clients, professors and students, and supervisors and supervisees as more acceptable than did doctoral students.

This research study concluded that among the participants, males and females viewed boundary issues similarly.

This study found that, among participants, those who were older tended to have more realistic views and were more practical in their perceptions of boundaries and multiple relationships. On the other hand, a remarkable finding of this research study was that, among participants, those who were younger tended to have idealistic views and

were more rigid in their perceptions of boundaries and less acceptable of multiple relationships.

More research in the area of boundary issues in counselor-client, professor-student, and supervisor-supervisee relationships is needed. Future studies are needed to identify when and where multiple relationships are acceptable and unacceptable.



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## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**Counselor Client Survey**  
**Form A**

## Boundary Issues Survey Counselor-Client Relationships

### Demographic Information

Please reply to the following questions. Note, for Position, you may indicate more than one response (eg. Student, Supervisee, and In Supervision for Counselor Licensure).

#### Gender:

Male: \_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_

#### Race:

African American: \_\_\_

Asian American: \_\_\_

Caucasian: \_\_\_

Hispanic American: \_\_\_

Native American: \_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_

#### Position (current position, not past positions):

Student: \_\_\_

Professor: \_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_

Supervisee: \_\_\_

Licensed Counselor: \_\_\_

In Supervision for Counselor Licensure \_\_\_

#### Experience:

Number of years since you earned a master's degree in counseling or related field. \_\_\_

#### Vignettes:

Please read the following vignettes and reply to the statement following each one. When you have completed the survey, click FINISHED at the bottom of the form to complete the survey process and e-mail it back anonymously.

**For the following vignettes, the counselor and the client were in a professional counseling relationship that lasted for approximately one year. The professional relationship has since terminated with the client successfully completing counseling.**

The client, while seeing the counselor, discussed a romantic relationship the client was having with a friend and the difficulty they were encountering. The client was able to successfully resolve the issue and became engaged to marry the friend. About two months after completing counseling, the former client ran into the counselor at the grocery store and invited the counselor to the wedding. The counselor accepted the invitation and attended the wedding.

Please respond to the following statement:

	1	2	3	4	5
The relationship is ethical.	<b>Completely Disagree</b>				<b>Completely Agree</b>

The client owns a building management firm that rents out office space to professionals in the area. About two months after ending counseling sessions with the counselor, the former client approached the counselor with an offer to rent office space to the counselor. Since the rent was less expensive than the counselor was then paying, the counselor signed a lease with the former client and began counseling in the new office.

Please respond to the following statement:

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>			<b>Completely Agree</b>	
The relationship is ethical.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

About two years after ending the counseling relationship with the client, the counselor was attending the annual state counseling conference and unexpectedly met the former client in the hotel lobby. They had a friendly conversation and the counselor asked the former client if the counselor could take the former client to dinner. The former client agreed and they had cocktails in the hotel lounge, followed by dinner, dancing, and a good night kiss.

Please respond to the following statement:

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>			<b>Completely Agree</b>	
The relationship is ethical.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**FINISHED**



**APPENDIX B**

**Supervisor Supervisee Survey**

**Form B**

## Boundary Issues Survey Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships

### Demographic Information

Please reply to the following questions. Note, for Position, you may indicate more than one response (eg. Student, Supervisee, and In Supervision for Counselor Licensure).

#### Gender:

Male: \_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_

#### Race:

African American: \_\_\_

Asian American: \_\_\_

Caucasian: \_\_\_

Hispanic American: \_\_\_

Native American: \_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_

#### Position (current position, not past positions):

Student: \_\_\_

Professor: \_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_

Supervisee: \_\_\_

Licensed Counselor: \_\_\_

In Supervision for Counselor Licensure \_\_\_

#### Experience:

Number of years since you earned a master's degree in counseling or related field. \_\_\_

#### Vignettes:

Please read the following vignettes and reply to the statement following each one. When you have completed the survey, click FINISHED at the bottom of the form to complete the survey process and e-mail it back anonymously.

**For the following vignettes, the supervisor and the supervisee were in a professional supervision relationship that lasted for approximately one year. The supervisee was receiving post-master's degree clinical supervision from the supervisor that was required to become licensed. The professional relationship has since terminated with the supervisee successfully completing supervision.**

The supervisee, while receiving supervision from the supervisor, discussed a romantic relationship the supervisee was having with a friend and the difficulty they were having. The supervisee was able to successfully resolve the issue and became engaged to marry the friend. About two months after completing supervision, the former supervisee ran into the supervisor at the grocery store and invited the supervisor to the wedding. The supervisor accepted the invitation and attended the wedding.

Please respond to the following statement:

	1	2	3	4	5
The relationship is ethical.	<b>Completely Disagree</b>				<b>Completely Agree</b>

The supervisee owns a building management firm that rents out office space to professionals in the area. About two months after ending supervision sessions with the supervisor, the former supervisee approached the supervisor with an offer to rent office space to the supervisor. Since the rent was less expensive than the supervisor was then paying, the supervisor signed a lease with the former supervisee and began supervision in the new office.

Please respond to the following statement:

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>			<b>Completely Agree</b>	
The relationship is ethical.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

About two years after ending the supervision relationship with the supervisee, the supervisor was attending the annual state counseling conference and unexpectedly met the former supervisee in the hotel lobby. They had a friendly conversation and the supervisor asked the former supervisee if the supervisor could take the former supervisee to dinner. The former supervisee agreed and they had cocktails in the hotel lounge, followed by dinner, dancing, and a good night kiss.

Please respond to the following statement:

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>			<b>Completely Agree</b>	
The relationship is ethical.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**FINISHED**

**APPENDIX C**  
**Professor Student Survey**  
**Form C**

## Boundary Issues Survey Professor-Student Relationships

### Demographic Information

Please reply to the following questions. Note, for Position, you may indicate more than one response (eg. Student, Supervisee, and In Supervision for Counselor Licensure).

#### Gender:

Male: \_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_

#### Race:

African American: \_\_\_

Asian American: \_\_\_

Caucasian: \_\_\_

Hispanic American: \_\_\_

Native American: \_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_

#### Position (current position, not past positions):

Student: \_\_\_

Professor: \_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_

Supervisee: \_\_\_

Licensed Counselor: \_\_\_

In Supervision for Counselor Licensure \_\_\_

#### Experience:

Number of years since you earned a master's degree in counseling or related field. \_\_\_

#### Vignettes:

Please read the following vignettes and reply to the statement following each one. When you have completed the survey, click FINISHED at the bottom of the form to complete the survey process and e-mail it back anonymously.

**For the following vignettes, the professor and student were in a professional teaching relationship that lasted for approximately one year. The professor taught in a master's degree program in counseling and the student was in that program. The professional relationship has since terminated with the student successfully completing the master's degree program.**

The student, while a student of the professor's, discussed a romantic relationship the student was having with a friend and the difficulty they were encountering. The student was able to successfully resolve the issue and became engaged to marry the friend. About two months after completing the master's degree program, the former student ran into the professor at the grocery store and invited the professor to the wedding. The professor accepted the invitation and attended the wedding.

Please respond to the following statement:

	1	2	3	4	5
The relationship is ethical.	<b>Completely Disagree</b>				<b>Completely Agree</b>

The student owns a building management firm that rents out office space to professionals in the area. About two months after completing the master's degree program, the former student approached the professor with an offer to rent office space to the professor for the professor's private counseling practice. Since the rent was less expensive than the professor was then paying, the professor signed a lease with the former student and began working in the new office.

Please respond to the following statement:

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>			<b>Completely Agree</b>	
The relationship is ethical.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

About two years after ending the teaching relationship with the student, the professor was attending the annual state counseling conference and unexpectedly met the former student in the hotel lobby. They had a friendly conversation and the professor asked the former student if the professor could take the former student to dinner. The former student agreed and they had cocktails in the hotel lounge, followed by dinner, dancing, and a good night kiss.

Please respond to the following statement:

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>			<b>Completely Agree</b>	
The relationship is ethical.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**FINISHED**

**APPENDIX D**

**Letter to Human Subjects Committee**

Dr. Matthew Stanford, Chair  
Human Subjects Committee  
Department of Psychology  
University of New Orleans  
New Orleans, LA 70148

Dear Dr. Stanford:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education program at the University of New Orleans. I am writing you to request a waiver of the formal review process by the Human Subjects Review Committee for my study. The chairperson of my dissertation committee is Dr. Ted Remley, professor of Counselor Education and chair of the Department of Education Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations.

My dissertation instrument is a survey designed to assess perceptions of individuals as they relate to personal boundary issues and multiple relationships within the counseling profession. I intend to survey professors and doctoral students from CACREP accredited counseling programs. The participants will receive a letter and the instrument via e-mail and will be able to reply in the same manner. Two weeks later, all of the participants will receive a follow-up letter reminding them to complete the survey if they have not already done so, the same instrument, and a note thanking them for their participation. No information will be gathered that could be used to identify the participants.

Please contact me by phone (488-9584) or e-mail ([markthornton9584@msn.com](mailto:markthornton9584@msn.com)) if you have any questions or comments. You may contact Dr. Remley by phone (280-7386) or e-mail ([tremley@uno.edu](mailto:tremley@uno.edu)) as well regarding this research project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate



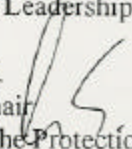
**APPENDIX E**

**Approval from Human Subjects Committee**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**  
**University of New Orleans**

*Campus Correspondence*

To: Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations

From: Matthew S. Stanford, Ph.D.   
Associate Professor and Chair  
University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Date: 1/13/03

RE: IRB Review Exemption

Because of the anonymous nature of your project it is exempt from committee review as stated in section 46.101 B, paragraph 2 of the OHRP guidelines.

**APPENDIX F**

**Letters to Participants**

Dear Colleague:

I am conducting a study to assess perceptions of individuals as they relate to personal boundary issues and multiple relationships within the counseling profession. The information gathered as a result of this study will provide useful data that can be implemented in continuing education and counselor education programs.

Your participation and the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and no information will be gathered that could be used to identify you. I would greatly appreciate your time and participation. All you have to do to complete the survey is click on the URL (<http://www.uno.edu/~testserv/midcity/ccr.html>) or cut and paste it. The survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete and return.

In the event you have any difficulties opening the web page, please send me a return e-mail message ([markthornton9584@msn.com](mailto:markthornton9584@msn.com)) and I will contact you to determine the best way to proceed.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,  
Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate

Theodore P. Remley Jr., J.D., Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair  
University of New Orleans

Dear Colleague:

I am conducting a study to assess perceptions of individuals as they relate to personal boundary issues and multiple relationships within the counseling profession. The information gathered as a result of this study will provide useful data that can be implemented in continuing education and counselor education programs.

Your participation and the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and no information will be gathered that could be used to identify you. I would greatly appreciate your time and participation. All you have to do to complete the survey is click on the URL (<http://www.uno.edu/~testserv/midcity/psr.html>) or cut and paste it. The survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete and return.

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Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,  
Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate

Theodore P. Remley Jr., J.D., Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair  
University of New Orleans

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Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,  
Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate

Theodore P. Remley Jr., J.D., Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair  
University of New Orleans

**APPENDIX G**

**Follow-up Letters to Participants**

Dear Colleague:

You recently received a request from me to assess perceptions of individuals as they relate to personal boundary issues and multiple relationships within the counseling profession. The information gathered as a result of this study will provide useful data that can be implemented in continuing education and counselor education programs. If you have already completed the survey, thank you very much. I sincerely appreciate your time.

If you have not yet completed the survey I sent earlier, please do so at this time. Your participation and the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and no information will be gathered that could be used to identify you. I would greatly appreciate your time and participation. All you have to do to complete the survey is click on the URL (<http://www.uno.edu/~testserv/midcity/ccr.html>) or cut and paste it. The survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete and return.

In the event you have any difficulties opening the web page, please send me a return e-mail message ([markthornton9584@msn.com](mailto:markthornton9584@msn.com)) and I will contact you to determine the best way to proceed.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,  
Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate

Theodore P. Remley Jr., J.D., Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair  
University of New Orleans



Dear Colleague:

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Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,  
Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate

Theodore P. Remley Jr., J.D., Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair  
University of New Orleans

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If you have not yet completed the survey I sent earlier, please do so at this time. Your participation and the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and no information will be gathered that could be used to identify you. I would greatly appreciate your time and participation. All you have to do to complete the survey is click on the URL (<http://www.uno.edu/~testserv/midcity/ssr.html>) or cut and paste it. The survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete and return.

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Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,  
Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate

Theodore P. Remley Jr., J.D., Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair  
University of New Orleans

**APPENDIX H**

**Initial Letter to Universities**

Counseling Graduate Program  
Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations  
College of Education and Human Development  
University of New Orleans  
348 Education Building  
New Orleans, LA 70148

Dear Counselor Education Chair or Coordinator:

I am beginning the process of collecting data for my dissertation at the University of New Orleans. Drs. Ted Remley and Vivian McCollum are co-chairs of my doctoral dissertation committee. The study I am conducting will assess perceptions of individuals as they relate to personal boundary issues and multiple relationships within the counseling profession. The information gathered as a result of this study will provide useful data that can be implemented in continuing education and counselor education programs.

I am utilizing e-mail as a form of sending information and collecting data. The participants intended for the study are professors and doctoral students from all the CACREP accredited counseling programs in the country. I am sending you this message asking for your assistance with my research.

If possible, I would like the e-mail addresses of each doctoral counseling student in your program as well as the e-mail addresses for each full-time and part-time professor teaching within your counseling doctoral program. If you are not able to give me the e-mail addresses of your faculty and students, another option would be for me to send you the information via e-mail and you could distribute it to your faculty and students. If none of these options are possible, please contact me so I can resolve the problem.

I truly value your time. Any assistance that you would be able to provide will be greatly appreciated. I hope you will be able to assist me with my research. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (504) 488-9584 or e-mail me at ([markthornton9584@msn.com](mailto:markthornton9584@msn.com)).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate

Theodore P. Remley, Jr., J.D., Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair

Vivian C. McCollum, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor

**APPENDIX I**

**Letter to Chairs and Coordinators**

Dear

I am sending you the information regarding my dissertation. There are three different surveys that need to be randomly e-mailed to your faculty and students. Please try to have one third of your faculty and students respond to the Counselor-Client survey, one third of your faculty and students respond to the Professor-Student survey, and the final third of your faculty and students respond to the Supervisor-Supervisee survey. It is important to note who received what survey because in one week I will be sending you the same information to send out to those who have not yet responded to the surveys. I realize that this is a lot to ask and I truly appreciate your cooperation and assistance with my research.

To try and make this task somewhat easier, I am sending you three different e-mails that can be forwarded individually to your faculty and students. Each e-mail will be for each of the different surveys. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know. Again, I want to thank you for your help with my research.

Sincerely,  
Mark Thornton

**APPENDIX J**

**Follow-up Letter to Chairs and Coordinators**

Dear Counselor Education Chair or Coordinator:

You recently received a request from me for the e-mail addresses of your faculty and students in your counseling program. If you have already contacted me regarding this information, thank you very much and please disregard this message. I sincerely appreciate your time and assistance. If you have not received this message, or have not responded yet, please read on.

I am beginning the process of collecting data for my dissertation at the University of New Orleans. Drs. Ted Remley and Vivian McCollum are co-chairs of my doctoral dissertation committee. The study I am conducting will assess perceptions of individuals as they relate to personal boundary issues and multiple relationships within the counseling profession. The information gathered as a result of this study will provide useful data that can be implemented in continuing education and counselor education programs.

I am utilizing e-mail as a form of sending information and collecting data. The participants intended for the study are professors and doctoral students from all the CACREP accredited counseling programs in the country. I am sending you this message asking for your assistance with my research.

If possible, I would like the e-mail addresses of each doctoral counseling student in your program as well as the e-mail addresses for each full-time and part-time professor teaching within your counseling doctoral program. If you are not able to give me the e-mail addresses of your faculty and students, another option would be for me to send you the information via e-mail and you could distribute it to your faculty and students. If none of these options are possible, please contact me so I can resolve the problem.

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Thornton, M.Ed., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate

Theodore P. Remley, Jr., J.D., Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair

Vivian C. McCollum, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor



**APPENDIX K**

**Follow-up Letter to Chairs and Coordinators**

Dear

This a follow-up letter regarding information I recently sent you. I am resending you the information regarding my dissertation. There are three different surveys that need to be randomly e-mailed to your faculty and students. Please try to have one third of your faculty and students respond to the Counselor-Client survey, one third of you faculty and students respond to the Professor-Student survey, and the final third of your faculty and students respond to the Supervisor-Supervisee survey. It is important to note who received what survey because in one week I will be sending you the same information to send out to those who have not yet responded to the surveys. I realize that this is a lot to ask and I truly appreciate you cooperation and assistance with my research.

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Sincerely,  
Mark Thornton

## VITA

Mark D. Thornton was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. There, he graduated from Baldwin-Wallace College in 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology. Upon graduation from college, Mark moved to Cincinnati, Ohio to attend Xavier University where, in 2000, he earned his Master's of Education in Community and Agency Counseling. Upon graduation from the master's program, Mark gathered up his belongings and headed south. He arrived in New Orleans, Louisiana in the middle of August, 2000 where he began a new journey at the University of New Orleans. While attending the university, Mark has been working on his Doctor of Philosophy in Counselor Education. He is expected to graduate in May of 2003.

During Mark's stay in Cincinnati, he worked with a variety of different people in a multitude of different settings. His experience ranged from helping young children with their schoolwork to teaching coping skills to senior citizens at a retirement community. Mark gathered valuable experience living and working in Cincinnati, and the knowledge he acquired was useful during his doctoral studies.

The most recent chapter in Mark's professional life has taken place in New Orleans with his experiences working at the university. At the university, Mark has worked with many different and exciting individuals and has been afforded many opportunities to develop his counseling and supervision skills. Although the journey toward professionalism is not complete, Mark expects it to remain interesting and exciting.

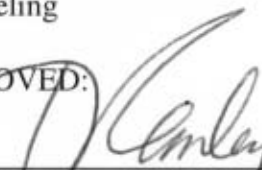
# DOCTORAL DISSERTATION REPORT

CANDIDATE: Mark D. Thornton

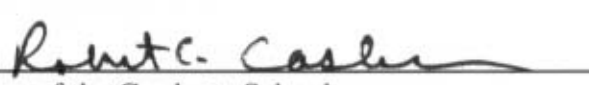
MAJOR FIELD: Counselor Education

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: Personal Boundary Issues In Counselor-Client, Professor-Student,  
And Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships In Counseling

APPROVED:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Major Professor & Co-Chair  
TED REMLEY

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Major Professor & Co-Chair  
VIVIAN MCCOLLUM

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
BARBARA HERLIHY

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DIANA HULSE-KILLACKY

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JAMES MILLER

DATE OF EXAMINATION:

May 9, 2003