

Recommendations for Counselor Education and Supervision Programs to Improve Gatekeeping Processes Developed from Doctoral Student Experiences

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Recommendations for Counselor Education and Supervision Programs to Improve Gatekeeping Processes Developed from Doctoral Student Experiences

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of eleven doctoral students at three CACREP accredited programs to address issues in counselor education and supervision programs and faculty face regarding gatekeeping. The information was used to develop and provide recommendations for gatekeeping procedures that can be implemented at the departmental and classroom levels. Ways programs can improve the training of doctoral students for gatekeeping roles and responsibilities, steps faculty can take to create an environment which supports gatekeeping at their institution, as well as support doctoral students as they grow into future gatekeepers of the profession are discussed.

Keywords

gatekeeping, counselor education, supervision, program policy, qualitative research

Author's Notes

Authors report no conflicts of interest.

The question of how to assess problems of professional competency (PPC) and which processes and procedures should be enacted to address students exhibiting PPC poses a particularly difficult quandary for counselor educators. Formal policies for gatekeeping are required by the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2016), but these policies are not outlined or standardized, leaving counselor educators and supervisors with little direction on how to design and implement gatekeeping procedures. Therefore, counselor educators and supervisors rely on existing literature to inform procedures and practices. There continues to be significant gaps within the literature pertaining to gatekeeping in counselor education and supervision (CES), such as necessary procedures, the involvement of doctoral students or supervisors, and how the gatekeeper's professional development influences gatekeeping. Particularly, the roles and responsibilities of doctoral-level supervisors are not well established by CES programs and faculty, nor is the way doctoral students are trained and supported in developing the gatekeeper role (DeDiego & Burgin, 2016; Rapp et al., 2018). This study explores the experiences of doctoral level CES students to inform CES programs and faculty on training and involvement of doctoral students in the gatekeeping process.

Gatekeeping within Counselor Education and Supervision

The percentage of students who exhibit PPC within CES programs has been estimated to be as high as 21% (Gaubatz & Vera, 2006). Students exhibiting PPCs are addressed through the process of gatekeeping, an ongoing process throughout students' academic career in which appropriateness for the profession is assessed (Ziomek-Daigle & Bailey, 2010). Gatekeeping begins with application materials and interviews, through admissions, and until matriculation. While gatekeeping does not always call for remediation, it often involves assessment of deficiencies, repeating coursework, and in some rare cases students may be prevented from entering the profession altogether (Ziomek-Daigle & Bailey, 2010). Despite the importance of gatekeeping within CES, only 38% of faculty report receiving formal training from the program where they are employed on how to intervene with problematic

students (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2016). There is limited consensus within CES literature regarding the process of gatekeeping and how to appropriately protect the profession from students who exhibit PPCs. Terminology, procedures, and assessment tools vary greatly among CES programs (Crawford & Gilroy, 2013), and factors related to the process and outcome of gatekeeping procedures are not yet well-established (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2016; Rust et al., 2013).

Doctoral-level Student Involvement

Doctoral-level supervisors play an important role in gatekeeping but do not appear to be a primary focus of research. Current counseling literature indicates only two qualitative studies exploring the gatekeeping experiences of CES doctoral students: Corley et al. (2020) and Charnley (2021). Corley et al. (2020) explored the experiences of 15 doctoral level students from CES programs in the southern and rocky mountain regions to understand the gatekeeping experiences of counselor education doctoral students at various points within their program. Corley et al. (2020) concluded that follow-through on gatekeeping policies was inconsistent between faculty and peers, faculty felt a general sense of fear of repercussion and litigation when approaching a gatekeeping concern—especially when the faculty held roles of power—and there was uncertainty of when to intervene and apply gatekeeping practices. Further, since participants were at various program phases, their perception of and involvement in gatekeeping changed as they progressed in the program, changing from a theoretical perspective and conceptual identity to a professional identity with contextual experiences (Corley et al., 2020).

Charnley's (2021) study included 5 doctoral participants, recruited from a large midwestern university CES program to understand the gatekeeping experiences doctoral students had during their training. The participants described gatekeeping as an ongoing process beginning at admissions and continuing with several key courses in the curriculum. However, they shared that gatekeeping policies and training were not explicitly outlined or formally addressed within the program. They noted challenges and inconsistencies within gatekeeping procedures and outcomes at their institution and

recommended programs use experiential learning and faculty mentorship to improve the training of doctoral students for gatekeeping roles and responsibilities as future faculty and improve gatekeeping processes. See Table 1 for Corley et al. (2020) and Charnley (2021) reported themes.

Table 1

Prior Study Themes and Participant Demographics

Author	Participants	Themes & Subthemes
Corley et al. (2020)	n=15; White (11), African American (1), Asian (1), Mexican American (1), Jewish/European (1); Female (12)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Precarious positions and power</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>gatekeeping positions</i> b) <i>differences in access and interactions</i> c) <i>unclear power</i> d) <i>delicate balance</i> 2) <i>Developing a gatekeeper identity</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>role of the relationship</i> b) <i>developmental experiences</i> c) <i>program context</i>
Charnley (2021)	n=5; White (4); Female (4)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Gatekeeping as a process</i> 2) <i>Several 'key' gates</i> 3) <i>Ways of learning</i> 4) <i>Barriers to learning</i> 5) <i>Teaching versus Supervision roles</i> 6) <i>Faculty relationships</i>

Although themes from these articles are valuable, these studies present a limited perspective. Out of a combined 20 participants, 16 participants identified as white, and 15 identified as female, indicating the need to explore the experiences of a more diverse sample to highlight multicultural considerations. Each study included participants from either one (Charnley, 2021) or two (Corley et al., 2020) CES programs, representing a narrow perspective. Additionally, the samples considered a variety of doctoral student standings and did not consider solely the experiences of doctoral student candidates. Our sample included licensed and non-licensed doctoral students, and students with various professional identities within counseling, including clinical mental health counseling, rehabilitation counseling, school counseling. Finally, Corley et al. (2020) focuses on developing identity as a

gatekeeper, while Charnley (2021) focuses on both developing identity and learning the process of gatekeeping. While these are both important concepts, the current research expands on and adds to prior research by targeting the gatekeeper identity as well as the systemic program functioning regarding training and development of the gatekeeper role.

Study Objectives/Aims/Research Goals

This article expands upon previous research by exploring the experiences of doctoral candidates of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds with gatekeeping experiences at three CACREP accredited programs. Participants were asked to provide direct recommendations for improving gatekeeping procedures within their CES program. The purpose of the current article is to present their recommendations and integrate prior research to develop procedural guidelines and experiential learning activities for CES programs to improve the preparation of the gatekeeper role. The primary research question of this phenomenological study is:

1. What are CES doctoral students lived experiences of gatekeeping training, policies, and procedures within their program and within counselor education broadly?

Sub-questions include:

A. How do CES doctoral students with gatekeeping experiences describe their experiences in adapting to gatekeeping roles and responsibilities?

B. When engaged in gatekeeping, what are the lived experiences of CES doctoral students related to personal, interpersonal, and environmental factors?

Design and Methodology

This study used a transcendental phenomenological approach, one of the most widely used qualitative research designs to explore the lived experiences of participants with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is appropriate to develop an understanding of the shared experience of doctoral students in taking on gatekeeping roles, which could help inform policies, practices, and future research. Each author is a counselor educator with a licensed clinical

background as professional counselor and supervisor. They are currently teaching and supervising in CES programs at institutions in Rhode Island, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. The researchers ascribe to a social constructivist framework which assumes knowledge is socially constructed by the individual and seeks to understand individual perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further, social constructivism acknowledges the role culture, and context play in informing how individuals construct their subjective experience.

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, a variety of recruitment strategies were used to solicit participants within the same CES program as the primary researcher, as well as participants at other CES programs. These recruitment strategies included consultation with current faculty and research participants to identify potential subjects. Participants were provided with a copy of their transcripts for member checks and a \$25 USD Amazon gift card upon completion of the study. One participant chose to remove and alter several quotes due to a fear of being identified and retaliated on by their current faculty members.

Participants

Participants were recruited using chain sampling which allowed the sample size to increase during the interview process to ensure saturation of data. The sample included 11 participants from three CACREP accredited CES programs in Texas, Arkansas, and Virginia who identified as doctoral candidates with gatekeeping experiences. The primary author conducted interviews with the participants in person and remotely via Zoom. Six of the participants were students within the same program as the primary author and five were from additional programs. Of the 11 participants, 36% were licensed as LPCs and the remaining 64% were non-licensed. A majority of participant clinical experience was in clinical mental health settings (81.8%) and the remaining experience in school counseling (9.1%) and rehabilitation counseling (9.1%). Participants range of supervision experience was between 6 to 36 months, averaging 18.9 months or 1.5 years across participants. During this time, participants reported a range of supervising 2 to 24 counselors-in-training, averaging 11.5 supervisees

across participants. When inquired about their ability to access and provide gatekeeping policy documentation, 36% reported being unable to do so, stating they were uncertain of where to locate documents, or their program did not currently have documentation in place. Interestingly, all licensed participants reported being able to provide gatekeeping documentation and resources. Participant demographics are listed in Table 2.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants completed a demographic form, critical incident writing prompt, and two semi-structured interviews. Interviews varied between 50 to 130 minutes in total. Participants used pseudonyms to de-identify and reduce bias. Participants were asked to describe their gatekeeping experiences, barriers, supports, the impact of personality characteristics, and multicultural considerations within their gatekeeping experiences. Additionally, participants were asked to describe recommendations for improving gatekeeping at their program and within CES as a field. The primary researcher created reflectivity memos prior to and throughout the study and debriefed with an external auditor throughout the data collection and analysis.

Having bracketed assumptions and biases to the best of their ability (i.e., epoché), using bracketing methods suggested by Tufford and Newman (2012), the primary researcher began the coding process with horizontalization – identifying each statement as equal and valid to all other statements made (Moustakas, 1994). Next, statements that were relevant to the topic of research were identified as statements of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Statements of meaning were then synthesized and organized into clusters of meaning (Moustakas, 1994), from which themes began to emerge. The primary researcher reviewed the emergent themes and engaged in dialogue with their external auditor to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the collected data.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Measures of trustworthiness—credibility, transferability, and dependability—were utilized in various ways. Credibility was ensured through the inclusion of descriptive accounts of participants' experiences, thorough documentation and description of the data collection processes and data analysis, and a clear framework of the researcher's biases, assumptions, and reflexivity on the research topic through a bracketing interview (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, triangulation methods such as member checking, peer debriefing, and use of an external auditor strengthened credibility. Thick participant descriptions and quotes strengthened transferability, allowing for accurate interpretation and comparison to other experiences. Transparency in data collection and analysis helped to ensure accurate conclusions and exhibit dependability for the study (Shenton, 2004).

Results

Table 2 provides an overview of the themes yielded from the participant interviews. We uncovered six primary themes and nine subthemes. Primary themes included, *preparation, disposition, responsibility, supports/barriers, application of experience, and influence and intersection of identity*. Each primary theme and corresponding subtheme are discussed below.

Table 2

Overview of Current Study Themes and Participant Demographics

Author	Participants	Themes & Subthemes
Smarinsky et al.	n=11; Latinx/Hispanic (4), Black/African American (3), White (3), Asian (1); Female (9), Male (2)	<i>1) Preparation</i> <i>a) clinical experience</i> <i>2) Disposition</i> <i>a) gatekeeper</i> <i>b) supervisee</i> <i>3) Responsibility</i> <i>a) necessity</i> <i>b) burden</i> <i>4) Supports/Barriers</i> <i>a) faculty</i> <i>b) program</i> <i>5) Application of experience</i> <i>a) professional growth</i> <i>b) personal growth</i> <i>6) Influence and intersection of identity</i>

Preparation

Preparation was captured by participant responses that included experience, training, and competency of gatekeeping roles. All but one of the participants reported they believed their program did not adequately prepare them for many of responsibilities of doctoral supervision and all the participants reported feelings of frustration towards their level of preparation. At a macro-level, all the participants reported, they were still able to gain confidence and competency through supervision experience regardless of their training. At a micro-level, participants discussed how their prior clinical experience helped prepare them for the gatekeeping role.

Clinical Experience

Participants who received licensure prior to beginning doctoral studies reported clinical experience was a support regardless of the level of preparation by the program. These participants stated using their prior experience to inform their supervision approach and reinforced their respect for gatekeeping. For example, “I think having the clinical experience knowing what these future counselors will be exposed to and must work with. So, you want to ensure that those client’s welfare

is accounted for.” Participants shared by having prior supervisors who discussed or modeled the gatekeeper role in supervision for licensure familiarized them with the process. These participants described how they integrated their clinical experience in conceptualizing supervisee’s and how they approached providing feedback and encouragement. They described how their professional identity illustrated the need for gatekeeping in CES and appeared to be more committed to the gatekeeper role as a result. Several licensed participants discussed how their prior clinical experience made them frustrated by their program’s gatekeeping processes, and how they felt their programs did not endorse the same professional values they developed.

Participants without licensure generally reported the lack of extensive clinical experience made it more difficult to develop the gatekeeper role, and generally reported less familiarity with gatekeeping in CES. Despite their lack of clinical experience, these participants reported they were able to adopt the gatekeeper role. However, many described feeling like an “imposter,” struggled to develop confidence, and difficulty demonstrating competence. Some of these participants stated they struggled to adjust to their new identity and role as doctoral supervisors, because they were recently master’s students and had dual-relationships.

Disposition

Disposition was described as personality traits, social/emotional intelligence, ethics, and behaviors related to professionalism. All participants identified personality traits and dispositional factors as being relevant to their supervision experience. “I think for me is that [gatekeeping] comes down to a lot of internal disposition and mindset.” At a macro-level, supervisor dispositional factors such as agreeableness and openness were described occasionally as beneficial. These traits were identified by statements such as “willingness to be open” and “willingness to continue to learn and grow.” Neuroticism, as identified in statements regarding “irritability,” “frustration,” “overthinking”, “guilt”, “fear,” and “anxiety,” was described as a barrier. Conscientiousness, as identified by statements

such as: “ability to assess, be assertive and set boundaries, or expectations or accountability,” “I am direct” and “I have to be professional” was described as helping support their experience.

Supervisee dispositional factors were also frequently discussed as supporting or creating a barrier during their experiences. Having a lack of receptivity towards receiving feedback was the most reported dispositional barrier. Participants frequently reported supervisees who presented with traits of neuroticism as evidenced by descriptions such as: “defensiveness,” “reactive,” “anxious,” and “angry” were the most difficult to address in supervision. The role disposition played in the supervisory alliance was discussed by all the participants. Both gatekeeper and supervisee disposition appeared to greatly influence their experience of gatekeeping roles/responsibilities of evaluating, monitoring, and providing feedback.

Gatekeeper Disposition

Most participants described empathy, warmth, and conscientiousness as qualities which helped them facilitate a supervisory relationship with their supervisees. One participant discussed how their sense of humor helped them connect with supervisees. Many of the participants described struggling to give critical feedback because they did not want to harm the relationship or their supervisee. Several described experiencing difficulties with confrontation. Many described themselves as “introverted” or “anxious” or endorsed perfectionistic qualities. For these participants fulfilling their evaluative role was particularly challenging:

I think of the disposition of one of the instructors students gravitate towards. They're very nurturing nature or disposition. They would not likely be somebody who would take on the gatekeeping role as assertively as this other faculty member, and because of discussions I've had with this faculty member, they've often been the ones that are involved in those procedures, and then have this association to having the gatekeeping role. So, it always comes down to them.

Supervisee Disposition

Supervisee disposition was described as one of the most common factors leading to gatekeeping concerns. Supervisors described struggling with supervisees who were defensive, emotionally reactive, and lacked insight. “Supervisees who are timid or embarrassed to speak up for themselves or to ask for consultation can act as a barrier to gatekeeping. Supervisees who have a know-it-all attitude can also act as a barrier.” The participants reported the dispositional issues which initiated gatekeeping actions as professionalism, ethics, emotional reactivity, receptivity to feedback, and lack of insight. For instance, one participant stated, “Personality traits open to feedback, willingness to learn, and passion for the field support the gatekeeping process. It allows for a more competent counselor to come out of the other side.” Another participant said, “More and more, I have seen the influence of a supervisee’s own personal attachment style be the mediating factor in gatekeeping outcomes.” Participants spoke and wrote at great length regarding supervisee disposition and at several points it appeared this sub-theme was one that prompted the strongest emotional reaction:

The two times I had challenging supervision work, both of my supervisees at the time had very ‘rigid’ personalities in different ways. One supervisee always appeared to be uncomfortable and nervous both in supervision and counseling and had difficulties identifying and improving their behaviors/feelings. The other supervisee had their guard up the entire time, resisted every change and learning, and was very defensive. I think one of the key traits we are looking for in the gatekeeping process is the receptivity to feedback, and those very odd, specific personalities often do not show improvement in that department.

Responsibility

Each participant emphasized the importance of gatekeeping within CES. Participants frequently stated they felt it was a necessary and a burdensome role as doctoral supervisors. They highlighted the challenging role doctoral supervisors occupy: “Doctoral students oftentimes are middle management when it comes to the counseling department. I think that also adds another layer of complexity in doc student supervision.” Several of the participants discussed incidences in which

collaborating with faculty was challenging, unsuccessful, and frustrating. Many identified incidents in which they believed their concerns were ignored, and they were asked to continue supervising a student who they believed was exhibiting a problem with PPC which faculty needed to address.

When concerns were brought up, the faculty would listen and “support” and utilize reflective statements to validate my thoughts and feelings around the issue(s) but would rarely take action or follow through with furthering the gatekeeping role. Sometimes they may problem solve and discuss solutions, but if the issue progressed, nothing more was done. I’d seen multiple students move onto internship from practicum because they met their hours, but their skills, professionalism, and cultural awareness and sensitivity needed great improvement.

The participants described gatekeeping as “essential,” “vital,” and “necessary.” All participants stated they believed gatekeeping was an important responsibility for faculty, CES programs, and doctoral supervisors. Many participants stated they felt burdened by this role. They described the interaction between believing gatekeeping is necessary, feeling their role was important, and coping with the difficulties associated with their role.

Necessity

Many of the participants described gatekeeping as “protecting the public,” describing how incompetent, unethical, and unprofessional counselors can hurt their clients. Several spoke about how allowing students with PPCs direct client contact harms the credibility of the profession. Some did not believe good gatekeeping is occurring in the field, and that gatekeeping is more difficult to implement post-graduation. They described this increased the necessity for gatekeeping in the academic setting: “I remember discussing the importance of gatekeeping in the field and how inclusive and expansive gatekeeping should be – in order to ensure quality of care to clients, uphold professional standards, and quality of education/supervision.”

Burden

Participants described several ways they felt burdened by their role. Providing evaluations and feedback to supervisees and faculty was described as a challenge. One participant summarized the difficulty in providing evaluations and feedback as follows: “Finding out what examples do I want to give to you to demonstrate this. Because I don't want to just tell you that you're not being multiculturally responsive.” Many participants described not only an emotional burden, but also the burden of time and energy to effectively gatekeep through continuous monitoring and evaluation. Balancing their obligations as a supervisor with those as a student was also described as difficult.

Support/Barriers

Participants identified several supports and barriers during their experiences as doctoral supervisors. There was significant interaction and overlap between these. Several participants reported they believed the culture of the faculty, the program, the institution, and their cohort supported their experiences. Faculty, program, and institutional culture were also identified as creating barriers during these experiences. Interactions between faculty, faculty dynamics, and the availability of faculty were also frequently discussed both in positive and negative ways. Participants reported they felt that their faculty, institution, and fellow doctoral students held similar and dissimilar values which influenced their experience in adopting gatekeeping roles and responsibilities within CES. For example, when asked to describe how faculty and the program support or act as a barrier to gatekeeping one participant described the gatekeeping culture of her program as, “lacking. There are different standards and objectives it seems amongst faculty and there's no clear model or protocol until ...a significant problem occurs. Gatekeeping should be an ongoing process throughout students' education/program.”

Faculty

Faculty were often described as facilitating the development of their gatekeeper identity and providing support during their experiences. Several participants described faculty as available to provide feedback or suggestions. This is illustrated by the following statement: "I think the professors themselves, they're really, really supportive and if you have any type of question or any concern they're

there.” Many of the participants stated they received support through faculty instruction, supervision, and mentorship. Some participants identified a single faculty member as the most impactful support, or model for the gatekeeping process. Some participants reported feeling unsupported and frustrated by faculty. Several participants stated they felt the concerns were not taken seriously, or that faculty did not take gatekeeping seriously. Some participants described perceiving or evaluating student’s differently than their faculty. Differences in values, and professional identity were mentioned by some participants. She also stated faculty were not busy or unavailable when needed. One participant chose to remove and alter several quotes due to a fear of being identified and retaliated by their current faculty members.

Program

The faculty dynamics, institutional culture, and academic rigor were frequently described as either a support or a barrier. Programs in which faculty was described as “communicating well” and “getting along” were perceived as generally supportive. However, programs in which faculty failed to communicate, and in which there was conflict, were described as creating barriers. Several participants mentioned enrollment as a barrier for gatekeeping during admissions and throughout. They described the desire to increase or maintain enrollment discouraged gatekeeping. The size of the program was mentioned as important and one participant described the institution’s Research One status as a support, while another stated they felt the large size of their program made gatekeeping more difficult. Some participants felt their academic program did hold the same personal and professional values. These participants stated they believed the focus of their program was on research, and not on clinical competency, or gatekeeping. Some participants discussed their role in the program as a barrier. They described being part of the gatekeeping processes as a non-faculty member was conflicting. Participants frequently believed their program culture did not support or encourage gatekeeping. One participant described their program culture, stating, “I would say that, overall, not a culture that supports gatekeeping.”

Application of Experience

Participants identified the application of experience as a macro level theme, and micro level themes of professional and personal growth. The participants reported experiencing growth through adopting the gatekeeper role and responsibilities within their CES programs. However, many participants reported initial challenges with a lack of experience in gatekeeping or minimal direction from their program on how to step into the gatekeeper role.

Professional Growth

Regarding professional growth, participants stated they developed a better understanding of and alignment with a supervision model. They described developing a better understanding of gatekeeping policies and procedures at their institution. Several stated these experiences gave them a better understanding of the duties and responsibilities of counselor educators. All identified gaining some confidence and competence within the gatekeeper role. Many stated they learned to implement better boundaries with supervisees as well as ways to attend to the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Some stated they grew in ways that made them better clinicians and impacted their approach to supervision and instruction.

Personal Growth

Many of the participants identified areas of professional development overlapped with areas of personal growth. For many of these participants, they recognized that the skills they developed because of their gatekeeping experiences were applicable outside of their academic position. Some participants mentioned they developed the ability to be assertive and use confrontation as part of their experiences. They also described developing an increase in self-confidence, decreasing self-doubt, and improved feelings of self-worth:

I feel like I have grown as a person, so that's been an easier part is just being able to zoom out and see, "Okay. Now, I'm not just a student, or a master student in training. I'm a doctoral student. So, I can see all sides of it. And I can still see... even though I don't like how the

department might react to something, I can see more of why they might be doing something. I don't have to like it. But I can see more of it.

Influence and Intersection of Identity

Participants frequently discussed the impact and intersection of their multiple identities during their experience in adopting the gatekeeping role within CES. Some participants reported they specifically felt their ethnic/racial background made it more difficult to develop a gatekeeper identity and made their experiences more challenging. These participants described how their resiliency and passion for the profession helped them overcome these challenges. For many of these participants they described getting support from other students from a similar racial/ethnic background or other students with a visible minority status:

I believe being a younger, biracial Latina has impacted my gatekeeping experiences with my younger female supervisees. I have noticed that I need to work harder to justify my supervision skills and observations with my supervisees when it is a gatekeeping or growth-oriented concern, which may be because I am younger, also female, or a Latina, or possibly both. However, I have noticed with older supervisees, I do not have to “work as hard” or work with as much resistance.

Similarly, another participant stated:

I also think students experience gatekeeping differently. I’m an African American woman. I feel like I’ve heard more students of color being held more accountable than white students, like students get a pass. People are more apt to be forgiving of their unprofessional behavior than students of color.

Other participants made statements illustrating ways in which supervisees’ identities impacted their experiences. All participants acknowledged the importance of multicultural competence within supervision, and in providing feedback and completing evaluations. Several participants stated they

felt that responding to the influence and intersection of identity was challenging. Some participants stated they used their identity to educate, and model challenging conversations with their supervisees:

As a POC who identifies as female I am unable to do anything without considering this and how my identity plays into what I do. I think it is important that all counselors think about it and are familiar with the competencies that are outlined by the ACA regarding MCSJ. I make this a focus and I think it should be considered when determining who to gatekeep or not.

Multicultural competency was identified as one of the most important skills for supervisees, and one of most common concerns which lead to gatekeeping. For several, their identity was described as extremely impactful, and often as a challenge or support, particularly for participants with a visible minoritized status. The identity of supervisees was also described as impactful:

I know that my sex, ethnicity, and orientation all influence my work even before I realized it. I am aware of the power a supervisor holds and being male in a country that has been male dominated requires sensitive and care. This same awareness and care are required as my orientation is not in the minority and I have privilege that is given inherently.

In general, it appeared that for the participants of color, their race/ethnicity was the most meaningful aspect of their identity. One participant described feeling like they were evaluated unfairly and described experiencing implicit racial bias. Another participant felt responsible to address ethnic or racial differences. For some, they felt that within their culture, women typically are less likely to possess positions of authority or are less likely to speak. Some participants described feeling angry as a result, some described how their own identity made it more difficult to develop the gatekeeper identity, and for some, they approached the topic with equanimity. One participant stated they believed their sexual orientation helped them to model difficult conversations with supervisees. One of the participants stated they used their status as woman to facilitate understanding of minorities/victimized clients and supervisees. Both male participants spoke primarily about responding to their supervisees' identities in an inclusive manner. They described being mindful of their privilege and attempting to

facilitate the development of multicultural competency within their supervisees. For all participants, attending to identity was described as important, impactful, and challenging for the gatekeeper.

Discussion

Gatekeeping is a preventative and responsive practice. Often, CES doctoral students serve in the gatekeeper role as doctoral supervisors. However, this role and associated responsibilities can be cumbersome and challenging to navigate. By exploring doctoral experiences, we sought to better understand how CES programs can improve gatekeeping and support students in this role. Several themes derived from participant quotes were congruent with Charnley (2021) and Corley et al. (2020) who also found that doctoral students felt unprepared and identified barriers for gatekeeping roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, participants described the gatekeeping role as a necessity, but reported they did not feel supported in this role. The themes derived by Charnley (2021), and Corley et al. (2020) primarily focus on the identity of the doctoral student and the process of gatekeeping. The result of this study expands upon prior research as participants described how factors such as disposition, clinical experience, systemic influenced and culture impacted their experiences from the perspective of a diverse sample. The discovered themes facilitated recommendations for CES programs and faculty to implement for effective training in gatekeeping (see Table 3). A full list of participant quotes can be found at the following link (removed for blind review).

Table 3

Recommendations for CES Programs and Faculty

Themes and Subthemes	Recommendations for CES Programs	Recommendations for CES Faculty
<p>1) <i>Preparation</i> <i>a) clinical experience</i></p> <p>2) <i>Disposition</i> <i>a) gatekeeper</i> <i>b) supervisee</i></p> <p>3) <i>Responsibility</i> <i>a) necessity</i> <i>b) burden</i></p> <p>4) <i>Supports/Barriers</i> <i>a) faculty</i> <i>b) program</i></p> <p>5) <i>Application of experience</i> <i>a) professional growth</i> <i>b) personal growth</i></p> <p>6) <i>Influence and intersection of identity</i></p>	<p>Inform and disclose gatekeeping role and responsibilities to incoming students (Theme 1, 3, 4.b)</p> <p>Inform students of program gatekeeping procedures and policies along with associated burdens and challenges (Theme 1, 3, 4.b)</p> <p>Provide documentation outlining procedures and update students when changes are made (i.e. PPC, KPIs, etc.) (Theme 1, 3, 4.b)</p> <p>Provide students with training opportunities to take on gatekeeper role prior to supervision class (e.g., pre-course workshop, orientation) (Theme 1, 5)</p> <p>Assess students' competency of taking on gatekeeper role (Theme 2, 5, 6)</p> <p>Position doctoral students' supervision, instructorship, and other support responsibilities later within their program of study.(Theme 4.b, 5)</p>	<p>Assess how students are adjusting to roles and responsibilities through mentorship (Theme 2.a, 4.a, 5, 6)</p> <p>Assess student knowledge, clinical experience, and willingness to fulfill gatekeeping roles and responsibilities (Theme 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)</p> <p>Observe student experiences, ability, and disposition to inform decision-making process of student level of engagement in co-teaching and supervision of master-level students (Theme 1, 2, 5, 6)</p> <p>Provide role plays, case examples, workshops, guest lectures, and panel discussions (Theme 1, 4, 5.a)</p> <p>Provide explicit and concrete examples of gatekeeping policies and procedures (Theme 1, 3, 4.a)</p> <p>Model and support the development of the gatekeeper role through mentorship and supervision (Theme 2.a, 3, 4, 5, 6)</p> <p>Include doctoral students in gatekeeping and/or remediation meetings when appropriate (i.e., Doctoral supervisor for masters-student of concern) (Theme 1, 2.b, 3, 5)</p>

Implications for CES Programs

Counseling faculty need to be aware of the challenges doctoral students face, be transparent about the roles and responsibilities required early in the program and provide direct and ongoing support throughout the program. Programs can benefit from developing and implementing a comprehensive procedure for addressing gatekeeping and remediation issues from admissions to graduation. These procedures need to be addressed clearly and be made accessible to students at the start of the program and through their tenure. CES programs can proactively approach educating students about gatekeeping and the gatekeeping role prior to expecting them to provide supervision. If any changes are made to gatekeeping policies, faculty should ensure doctoral supervisors are knowledgeable of the changes. The role of disposition and identity need to be addressed by CES programs and supported by faculty, for example by having a dispositional evaluation form with a focus on reported dispositional constructs such as openness, neuroticism, and agreeableness. Currently, scales evaluating counselors-in-training self-efficacy (Melchert et al., 1996) and competencies (Lambie et al., 2018) exist, yet evaluation of supervisee disposition could be expanded and thoroughly addressed by the supervisor. Discussion of dispositional traits could be highlighted in at various points in the program such as, professional orientation, methods and techniques, ethics, multicultural, and practicum/internship courses.

CES programs are responsible for providing students with gatekeeping materials, education on their use and assessing competency around gatekeeping issues. Increased visibility and understanding of gatekeeping at both the doctoral and masters-level will improve transparency of gatekeeping processes, highlighting clear policies and practices that are actively upheld. Feedback from students should be encouraged and integrated into training for both doctoral and masters-level students. All participants reported they would like more information and training from their program prior to beginning supervision. This may be achieved by offering a pre-course workshop where students review program policies and procedures, staff mock cases, and perform role plays.

Many of the participants stated they believed their evaluations and gatekeeping concerns were not valued. Several stated they wanted to abandon their responsibilities because of feeling undervalued or that the program did not share their values. CES programs need to find ways to demonstrate they value the role of doctoral supervisors in supervisor and co-teaching positions. Programs can elicit and incorporate feedback from students by including them in gatekeeping meetings and faculty mentorship to encourage doctoral students in fulfilling their challenging duties and assess if they are unable due to burnout.

Implications for Counselor Educators

Faculty members are responsible for making decisions regarding the admission, remediation, and dismissal of students, however doctoral students often play informal roles within these processes. Because doctoral supervision is not only challenging, but also important, faculty should be thoughtful in how they include doctoral students in gatekeeping processes, facilitate professional development, and provide support as they navigate their experiences.

First and foremost, counselor educators need to devote time and energy to assessing how doctoral students are adjusting to their roles and responsibilities. They should model and share their personal experiences as appropriate. Prior clinical experience, ability to address topics, and disposition should inform the decision-making process of how to include doctoral students in co-teaching and supervision of masters-level students. Faculty need to assess how knowledgeable their doctoral students are, what levels of clinical experience they have, and their willingness to fulfill gatekeeping roles and responsibilities.

Counselor educators should be mindful to model and support the development of the gatekeeper role through mentorship and supervision. Faculty can assess how doctoral students are adapting to the gatekeeping role and address the influence of disposition and personality. Development and support of the gatekeeper role can be facilitated through assignments, discussions, and role plays throughout the program. Multicultural competency and responsiveness were identified as the primary

concerns leading to gatekeeping, and the identity of the gatekeeper was identified as significant. Counselor educators should be aware and responsive to the role identity plays in gatekeeping supporting students and modeling ways to broach diverse topics with supervisees.

Faculty can be mindful of supervision assignments in relation to clinical experience and the commitments and responsibilities of doctoral supervisors outside of supervision. In an ideal environment, counselor educators would anticipate and assign supervisees to doctoral supervisors with consideration of their stage in the program and clinical experience to reduce and manage potential burnout of supervisors. Additionally, greater transparency in how supervision assignments are made, increased flexibility to accommodate feedback from doctoral supervisors before supervision pairing decisions, and increased consideration of the available time and energy for supervision could be integrated into supervision assignments.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although several steps were used to establish trustworthiness, the present study has limitations regarding data collection techniques and the sample. Researchers have identified several factors which affect the quality of data obtained through recorded interviews including the effect of being recorded, how interview questions are phrased, topic being discussed, and interviewer identity (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). While steps were taken to limit researcher bias upon the interview process, the primary author was solely responsible for conducting interviews and identifies as white male and was a doctoral candidate at the time of interviews. It is possible the researcher's sex, age, race, prior knowledge, and current role may have affected the interview process. The researcher attempted to acknowledge the influence of power and privilege, using a semi-structured format of interviews allowed the researcher to address identity. Some participants asked how the researcher identified, which was disclosed. Member checks allowed participants to provide feedback and to reduce the power and influence of the researcher.

Research participation effects such as social desirability, and the Hawthorne effect can affect research data (Oswald et al., 2014). Gatekeeping is a sensitive topic and major concern for counselor educators (Chang & Rubel, 2019; Corley et al., 2020; Rapp et al., 2018). Participants may have desired to describe their program more favorably or unfavorably. Three participants stated they were concerned how they presented their programs. One participant requested the researcher remove information believing they might be identified and face consequences from the program. The researcher followed suggestions by this participant to maintain their anonymity, removing quotes they believed would identify them.

The sample included participants from three southern CACREP-accredited programs. There could be limitations due to the region in which the sample was drawn as there is a possibility that samples from other regions may differ, affecting the generalizability of this study. Therefore, it would behoove researchers to continue this research by expanding it to include multiple universities to encompass every geographic region. Although the sample included a diverse range of participants, the demographics of the sample could also be a limitation as identity appeared to significantly impact the samples experiences. Future research should further explore the gatekeeper role in doctoral students who hold a visible minoritized identity. As a result of these limits the experiences of the participants within this study may differ from others.

Conclusion

This study highlights the challenges some CES doctoral students face in fulfilling their gatekeeping roles and responsibilities. The results were used to propose recommendations to inform CES programs and faculty gatekeeping policies and procedures. Based upon the results and prior research, it appears CES programs can improve the emphasis on gatekeeping by increase the visibility of their gatekeeping procedures and policies, make these explicitly known to all stakeholders throughout multiple courses, and provide greater mentorship to supervising students. CES programs

and faculty may consider the results and implementation of the proposed recommendations to support and improve current gatekeeping processes.

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