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Building a consensus on the professional dispositions of counseling students: A content analysis on counseling student retention policies

Jeffrey Kyle Christensen
College of William & Mary - School of Education

BUILDING A CONSENSUS ON THE PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS OF COUNSELING STUDENTS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS ON COUNSELING STUDENT RETENTION POLICIES

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Jeffrey Kyle Christensen

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Jeffrey Kyle Christensen

Approved January 2015 by

Charles "Rick" Gressard, Ph.D.
Chairperson of Doctoral Committee

Charles "Rip" McAdams, Ph.D.

Thomas J. Ward, Ph.D.

James P. Barber, Ph.D.

DEDICATION

To the woman who was sold to slavery at the age 9, only to be bought back a few years later because she was "pretty enough" to be married off to a wealthier family. To her bravery at swimming the Kowloon Channel to find a better life in Hong Kong. To her selflessness in leaving all she knew to immigrate to a country completely unknown to her, with the only exception being that it would mean a better life for her children. To her courage in finding herself a single mother a few years later and finding the fortitude to raise those four children into the responsible, loving adults they are today. And to her raising her children's children and for her unwavering belief in them, even while they were questioning that belief themselves.

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ABSTRACT

The ACA Code of Ethics requires that counselor educators are responsible for monitoring and addressing student deficiencies and counselor educators live up to this responsibility despite the legal risk they may face in dismissing a student deemed incompetent (ACA, 2014; McAdams et al., 2007). The *Ward v. Wilbanks* presented significant implications for the counseling profession (Kaplan, 2014) with calls for counselor educators to clearly communicate these policies to students, as well as moving to a more standardized evaluation and remediation process (Rust, Haskin, & Hill 2013; McAdams & Foster, 2007).

The current study will present overlying themes from a census of CACREP accredited counseling programs' student retention policies (n=224) with specific attention to the professional dispositions and personal characteristics that have been deemed 'elusive,' yet regarded as important to successful therapy (Robiner, Fuhrman, & Ristveldt, 1993; Herman, 1993). Evaluating multicultural competence is arguably the most controversial and challenged disposition in student evaluation and special consideration will be given to the themes in how multicultural competence has been assessed and offer strategies in how counselor educators can navigate the remediation process for students who are struggling in this area.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A chief responsibility of counselor educators is evaluating the professional dispositions of counselors-in-training to ensure that future services provided to clients will not cause harm. Evaluation is considered the "nucleus" of supervision (Bernard and Goodyear, 2009) and with priority given to client safety, counselor educators must navigate a fine balance of adhering to their gatekeeping responsibility, while providing students with sufficient opportunities to develop into competent professionals.

Current evaluations of professional competencies have come to encompass both the skills required of counselors as well as the dispositions necessary for growing professionally and establishing a working relationship with clients (Swank, Lambie, and Witta, 2012). While there is a general understanding in the evaluation around professional competencies (counseling techniques, application to theory, etc.), evaluation of professional dispositions is less understood, leaving counselor educators exposed to potential litigious consequences when adhering to their gatekeeping responsibilities (Henderson and Dufrene, 2012; Rust, Raskin, and Hill, 2013).

Accurate and transparent evaluative measures are essential for supporting counselor educators and supervisors in this capacity (Foster and McAdams, 2009; Swank et al., 2012). Though a number of screening rubrics exist that evaluate professional dispositions, the lack of consensus on the specific criteria that make up non-academic competencies remains a problem in the counseling profession (Henderson and Dufrene, 2012; Rust et al., 2013).

An inductive and emergent content analysis on student retention policies and evaluations from Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredited programs can demonstrate the dispositions most commonly assessed. These results

can guide future studies to explore the specific professional dispositions of counselors and build a consensus in the counseling profession that can better aid counselor educators and supervisors in their evaluation efforts.

Description of the Problem

Evaluation around trainees' professional dispositions and subsequent remediation practices has been a contested issue within the counseling profession. With the recent court cases of *Keeton v. Anderson-Wiley et al., 2010* and *Ward v. Wilbanks et al., 2010,* counselor educators are becoming more aware of the potential legal liability of upholding the gatekeeping process to students deemed unfit to serve as counselors. As these cases are brought to light, so too is the relative absence of empirical research on evaluation measures and the counseling profession's lack of consensus on the professional dispositions deemed necessary for counselors. (Henderson and Dufrene, 2012). Several authors have written on defending a litigation challenge from a student dismissed from a graduate program (Baldo, Softas-Nall, and Shaw, 1997; Frames and Stevens-Smith, 1995; Kerl, Garcia, McCullough, and Maxwell, 2002; McAdams, Foster, and Ward, 2007), and from a 1994 lawsuit filed against Louisiana Tech University for allowing a counselor to graduate without sufficient training, the prosecuting attorney stated, "a university has an obligation not only to the degree participants, but also to the public [to ensure] that a person who graduates from its program is competent in the area in which the degree is bestowed" (Custer, 1994).

The American Counseling Association's (ACA; 2014) *Code of Ethics* require that supervisors provide "ongoing evaluation and appraisal" of supervisees and to be aware of any academic and *personal* (italics added) limitations that could impede the quality of services they provide to clients. Supervisors must assist supervisees in securing remedial assistance when

needed and to recommend dismissal when supervisees are unable to provide competent services (Standard F.6.b). CACREP requires that program faculty conduct; "a systematic developmental assessment of each student's progress throughout the program, including consideration of the student's academic performance, professional development, and personal development...if evaluations indicate that a student is not appropriate for the program, faculty members help facilitate the student's transition out of the program and, if possible, into a more appropriate area of study" (pg 5; Standard I.P).

Despite clearly defined responsibilities around gatekeeping, counselor educators are still subject to legal challenges around student dismissal. Students filing the charge often claim that the dismissal was malicious and punitive and it falls on the educational institution to defend the decision is by providing sufficient evidence that justified the dismissal (McAdams and Foster, 2007). Justification is demonstrated by showing evidence that the student had advanced notice of the evaluative and remedial policies of the institution and that sufficient efforts were made to remediate the student before the dismissal was finalized. These points of defense fall under the doctrines of substantive and procedural due process and serve as the primary standards in which remedial policies have been evaluated (McAdams and Foster, 2007). Should the graduate institution fail to adequately defend the dismissal decision, then court costs, compensatory and punitive damages to the dismissed student are liable consequences for the graduate institution. It is critical that programs adhere to a standard of student retention and enforce dismissal policies, despite the risk of being vulnerable to lawsuits from students or other third parties (Kerl, et al., 2002).

While it is not clear how many students dismissed from a graduate program challenge that dismissal in court, most counseling programs report one to three "problem" students a year

(Olkin and Gaughen, 1991). Other articles have cited the occurrence of counselor educators living up to the stressful task of addressing student impairment on a yearly basis, making faculty involvement with students who fall below professional standards a common occurrence (Gaubatz and Vera, 2006; Kerl, et al., 2002). In addition, several studies detail that more students are asked to leave programs due to personal issues, such as interpersonal problems, or emotional and psychological difficulties (Brear, Dorrian and Luscri, 2008; Enochs and Etzbach, 2004) and the potential for students to pursue litigation to challenge dismissal decisions is even greater when the dismissal is based on personal reasons rather than academic ones (Olkin and Gaughen, 1991).

Another complication of student remediation is faculty reluctance to dismiss students who have interpersonal deficits. Several authors write of the reluctance to dismiss students outside of meeting academic standards due to facing possible litigation (Baldo, et al., 1997; Frame and Stevens-Smith, 1995; Kerl, et al., 2002). Another possible source of reluctance could be faculty's former roles as clinicians who, being trained in personality and behavior change, take additional responsibility in working with students in addressing interpersonal issues that affect their professional capacity (Kerl, et al., 2002). Lastly, the lack of preferred models of pedagogy or content to assist counselor educators in determining the best remedial and developmental approach to best meet the needs of students is another source of faculty reluctance (McAdams and Foster, 2007).

The following sections will detail how the topic of professional dispositions are currently addressed in the counseling and psychology literature, the gaps that need further attention within both fields, and the purpose of the current study.

Current Approaches

Many articles within the counseling literature on establishing professional competencies of students have been conceptual in nature, detailing student remediation policies and evaluation of the specific programs of the authors. Several articles provide similar themes that include individual programs' evaluation measures and remediation policies of students (Baldo, et al., 1997; Frame and Stevens-Smith, 1995; Kerl, et al., 2002; Lumadue and Duffey, 1999; McAdams, et al., 2007). The policies proposed by these authors share the commonality of providing a rubric for faculty members to assess students along several domains of professional competencies, including areas such as flexibility, personal responsibility, ability to receive feedback, etc. The rubrics are Likert-scaled and students who score below an acceptable standard meet with faculty to begin a remediation plan. The nature of the plans vary according to each graduate program but most commonly involve regular progress evaluations and routine meetings with a member or members from the faculty to ensure that the remedial plan is adapting adequately to best fit the student (Kerl, et al., 2002; McAdams, et al., 2007; McAdams and Foster, 2007). Other articles provide detailed ways in which programs can more effectively administer evaluation policies in the mental health profession. Suggestions include creating a climate of transparency around evaluation to foster a sense of trust and understanding in the importance of gatekeeping for students (Foster and McAdams, 2009; Kaslow, Rubin, Forrest, et al., 2007). Lastly, several authors have written on the importance of programs providing opportunities for self-assessment practices in students, as it is a key component in competency, due to it requiring self-awareness, self-reflection, self-understanding and self-evaluation, all necessary as professional dispositions for effective mental health professionals (Kaslow et al., 2007; Rodolfa, Bent, Eismann, et al., 2005; Swank et al., 2012).

There have been limited attempts to provide empirical support for evaluation measures. Swank, et al., (2012) developed the Counseling Competencies Scale (CSS), a measurement intended for assessing students in practicum, and compared the results with students' final grades of their practicum course. Despite a low correlation ($r = .407$), the study was the first in nearly a decade that attempted to empirically validate an assessment of counseling students' professional competencies and dispositions. Prior to that, Eriksen and McAuliffe (2003) developed the Counseling Skills Scale (CCS) another evaluative measurement designed for experts to evaluate beginning counseling students. The study had a strong internal consistency of .90, but the sample size was small ($N = 29$), with two raters evaluating students within the same university.

For the past two decades, the psychology profession has given increasing attention to identify and define the professional competencies required of psychologists. Numerous efforts in the form of councils and workgroups, have worked to define and appropriately assess the professional competencies expected of students and professional psychologists. The competencies outlined have established measurable learning outcomes for psychologists-in-training and establish competency benchmarks for professional psychologists (Fouad, Grus, Hatcher, et al., 2009). The first of these task forces originated from the National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology (NCSPP) in 1986 (Rubin, Bebeau, Leigh, et al., 2007). The model proposed by NCSPP identified and defined six core competency areas relevant to professional psychologists and were based on scientific and practical knowledge and skills, as well as attitudes, and ethical behaviors. From this model, the Council of Accreditation revised the Guidelines and Principles for Accreditation to require programs to tailor their education and training efforts to reflect the areas of competencies outlined by the NCSPP (Peterson, McHolland, Bent, et al., 1992). Later models emerged from the efforts of the Council

of Chairs and Training Councils, the Association of Directors of Psychology Training Clinics and the Practicum Competencies Outline in 2001, which established behavioral benchmarks expected of practicum students (Hatcher and Lassiter, 2007).

The next major step in the evolution of the competency movement was the 2002 Competencies Conference: Future Directions in Education and Credentialing, from which the Cube model was formed (Rodolfa et al., 2005). The Cube model is a three dimensional, heuristic model consisting of three domains that encompass the knowledge, skills, and day-to-day activities required of psychologists. The competencies covered in the model are arranged along a *foundational* domain, which consists of personal dispositions and the foundational knowledge that are taught and reinforced through graduate education. This domain encompasses the necessary building blocks for understanding and implementing the day-to-day activities and professional skill-sets of the *functional* domain. Both of these domains are integrated along the professional life-span of psychologists, which makes up the third domain. The model illustrates how the two areas of competency vary dependent on the level of professional development of the individual, and how development in one area of competency, influences the development in others, making each dimension interdependent upon the others.

The Cube model is currently cited as a standard in outlining the areas of competency from which psychologists in all stages of professional development are evaluated (Fouad, et al., 2009; Kaslow, Rubin, Leigh, et al., 2006; Kaslow et al., 2007). Building on the Competencies Conference, the American Psychological Association (APA) Board of Educational Affairs assembled a task force in 2003 to move beyond defining competencies to measuring those competencies. A comprehensive report detailed the needs for competency assessment, the different models of assessment from other professions, and the challenges to accurately assess

competence and provided recommendations and guiding principles in meeting those challenges (Kaslow et al., 2007; Leigh, Smith, Bebeau, et al., 2007).

More recently, the taskforce for the Assessment of Competency Benchmarks Work Group (known as the Workgroup) met in 2006 to identify the levels of competence appropriate for the developmental stages of psychologists and to clearly establish benchmarks appropriate for those stages (Fouad et al., 2009). Beginning with the Cube model, the Workgroup operationally defined each competency and identified behavioral anchors that would demonstrate the appropriate mastery of that competency based on the level of training. The Workgroup established three levels of training for each competency, which include; readiness for practicum, readiness for internship, and readiness for entry to practice. The product of the Workgroup (known as the Benchmarks document) was extensively reviewed by constituency groups and APA Boards and Committees, and working with the Competency Assessment Toolkit Group, expanded on the Cube model with the addition of three new competencies; professionalism (to address issues of behavior and deportment, labeled within the foundational domain), teaching and advocacy, (both considered part of the functional domain) (Fouad, et al., 2009; Kaslow, Grus, Campbell, et al., 2009).

Gaps in the Literature

Many articles share commonalities in the policies proposed for addressing remediation plans, however the specific criteria of professional non-academic behaviors vary in assessments, with some authors having five domains (Kerl, et al., 2002) and others having up to nine or ten (Frames and Stevens-Smith, 1995; McAdams, et al., 2007). There is a limited overlap to the professional dispositions among the proposed assessments, as different programs value certain dispositions more than others, or due to different word variations accounting for similar

dispositions or behaviors. This lack of consensus in criteria, limits standard practices in protecting client welfare and providing a climate of transparency around evaluation (Foster and McAdams, 2009; Kaslow, et al., 2007; Swank, et al., 2012).

Another gap is the lack of studies that attempt to empirically validate evaluative assessments, or provide evidence of consistency among the counseling profession's already existing measures. Swank, et al.'s (2012) study is an exception to this, though in an attempt to bring about empirical validation in evaluative standards, added yet another assessment to an already widening pool of policies and criteria, furthering the lack of consensus on professional competencies in the counseling profession.

No studies have empirically tested the competencies listed in the Cube model and Benchmarks document to effective practices in psychology and it is questionable whether all the competencies listed in the Benchmarks document are essential for all health care professionals, or whether it is necessary to develop the same level of competence across all the areas (McCutcheon, 2009; DeMers, 2009). Many questions remain unanswered around these issues and a means for addressing some of these gaps is by conducting a study that furthers a sense of consensus on the specific professional dispositions that are considered essential of counseling students.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to provide evidence on the current professional dispositions used to evaluate counseling students. Through an inductive, emergent content analysis of CACREP accredited counseling programs; themes can emerge on the specific professional dispositions used to evaluate students from the many student remediation policies and evaluations currently in place. The results of this study can help in developing evaluative

practices to guide counselor educators and supervisors around the professional dispositions of counselor trainees. Doing so will not only better meet the needs of students but serve as protective factors of procedural and substantive due processes in a court of law. For this study, the term professional dispositions will come to encapsulate other terms that have been used in the literature, such as non-academic behaviors, personal characteristics, professional performance, and personal development. Professional dispositions in counselor education will be defined as; the ability to function effectively in a professional capacity with clients and others, and takes into account the personal characteristics of individuals such as the core values, attitudes and beliefs, that either enable or restrict that ability (Kerl et al., 2002; McAdams and Foster, 2007; Spurgeon, Gibbons, and Cochran, 2012).

The following question framed and directed the study:

1. What are the professional dispositions that are most prevalent in student retention policies, dispositional rubrics and evaluations of master's level counseling students?

CHAPTER 2

Select Review of the Literature

Balancing the responsibilities of training competent clinicians with protecting client welfare is a delicate task decided on the evaluation of student competencies, including students' professional dispositions. What follows is a review of the literature pertaining to the history and challenges in the evaluation of professional dispositions of counselors, current practices and criterion within counseling, the Cube Model of Competency Development, and the proposed approach of the study.

History and Challenges to Consensus

It may be alarming for counselor educators that there is a lack of consensus on the criteria of professional dispositions deemed necessary for counselors. Competencies in counseling have been described as a "moving target with an elusive criterion" (Robiner, Fuhrman, and Ristvedt, 1993, p.5), which is a supported statement with literature spanning three decades that calls for consensus in this area (Hensley, Smith, and Thompson, 2003; Rust et al., 2013; Weiss, 1981, Borders and Benshoff, 1992).

Critics of psychotherapy have written that the inherent subjective nature of counseling makes the task of setting definitive criteria of evaluation impossible (Dawes, 1994). Traditionally, evaluative criteria have focused exclusively on the knowledge and skills of practitioners (Kaslow, Borden, Collins, et al., 2004), though studies have shown mixed results in demonstrating that these competencies actually produce positive client outcomes (Herman, 1993). A large body of research has demonstrated consistent findings that counselors' professional dispositions used in the formation of the working alliance with clients, are most predictive of positive client outcomes (Herman, 1993; Jennings, Goh, Skovholt, Hanson, and

Banerjess-Stevens, 2003; Shaw and Dobson, 1988; Wheeler, 2000). Thus evaluative assessments of counselor competencies have started to incorporate a more comprehensive scope to account for the professional dispositions of counselors, despite a lack of consensus on what those specific dispositions actually are (Eriksen and McAuliffe, 2003; Swank et al., 2012).

Evaluation of clinical dispositions can be traced back to the beginnings of psychotherapy, with Freudian psychoanalytic supervisors assessing future analysts on their ability to free associate, uncover blind spots in their sub conscious processes, and more of a dispositional trait, the general openness of self exploration (Hess, 2011). Before Freud's time, Lightner Witmer (1907/1996), touted as the father of clinical psychology, wrote of the responsibility of supervisors making sure students had sufficient training to live up to the multiple tasks of working with patients. Based on psychotherapy's roots in medicine, evaluation of students followed traditional medical practices in assessing supervisees' ability to demonstrate effective clinical practices and knowledge.

Whether these evaluations were grounded in Freud's Psychoanalytic practices of the 1920s, Rogers' core conditions of the 1940s, or the more recent microskills training approach grounded in counseling techniques independent of theory; the process of evaluation has typically required the supervisor to differentiate the supervisees' capacity to work effectively with clients through a reduction of the counseling session into moment-to-moment demonstrations of techniques and knowledge (Eriksen and McAuliffe, 2003; Young, 1998). Differing theorist backgrounds held different beliefs in what constituted a competent clinician, and it is possible that these differences account for the challenges of reaching a consensus on the competencies deemed necessary for effective practice. Currently, the counseling profession continues to rely

more on the intuitive professional judgment of supervisors to evaluate their supervisees, than on standard criteria established by the profession (Bernard and Goodyear, 2009).

The change in evaluative practices to include more of the professional dispositions can be attributed to several developments, one of which was the movement of professionals away from "purist" theorist practices toward embracing a more integrative/eclectic approach (Lazarus and Beutler, 1993). This allowed for assessment criteria to be more generalized and less rooted in a readily defined theoretical framework (Ivey, 1971; Truax and Carkhuff, 1967). This change towards a more integrative/eclectic practice, in conjunction with both a movement in the late 1980s to control for clinician impairment and studies finding that personal characteristics of counselors are more predictive of positive client outcomes prompted a shift in attention from clinical skills alone toward supervisees' professional dispositions (Forrest, Elman, Gizara, and Vacha-Haase, 1999; Lamb, Presser, Baum, et al., 1987; Lambert, 1989).

The counseling profession's adoption of the "personal development" and evaluation of "personal limitations" of students has become a standard in the counseling profession as reflected by the ACA Code of Ethics and the CACREP standards for graduate programs (CACREP, 2009; Standard I.P; ACA Code of Ethics, 2014; Section C.2.g). The ACA Ethical Codes and CACREP Standards require that graduate programs and faculty identify counselor professional dispositions and hold students accountable, inasmuch as failure to do so would entail acting incongruently with a profession that prizes upholding its ethical obligations (Henderson and Dufrene, 2012; Rust, et al., 2013; Swank, et al., 2012). Another factor influencing changes in clinical evaluation practices is a more macro influence in Western society toward becoming increasingly litigious (Bernard and Goodyear, 2009). This movement has influenced attention to due process standards in evaluation as well as a strong push for graduate

programs to incorporate standardized evaluation criteria ascribe to best practices in evaluative standards, including a call of standardization of criteria (Rust, et al., 2013).

Counseling Remediation Practices and Proposed Criterion of Professional Dispositions

Frame and Stevens-Smith (1995) were one of the first researchers to evaluate students' professional dispositions by describing the importance of the interpersonal and intrapersonal characteristics, considered the "essential function" of the competent clinician (pg 124). Following an extensive review of the literature, the authors identified nine essential professional dispositions for therapists including; *being open, flexible, positive, the ability to cooperate with others, willingness to use and accept feedback, awareness of one's own impact on others, ability to deal with conflict, ability to accept personal responsibility*, and the *ability to effectively express feelings*. These nine dispositions were incorporated into the Personal Characteristics Evaluation Form (PCEF) that scored each disposition along a 5-point Likert scale. To provide evidence of due process for litigious accountability, students entering the authors' counseling program were introduced to both the student retention policy and the PCEF, with emphasis on the possibility of remediation plans of students, should a faculty member deem it necessary.

Though the Frame and Stevens-Smith model is credited as the best known model of its time for assessing professional dispositions (McAdams and Foster, 2007), no empirical tests were done to test the validity of the nine dispositions (Eriksen and McAuliffe, 2003), and subsequent refinements by other authors have replaced certain dispositions and eliminated others entirely (McAdams et al., 2007). Evaluation of the PCEF model has been limited to evaluations and surveys of students and faculty in its authors' program, with no controls for bias or implementation of a comparison group. Nonetheless, the PCEF was the first evaluation that centered solely on professional dispositions and despite the limitations of its development, the

introduction of the PCEF and a remediation policy to address deficient dispositions were instrumental in furthering the discussion on professional dispositions evaluation.

Baldo, Softas-Nall, and Shaw (1997) offered an alternative evaluation framework policy, positing that Frame and Stevens-Smith's policy placed too much risk on individual faculty and offered another standard of evaluation which is commonly seen in practice today. This included having a retention committee made up of several faculty members charged with constructing and overseeing both evaluation and remediation, as opposed to having those responsibilities rest with a single faculty member. This policy evaluated six different professional disposition criteria in students including: *empathic capacity, maturity of judgment, ability to work closely with others, capacity to handle stress,* and *tolerance for deviance.*

While offering a very detailed remediation policy for other graduate programs to emulate, Baldo et al., did not provide any justification for the professional dispositions listed as evaluation criteria, and they did not conduct any empirical testing of their validity and reliability (Eriksen and McAuliffe, 2003). Its effectiveness was assessed only through the support it gained at the authors' university, after being successfully upheld in two court cases. It is also unfortunate to note the lack of overlap between the proposed criteria of Baldo et al., with that of the PCEF, as the additional criteria furthered the gap in determining a consensus of professional dispositions.

In 1999 Lumadue and Duffey introduced another professional competency evaluation known as the Professional Performance Fitness Evaluation (PPFE). The authors stressed the importance of standardization in evaluating students in areas outside of academic abilities to more effectively gatekeep students lacking the personal qualities needed of effective counselors. In addition to suggesting having programs utilize a faculty review committee to handle remediation, the authors felt that evaluative measure should be comprehensive in measuring both

students' professional Competencies and dispositions. The PPFE model came from suggestions made by the Texas Association of Counselor Educators and followed the competencies listed in the ACA Code of Ethics, with criterion including; *counseling skills and abilities, professional responsibility, competence, maturity,* and *integrity.*

The PPFE was the first instrument to provide a 4-point Likert-scale that let faculty differentiate the degree to which they observe students fulfilling the evaluative criteria. The four points included; N-no opportunity to observe, O-does not meet criteria for program level, 1-meets criteria only minimally, and 2-meets criteria consistently at the program level. For students who scored below criteria, then a detailed remediation process would begin that was in congruence with the ACA Code of Ethics and Due Process mandates. However, the authors note that the criteria of the PPFE were not empirically tested and that further investigation would be needed to establish the relationship with its criteria to student competency and the possible impacts on program development and student remediation.

Building off the works of Lumadue and Duffey (1999), Kerl, Garcia, McCullough and Maxwell (2002) introduced the Professional Counseling Performance Evaluation (PCPE) which is commonly found in use today among counseling programs. The PCPE came from the same institution of Lumadue and Duffey and like the PPFE, evaluated both students' dispositions and clinical competencies along *basic communication skills, anger control, empathy, maturity, professional demeanor,* and *conflict resolution.* Unlike previous assessments, the PCPE provides working definitions of acceptable behaviors expected of students and provides transparency around evaluation and protection against due process concerns.

Like Lumadue and Duffey's policy, the authors of the PCPE used the ACA Code of Ethics as well as the ethical standards specific to Texas state law as a foundation for developing

the professional dispositions criteria. However, as had been the trend around professional dispositions evaluation, no empirical testing was conducted to test the validity of the criteria (Eriksen and McAuliffe, 2003). The authors' demonstration of the model's effectiveness was solely based on the PCPE and remediation policy having been successfully upheld in court and although successful court resolution currently serves as the main indicator of effectiveness of evaluations and remediation policies of graduate programs (McAdams and Foster, 2007), this indicator is limited. Effective remediation policies need to identify optimal remediation practices such as intensity and frequency of remediation specific supervision, whether sufficient opportunity was provided to students to correct problematic behaviors, and establishing clear indicators that indicate whether remediation was successful, none of which is provided (Kaslow, et al., 2007; Rust, et al., 2013). While the PCPE has had great impact on the counseling profession as a useful evaluation tool, it is unfortunate that it added additional criteria, furthering the lack of consensus of professional dispositions. It is even more unfortunate that it shared relatively little in criterion with Lumadue and Duffey's PPFE, from which it was based on, demonstrating either a lack of importance placed on establishing consensus, or a greater challenge in identifying professional dispositions.

Recognizing the need for evaluative instruments that demonstrate both validity and reliability, Eriksen and McAuliffe (2003), developed the Counseling Skills Scale (CSS). Unlike most of the previous rubrics offered in the literature, the CSS attempted to serve as a more comprehensive assessment of counselor competence, by addressing both verbal and non-verbal clinical competencies. Eriksen and McAuliffe used the Skilled Counseling Scale (Urbani, Smith, Madux, et al., 2002), as a framework to develop the CSS, reporting that the measure had demonstrated promise, but had several limitations in its construction as well as weak validity

findings. The finalized CSS consisted of 22 different behaviors and traits that fell into six sub categories; *shows interest and appreciation, encourages exploration, deepens the session, encourages change, develops therapeutic relationship,* and *manages the session.*

The authors' efforts to test the validity and reliability were a true strength of the development of the CSS. Inter-rater reliability of two independent raters was .90 and pre and post-course evaluations demonstrated a total effect size of .80. However, the sample size was small (n=29) and though there was a strong internal consistency, both the raters and participants were from the same university, providing minimal opportunity to control for bias. The authors concluded that the CSS demonstrated satisfactory face and construct validity; however, the item analysis resulted in over half the items correlating with other subscales. Additionally, the final instrument only accounted for professional dispositions on one subscale, *develops therapeutic relationship*, raising strong concerns about the CSS's validity as a comprehensive measure of professional dispositions (Swank, et al., 2012). Despite this limitation, the CSS is one of the first evaluative instruments within the counseling profession that went beyond evaluating microskills of counseling students, to include the professional dispositions of counselors.

Sometimes referred to as the William and Mary Model, McAdams, Foster, and Ward (2007) developed a more comprehensive evaluation rubric based off the works of Frame and Stevens-Smith (1995). Their Professional Performance Review Policy (PPRP) outlined 10 professional dispositions that students are evaluated on, which include; *openness to new ideas, flexibility, cooperativeness with others, willingness to use and accept feedback, awareness of impact on others, ability to deal with conflict, ability to accept personal responsibility, ability to express feelings effectively and appropriately, attention to ethical and legal considerations*, and *initiative and motivation.* These 10 criteria are similar to the ones proposed by the PCEF but

differ in the inclusion of ethical considerations and initiative and motivation criteria and elimination of a positive attitude criterion. In addition, the PPRP offers clear behavior indicators that differentiate students' professional performance along a Likert-scale scheme, in an effort to control for potential subjective bias of evaluators.

To date, the PPRP is one of the most comprehensive measures in assessing for professional dispositions and used in numerous counseling programs as a standard of evaluation. Despite this, its main limitation is the lack of empirical validation of its criteria (Swank, et al., 2012) and the lack of justification given for the addition and removal of the PCEF criteria. Another limitation can be seen in the counseling professions' recent emphasis on developing culturally competent counselors and whether the PPRP adequately accounts in assessing for multiculturalism, a competency more understood as a disposition, that is collectively agreed upon as being crucial in the evaluation of students (Ancis and Marshall, 2010; Bemak, Epp, and Keys, 1999; Forrest et al., 1999; Kaslow et al., 2007; Rodolfa et al., 2005; Sue, 2010; Swank, et al., 2012). Specifically, the PPRP accounts for diversity under its ethical and legal considerations category, which may not be emphasized enough as gauged by the current writings of the counseling profession. This is evidenced with more recent models of competence development and evaluations having diversity and multiculturalism as a distinct component apart from ethical considerations (Fouad et al., 2009; Rodolfa et al., 2005; Swank, et al., 2012).

The most recent evaluative measure reported in the literature is the Counseling Competencies Scale (CSS) from Swank, Lambie, and Witta (2012). The authors attempted to make the CCS as comprehensive as possible, citing a strong need for the counseling profession to have a comprehensive, standardized measure in place that demonstrates empirical validity in the measurement of counseling skills, professional dispositions, and professional behaviors. The

CCS consists of 32 items that organize into five scales that include; *professional behaviors, counseling relationship, counseling skills, assessment and application,* and *professional dispositions.* The two scales that are most relevant to professional dispositions are the *counseling relationship* and, not surprisingly, the *professional dispositions* scales. Together they assess the following 10 indicators of professional behavior: *professional ethics, professionalism, self-awareness and self-understanding, emotional stability and self-control, motivated to learn and grow/initiative, multicultural competence, openness to feedback, professional and personal boundaries, flexibility and adaptability,* and *congruence and genuineness.*

The efforts of Swank et al., are noteworthy for several reasons. The CCS demonstrated strong psychometric support, with the five scales having strong factor loadings (ranging between .97 to .52, the mode being .71), with Eigen values greater than 1.0 and a Cronbach's alpha of .933 for the total instrument. In addition, the authors implemented a complex research design, putting in place controls for potential bias, such as using the CSS in more than one program, having a moderate sample size (n = 166), and having multiple evaluators (n = 16). Although the CSS demonstrated a low correlation with final grades of students in a practicum course (.407, 17% of the variance), the authors indicate that the lack of variation of grades within counseling and the inability to account for a portion of the sample due to a program grading on a pass/fail scale, as potential reasons for the low relationship. Additionally, there were low reports of inter-rater reliability (a total of .570), but unlike other studies that attempted to provide empirical validation to counseling evaluative instruments (Elliott,1979; Hill, 1978; as reported by Swank et al., 2012; Eriksen and McAuliffe, 2003), the present study used evaluations of students working with real clients and included the assessment of professional dispositions.

The sophisticated research design and strong factor loadings of the Swank et al. (2012) study lend optimism in the counseling profession finally meeting the challenge of standardizing an evaluative assessment. However, the instrument also has some limitations. For one, the development of the CCS was the result of a single programs' efforts, and as in the case of previous studies, the CCS evaluative criterion were program-specific and not necessarily grounded in a consensus of the counseling profession. Several authors have suggested that consensus is considered requisite in providing the foundation necessary for empiricism to be established and is needed to ensure ethical evaluation of students (Hensley, Smith, and Thompson, 2003; Rust, et al., 2013; Spurgeon, Gibbons, and Cochran, 2012;). Also limiting was the fact that while the CCS shared some overlap with the professional dispositions of the PPRP, there was also significant variation, with little justification given by the authors to account for this difference. While the CCS authors' claimed an extensive review of the literature as justification for including the criteria of the CSS, they provided little information about the specifics of their review, thus raising question as to its usefulness as a basis for grounding their criterion selection.

Finally, Swank et al. (2012) may inaccurately assume the need for a comprehensive assessment that encompasses both the professional skill sets with professional dispositions criteria, by overlooking important differences between those two sets of criteria. Other competency assessment models have differentiated between the two areas of competency, considering professional dispositions to be *foundational* to the acquisition of the professional skill sets required of the profession (Rodolfa et al., 2005; Kaslow et al., 2007; Fouad et al., 2009). This raises doubt as to whether it is appropriate to evaluate professional dispositions concurrent with professional skills evaluation. Also, with supervisees experiencing anxiety

around evaluation (Bernard and Goodyear, 2009; Foster and McAdams, 2009) it may be disadvantageous to include the more sensitive area of professional dispositions in an evaluation form that is paired with counseling skills competencies, a criterion often used in determination of student grade.

In summary, this review of the counseling literature concerning outcome evaluation has revealed two important findings: (a) there is a wide assortment of models for evaluating students' professional dispositions and (b) there is considerable variation in the specific criteria used for these evaluations (Appendix A, Table 1). Empirical validation of evaluation measurements remains a need (Swank et al., 2012) and justification of the criteria used in evaluation, through consensus from the profession is a requisite for standardization (Forrest et al., 1999; Hensley et al., 2003; Kaslow 2004; Kaslow et al., 2007; Ruben, Bebeau, Leigh, et al., 2007; Rust et al., 2013). Psychology has reached a consensus of measuring competence for psychologists in training, including professional dispositions, and what follows is a brief review of the model of competence that has been proposed by that field.

The Cube Model

Psychology has been very active in its "Competency Movement," so much so, that the initiative has been referred to as a "national zeitgeist" in offering definitions and strategies to aid in assessing competence (Ruben et al., 2007, pg. 453). In 2002, a major thrust in the movement came from the Competencies Conference: Future Directions in Education and Credentialing (Kaslow, 2004). An influential result of this conference was the development of the Cube model. This model captured the intersection of the foundational and functional competencies of psychologists that took into account the developmental stages of training (Rodolfa et al., 2005). The original model was further operationalized with the development of the Benchmarks

Document in 2009 from the works of Fouad et al., (2009). The authors of the Benchmarks Document served as a task force from the Assessment of Competency Benchmarks Workgroup and provided definitions of each competency of the Cube Model and set behavioral anchors in the forms of knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of trainees from three stages of training; practicum, internship, and entry into practice.

The original version of the Cube model proposed 12 core competencies conceptualized as either *foundational* or *functional* competencies and arranged along stages of professional development (Rodolfa et al., 2005). The *foundational* competencies make up the x-axis of the model and are considered the "building blocks" of what psychologists do; they comprise the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that underlie the day-to-day activities of psychologists. The specific domains of competency represented in this area were; *reflective practice and self assessment, scientific knowledge and methods, relationships, ethical and legal standards, individual and cultural diversity* and *interdisciplinary systems*. The domain of *professionalism* was added by Fouad and colleagues in 2009. These domains of foundational competency provide the groundwork for psychologists to acquire *functional* competencies. They are thought to be primarily taught and reinforced in graduate training and during internship, and they are expected to be continually expanded on by professionals, even after graduate training (Madan-Swain, Hankines, Gilliam, et al., 2012; Rodolfa et al., 2005).

The *functional* competencies, located on the y-axis, encompass the major roles that psychologists are expected to perform on a day-to-day basis. These domains of competency include; *assessment, intervention, consultation, research and evaluation, supervision, teaching, administration* and *advocacy* (Fouad et al., 2009; Rodolfa et al., 2005). Each of these functional competencies requires an application of the foundational competencies, and overall, the Cube

model assumes that the foundational and functional competencies are interrelated. The z-axis of the Cube model reflects the stages of professional development of psychologists, and includes the stages of graduate training, internship, postdoctoral experiences and entry into practice.

In total, the Cube model currently encompasses 15 separate domains of competencies and dispositions and is considered the standard in outlining the areas of competency from which psychologists in all stages of professional development are evaluated (Fouad et al., 2009; Kaslow et al., 2006; Kaslow et al., 2007; Ruben et al., 2007; McCutcheon, 2009). Despite general agreement on the competencies proposed by the Cube model, it is not inclusive of all specialty areas in psychology, although it is considered an acceptable framework from which to develop other competency models. For example, using the competencies outlined from the Cube model and Benchmarks document, the areas of clinical health psychology (France, Masters, Belar, et al., 2008) and geropsychology (Borrayo, 2006), have developed competency models that incorporate other competency domains unique to their specialty.

Despite the major contributions of the Cube model and the extensive work of Fouad et al. (2009) in establishing behavioral markers of trainees along the three developmental levels, it should be emphasized that these benchmarks were set without any empirical validation (DeMers, 2009; McCutcheon, 2009), or any suggestions by the authors as to how the model could be tested. In addition, closer scrutiny reveals that some of the competencies such as "teaching" and "advocacy" may have limited applicability for licensing bodies (DeMers, 2009).

The Cube model and Benchmarks Document have sufficiently delimited the range of criterion and attitudes that characterize the ethics and values of the psychology profession (Hatcher, 2011). Although some of the descriptions offered by the Benchmarks document are relevant to the counseling profession,(e.g., the *foundational* competencies resemble the

professional dispositions valued in counseling), there are also limitations to the model as a whole, given that only two competency areas in the *functional* domain (assessment and intervention) relate directly to counseling (Hatcher, 2011; Ridley et al., 2011). In addition, many studies have illustrated the importance of cognitive complexity in determining counseling competence (Byars-Winston and Fouad, 2006; Fauth, Gates, Vinca, Boles, and Hayes, 2007; Skovholt and Ronnestad, 2003) and the Cube model and Benchmarks document do not incorporate cognitive complexity in performance assessment.

Despite these limitations, the works of Rodolfa et al,. (2005) and Fouad et al., (2009) have been very influential in the field, with both articles having over 370 citations among them. In addition, both the Cube model and Benchmarks Document have currently served as the basis for several models of competency, all within specific branches of psychology, with the specific criterion found under the *foundational* and *functional* domains commonly seen in these models (Madan-Swain et al., 2012; Nash and Larkin, 2012). Though there is an absence of empirical assessments based off these works, several authors both within the psychology and counseling fields, have stressed the importance of establishing a consensus among competency criteria before such assessments could be made (Forrest et al., 1999; Hensley et al., 2003; Kaslow 2004; Kaslow et al., 2007; Ruben et al., 2007; Rust et al., 2013). Both the Cube Model and Benchmarks Document have wide agreed upon consensus among competencies, including professional dispositions. With the common overlap between the fields of psychology and counseling, the Cube Model and Benchmarks document are important frameworks to consider with the questions of the current study, inasmuch as it hopes to answer the question of the most assessed professional dispositions within counseling, with the hopes of establishing a greater consensus in this area.

Proposed Approach

The purpose of the proposed study is to establish a foundation for forming a consensus on the current professional dispositions that used to evaluate counseling students. By conducting a content analysis of student retention policies currently in use among CACREP accredited counseling programs, the results can provide insights into what the most commonly evaluated dispositions are within the profession. Content analysis offers a snapshot of "what is" and is an "approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification" (Mayring, 2000, p. 2). As the units of analysis will be comprised solely of textual documents (student retention policies) describing professional disposition assessment practices, content analysis is best suited for the task, as it is considered a good research methodology for analyzing written forms of communication (Krippendorff, 2013).

According to Holsti (1969), content analysis in the social sciences is commonly used to make inferences and describe the antecedents, characteristics and effects of a communication medium. Content analysis can also be used to make inferences about relationships between content and intent, in that the quantitative description of communication content can demonstrate a meaningful relationship with the themes and trends that are drawn from that content (Berelson, 1971). In accordance with Berelson's conceptualization, an analysis of the student retention policies in CACREP accredited counseling programs could help establish consensus by revealing the themes of professional dispositions that multiple counseling programs deem necessary for effective performance among counseling students.

Content analysis can vary in the process of how raw data is condensed into categories or themes with the main influence of variation being how inductive or deductive the reasoning is.

Inductive reasoning relies on the researcher's careful examination of the content and draws the themes solely from the data, whereas deductive reasoning is guided by a pre-existing theory in the coding of content and is often used to validate or extend an existing conceptual framework (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). The process used in this study will be a summative content analysis, a type of descriptive content analysis, which utilizes both inductive and deductive reasoning. This form of analysis is more quantitative in the early stages, via counting word frequencies and manifest content, then extends to explore the latent meanings or themes of the words coded. The goal of summative content analysis is to explore the usage of words in an inductive manner. In addition, this form of methodology uses both quantitative and qualitative methods, which demonstrates stronger content-analytic studies in terms of reliability and validity (Weber, 1990).

Of particular interest are the *foundational* competencies of the Cube model, since they appear to relate most to the professional dispositions under question in the current study. Though the Cube model was intended as a conceptual guide for doctoral level psychologists, the professional dispositions needed of professional psychologists arguably overlaps with that of counselors. Comparing the foundational competencies with the themes drawn from the content analysis could provide interesting findings in how the two professions, grounded in working and helping others, are different and alike in the professional dispositions deemed necessary for practice.

Conclusion

Competency evaluation is an evolving process and as the counseling profession responds to new challenges, so too must evaluation practices shift in accordance. Counselor educators have a responsibility to ensure that counseling trainees receive adequate training to work with

clients, and evaluation is one means to ensure this. Currently, a challenge facing the counseling profession is forming a consensus on the professional dispositions deemed necessary of its students. Before empirical measures and standardization of practices be established, a consensus is needed around the criteria expected of students (Rust, et al., 2013; Swank, et al., 2012). This study is intended to facilitate the development of consensus by examining and defining commonalities among the professional dispositions that are currently being used to evaluate student professional performance in the nation's CACREP accredited counseling programs.

Chapter 3

Method

The purpose of this study is to draw inferences about the professional dispositions of counseling students through a content analysis of the student retention policies, evaluations and rubrics of counseling programs that hold the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accreditation. Content analysis is defined as the "systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding" (Stemler, 2001, p. 1). It has been used in the social sciences to make inferences from numerous communication media, such as visual images, auditory sound bytes, songs, commercials, and written documents (Krippendorf, 2013; Neuendorf, 2002). This chapter will outline the research design of the inductive content analysis used in the study, including; defining inclusive criteria for the units of analysis, sampling, coding, the detailed steps of the analysis, measures used to establish reliability and validity of the coding and inferences made from the analysis.

The research question investigated in the study:

1. What are the professional dispositions that are most prevalent in student retention policies and evaluations of master's level counseling students?

Research Design

According to Stemler (2001) the steps of content analysis include;

1. Defining the variables to be researched (units)
2. Selecting the population from which texts are drawn (sample)
3. Developing a plan for analysis
4. Coding the textual material

5. Analyzing the data

Units

In content analysis a unit is defined as, "an identifiable message or message component which serves as the basis for identifying the population and drawing a sample on which variables are measured and serve as the basis for reporting analyses" (Carney, 1971, p. 52). Units can be words, characters, themes, time periods, interactions, or any other result of "breaking up a 'communication' into bits" (Carney, 1971, p. 52). According to Krippendorf (2013), there are five different ways that units are identified; physical, syntactical, categorical, propositional, and thematic. The units of this study will be identified using *categorical* distinctions, in that the units will be defined "by their membership in a class or category and/or by their having something in common" (Krippendorf, 2013, p. 106).

The units of research for this study include student retention policies of CACREP accredited master's level counseling programs, and dispositional rubrics or evaluations referenced within the policy as being a part of the student retention process. All three units are part of a system designed to evaluate and differentiate student fit for the counseling profession.

When defining units to be selected for the study it is important to set inclusive criteria to maintain consistency in the documents selected (Krippendorf, 2013). Student Retention Policies were commonly found in counseling student handbooks and to control for extraneous content being coded within the handbooks, the inclusion criteria for the units of analysis in the current study included;

1. Sections within counseling student handbooks headed as "Student Retention Policy" or similar wordings were to be included. Similar wordings include; procedures, standards, remediation, process, and evaluation. Some examples of headings used

from other programs that were included in the study were; "Student Evaluation Procedure," "Student Retention Process," etc.

2. If a suspected section of the handbook did not contain a similarly worded heading, but included within the paragraph content at least two areas of; student evaluation, the importance of faculty assessing personality or personal and/or professional dispositions, protecting client welfare, protecting the counseling profession, the importance of faculty upholding the ACA Code of Ethics, and gatekeeping, then the section of content was included for analysis.
3. If a section did not contain the specific worded headings, or mention the inclusive content criteria, and the section was still suspected to be a student retention policy, then the section was flagged. Attempts were made to contact faculty of that program for clarification and an expert, chosen prior to the investigation, was consulted to decide if the section was intended to be a student retention policy. If either attempt confirmed that section was a student retention policy, then it was included in the analysis.
4. If a policy referenced a disposition rubric used for student retention and remediation, then it was included in the analysis. If a policy referenced student retention requiring successful evaluations of supervisor rubrics of practicum and internship, then referenced evaluations were included in the analysis. If rubrics or evaluations were not available, then attempts were made to contact faculty from the respective program to gain access to specific document. If the document was not available, then only dispositions listed within the student retention policy were included for analysis.

Student Retention Policies were commonly found in counseling student handbooks. Programs that made student retention policies available on program websites that met inclusion criteria, were copied and pasted on a Word document to be included in analysis.

Sample

The sample included all CACREP accredited counseling master's programs listed on the CACREP website. At the time of the investigation, there were 274 CACREP accredited institutions listed, with some of those institutions having multiple counseling programs and counseling tracks. Because most units were readily available within program websites and to better answer the research question, all programs were included in the investigation, making the study a census content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). The method for gathering the census of data included a five step process designed to be an exhaustive attempt to maximize the potential for gathering the units of analysis. A brief summary of the steps are included in table 2 of Appendix A. By the end of the process, 224 programs were included in the study (approximately 82% of the programs listed on the CACREP website).

The first step included navigating each counseling program website and acquiring the most recent version of the counseling student handbook. At the conclusion of this step, 199 programs had policies that met inclusion criteria and were included in the study.

The second step included contacting remaining programs that did not offer a student handbook from their respective website, or did not list the policy online. Faculty listed on the CACREP website as liaisons were sent emails from the primary investigator. The email detailed the nature of the study and offered informed consent (Appendix B). In total 75 emails were sent and 15 were heard back from, with 12 of those sending copies of student handbooks or student

retention policies that met inclusion criteria. At the conclusion of this step, 211 programs were included in the study.

The third step included sending a second, condensed email to the remaining programs. This email was sent two weeks after the first email and if previous responses from faculty referred another faculty member who they felt to be more appropriate for acquiring student retention policies, then the second email was sent to them (Appendix C). In total, 60 emails were sent and there were five responses. Two faculty sent student retention policies, but only one met inclusion criteria. At the conclusion of this step, 212 programs were included in the study.

The fourth step included contacting specific faculty and program chairs by phone. In total, 58 phone calls were made and the primary investigator spoke with 9 individuals and left voice messages on the rest. A total of five student retention policies were received, but only three met inclusion criteria and at the conclusion of this step, 215 programs were included in the study.

The fifth step included a second round of phone calls to the remaining programs. In total, 53 phone calls were made and of those, the primary investigator spoke with 16 individuals and left voice messages for the rest. Several faculty members made referrals to an updated website and others sent student retention policies via email. A total of 9 programs were collected, six from program websites and three from emails. By the conclusion of this step, 224 programs were included in the study.

Of the 224 graduate institutions sampled, counseling programs were from public and private institutions, traditional and faith based programs, and varied in the number and type of counseling tracks offered. The different counseling tracks in which student retention policies, disposition rubrics and evaluations covered were; school counseling, clinical mental health

counseling, marriage and family, addictions counseling, vocational counseling and rehabilitation counseling.

Student retention policies of specific graduate programs were usually inclusive of all counseling tracks, however some programs utilized different evaluative criteria for specific counseling tracks and to control for misrepresentation of frequency counts, all relevant policies and evaluations were included, though evaluative criteria listed more than once within the same institution were only coded once. Policies that did not differentiate between master's level and doctoral level students were still included for analysis, though policies intended solely for doctoral level students were not included in the study.

To ensure that inclusion and exclusion of specific units of analysis aligned with best methodological practices, an expert in student retention served as a "peer debriefer" and was consulted for each questionable student retention policy, evaluation or rubric. For the purpose of this study, the peer debriefer was selected based off having ten or more years as a PhD level counselor and supervisor, being an involved faculty in student retention and remediation processes and of having been published in the area of remediation policies and disposition rubrics.

Plan, Coding and Analysis

A major assumption of content analysis is that words that are mentioned most often are the words that reflect the greatest concern (Stemler, 2001). This relates with this study's purpose in identifying the professional dispositions that are most often cited as criteria in evaluating master's level students, as the greater the frequency implies the greater amount of importance or concern to the value of that criteria. This assumption does not hold for all forms of content analysis, but holds more validity for textual documents, if one accounts for the limitations of

synonyms and multiple meanings of words (Krippendorf, 2013; Stemler, 2001; Weber, 1990). Strategies for addressing these limitations include; being mindful of synonyms when categorizing word frequencies in that words with similar meanings get grouped together (Stemler, 2001) and taking into account the context of how the word is used, as some words have multiple meanings and may not group equally in certain categories (Weber, 1990). The plan of analysis has two distinct phases: (a) establishing word frequency counts, and (b) categorizing frequencies into shared themes, taking into account synonyms and the context of the words used.

Word Counts. The word frequency counts are the summation of the words that get coded in the analysis. The main researcher coded all units of analysis independently, with an additional coder reviewing each coded disposition and retention policy to provide a reliability check. The additional coder is a licensed professional counselor and supervisor, trained in both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and given specific training in content analysis methodologies by the main researcher.

The analysis of this study followed an emergent process outlined by Stemler (2001) and Hendersen and Dufrene (2012) and included reviewing each unit of analysis of a graduate program and coding any word or phrase connected to professional dispositions or interpersonal traits. The data software nVivo was used to help keep track of words coded. All units of analysis (counseling student handbooks, or student retention policies copied from program websites and pasted onto Microsoft Word documents) were uploaded into the nVivo program and used in the coding process. Each time a word or specific disposition was coded, the nVivo software would save the code into a distinct group, referred to as a "node." Each disposition reviewed in student retention policies were either coded into a separate node, or into a pre-

existing node if the same ordering of words, or similar content were used. Through use of the software, each node would report the word frequency count via number of sources coded from, and the software allowed for easy reference, in going back to the specific policy to review content. The primary investigator coded each policy and the additional coder would then review each node and respective retention policy, for the words and dispositions coded and provide a reliability check.

Each disposition listed as criteria for evaluation would be counted only once per policy, evaluation and rubric, per program. Therefore if the same disposition was listed in a policy, then listed again in an evaluation or rubric that was referenced in the policy, that specific disposition was only counted once for that program.

The goal of coding is to determine the frequency of overall professional dispositions evaluated on in CACREP accredited programs. To ensure coding reliability, all policies were reviewed by the main researcher and the additional coder. In addition, the peer debriefer was consulted as needed, and offered oversight to the validity and process of the dispositions coded. Following the procedures of Henderson and Dufrene (2012), meetings would be held to compare results of the researcher's and colleagues' codebooks and to make revisions to the codebook until agreement was reached. In case a disagreement between primary investigator and additional coder were to take place, the peer debriefer would take an active role in facilitating the dialogue, until an agreement was reached.

Categorization. Categorizing frequencies is the process that provides meaning and richness to content analysis (Stemler, 2001). The basics of categorizing include the grouping of words into a category which is "a group of words with similar meaning or connotations" (Weber, 1990, p. 37), and ensuring that categories are mutually "exclusive" and "exhaustive" (General

Accounting Office, 1996, p. 12). This means that categories should be exhaustive in that all relevant dispositions being studied can be placed within the same category and exclusive so that no item can be coded into more than one category.

The beginning process of categorization includes reviewing each disposition coded and analyzing it for patterns and interrelationships with other dispositions. An inductive process, each word and phrase is analyzed in how and what the authors specifically intended to measure. Potential nuances between word phrases are evaluated, and those that share similar themes, such as, attention to ethical practices vs. ethical sensitivity, are closely assessed on whether both should be a separate disposition, or whether one could potentially subsume the other. The main objective of content analysis is to translate the coded data and organize it into a format that is useful and understandable.

Because categorization is largely an inferential process and due to the wide range of criteria of words and word phrases that may account for the same dispositions; the peer debriefer provided an active role in this process. This provided a reliability and validity check by ensuring the inferences used in assigning items to categories were sound and that methods used were congruent with best methodological practices in content analysis. Specifically, once categories were as mutually exclusive and exhaustive as possible, and all coded dispositions accounted for, the peer debriefer received the list of categories and independently reviewed how each category was formed. A series of meetings were conducted to compare results from the peer debriefer, the main researcher and the additional coder, and necessary revisions were made until a consensus was reached between all three members. Analysis of the data was complete once agreement was reached on each category.

Reliability and Validity Checks

According to Krippendorff (2013; p. 267), there are three types of reliability that are pertinent to content analysis; stability, replicability, and accuracy. *Stability* refers to the process of coding being unchanging over time and yielding the same results on repeated trials. This is established through test-retest conditions in that the analysis of a unit by a researcher, is then re-analyzed by that same researcher, usually after some time has elapsed. Stability is the weakest form of reliability and alone, is not sufficient for establishing data as reliable. *Replicability* is the degree to which results can be reproduced by different analysts. Usually referred to as intercoder reliability, this form of reliability is established through *test-test* conditions where multiple coders analyze the same unit, then compare results. Differences in results are usually due to ambiguous coding instructions, differences in ability, or random recording errors. High replicability is considered a minimum standard for content analysis, due to this type of reliability demonstrating a shared understanding of meaning, held by two different coders (Weber, 1990). This study demonstrates replicability reliability by comparing the results of the analysis between two independent coders that accounted for all codes within their respective units of analysis.

Accuracy refers to the extent that results of analysis correspond to an established standard or norm. To determine accuracy, a *test-standard* condition must be run and differences in results are usually from inherent differences in analysts or in deviations from a given standard of practice. The strongest form of reliability, it is rarely tested by researchers due to standardization of practices infrequently established for texts. As no standards of coding exist around student remediation policies, this study was unable to test for accuracy.

A contrast to reliability, validity is concerned with truth in that the claims that emerge from the research, demonstrate fact (Krippendorf, 2013). The most common type of validity

found in content analysis, is also the weakest; *face* validity consists of the understanding of the researcher's definitions of concepts corresponding with those of the categories that get coded (Weber, 1990). A category has face validity to the extent that it holds "face value" in appearing to measure the construct it intends to measure. The resulting categories reached through this analysis will provide strong face validity, in that a majority of assessments and policies reviewed, originally demonstrated strong face validity. However, face validity alone, is insufficient to make strong claims of findings (Krippendorf, 2013).

This study will also demonstrate s*emantic* validity, a form of content validity, where those who are familiar with the language and subject, review the coded dispositions and agree on the categories formed. Semantic validity is the degree to which categories established, accurately describe the meanings and uses in a chosen context (Krippendorff, 2013). This form of validity was demonstrated by the use of a peer debriefer reviewing the coding list and categories of the final analysis, meeting with the researchers, and coming to an agreement on the categories established.

Limitations

There are limitations to the current study. The first limitation is in the use of existing policies as being the main source of data, as each policy may have multiple meanings of professional dispositions, and the definition of each disposition can vary due to individual interpretations. However, as developing a consensus of the professional dispositions of counselors is a new topic in the counseling field, the use of content analysis is appropriate, as it could provide exploratory findings for further research.

Another limitation is the inclusion criteria of policies chosen for analysis and the potential omission of relevant data of the study. This is a necessary risk as setting specific

inclusion criteria is crucial for selecting units of analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). To meet this limitation is the census of policies chosen for analysis, specifically, all policies, rubrics, and evaluations, of CACREP accredited programs were included in the study, and that 82% of these programs were included in the final sample.

A third limitation to the study is an over reliance on expert opinions and human coding in establishing word frequencies and emergent themes. While a common reliability limitation found in qualitative methodology, this limitation is addressed through the use of standardized measures, reviewed and approved by the opinions of the peer debriefer, as well as the emergent coding process to reach a consensus between coders and the peer debriefer. In addition, the methodologies of the current study, reflect established methods of other content analyses that have been used within the counseling literature (Hendersen and Dufrene, 2012).

A final limitation in the study, is the timing in which the second, third and fourth steps were enacted. The first email attempt was made during late May, near the end of the Spring Semester for many graduate programs. Faculty in this time are often busy with end of semester duties and thus subsequent attempts made after, may have been less successful due to the lack of availability of many faculty members during the Summer months. In addition, many of the programs were in the process of updating their counseling student handbooks for the next year, and thus were unavailable for analysis. This limitation was addressed with a final telephone attempt made early in the Fall semester (mid to late September) and explains the reason for the increased response rate. Additionally, the number of programs included accounts for approximately 82% of the total number of CACREP accredited counseling programs, demonstrating a fairly accurate portrayal of the dispositions that the counseling profession assess on.

Summary

Establishing a consensus in the topic of counselor competence, with specific attention to the professional dispositions needed for effective practice, is likely to be an evolving process due the complexity of the topic. The present study can help address a piece of this issue by demonstrating the professional dispositions that are currently used for evaluation. While a consensus in this area will likely require an agreement of "what should be" in the area of professional dispositions of counselors, this study can offer a necessary foundation by providing a snapshot of "what is," in offering a rigorous exploration of professional dispositions in the many student retention policies found in the counseling profession.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the professional dispositions that CACREP accredited counseling programs use to evaluate their students. Using an emergent content-analysis with a census of CACREP counseling programs, the most occurring dispositions used among programs would provide evidence to the dispositions that counselor educators felt most relevant of its counseling students. The research question that guided this investigation was:

> What are the professional dispositions that are most prevalent in student retention policies, dispositional rubrics, and evaluations of master's level counseling students?

This chapter will review the results of the investigation, with specific detail given to the categories formed, and the nodes that make up each category with emphasis given on the context in which various programs used the specific dispositions.

Word Frequencies

Of the 224 programs that had policies that met the inclusive criteria, 47 of those programs failed to mention any specific dispositions or criteria. All 47 of these programs had student retention policies with many of them detailing the importance of student evaluation and the remediation process, but either failed to mention the specific dispositions and competencies expected of students, or just reported adverse behaviors that would bring about remediation. As the lack of adverse behaviors does not provide evidence of demonstrating the dispositions expected of students (e.g a student's uncooperativeness in professional settings does not demonstrate that the student is able to be cooperative with peers), these retention policies were

coded under a "nonspecific dispositions" node. These programs account for 20% of the sample and if any indication of counseling programs at large, present an alarming finding that will be explored in the next chapter.

In total, 177 programs had reported specific dispositions in the policies, or specific rubrics of evaluations referenced in their student retention policy. Of these programs, 1332 dispositions were coded, with a total of 116 nodes accounting for all codes. These 116 nodes were inductively "chunked" into 10 categories or themes, seven of which are indicative of the personality traits, values and attitudes of professional dispositions, with the other three accounting for the skill sets and competencies expected of counseling students. The seven dispositions were; (1) Openness to Growth, (2) Awareness of Self and Others, (3) Integrity, (4) Emotional Stability, (5) Flexibility, (6) Compassion and (7) Personal Style, and the three competency categories were; (8) Interpersonal Competency, (9) Professional Competency and (10) Clinical Competency. Though the scope of this study was to explore the most occurring professional dispositions, student retention policies still accounted for counseling competencies and skill sets that were labeled as criteria for retention or included in dispositional rubrics and evaluations, thus forming a sample of the nodes coded. A summary of the categories and code tallies can be found in Table 3, with words in bold denoting the names of each category and words in italics demonstrating nodes that were mentioned infrequently or only by one program (Appendix A). In addition, sample phrases are included from retention policies to provide evidence of how dispositions were coded and chunked within specific categories.

Professional Dispositions

Openness to Growth. The largest of the dispositional categories shared the theme of Openness to Growth and consisted of 18 different nodes and a combined total of 237 codes (see

Table 4). This category contains dispositions that demonstrate students' willingness to learn and grow both professionally and personally, and being willing to let faculty and supervisors be a part of that process.

Openness to Growth	
Willingness to Accept & Use Feedback	67
Initiative & Motivation	34
Values Professional & Personal Growth	32
Openness to New Ideas	27
Values Introspection	16
Willingness to Grow Professionally	14
Willingness to Learn/work w. Diverse	9
Openness	8
Commitment to Lifelong learning	7
Openness to Supervision	8
Seeks Supervision	4
Cooperates w/ remediation plans	3
Receptive to feedback	2
Responding to Supervision	2
Effective use of supervision	1
Self-Directed	1
Openness to take interpersonal risks	1
Critical Thinker	1
Tally	**237**

Table 4

The more prominent nodes Willingness to Accept and Use Feedback, Initiative and Motivation, and Openness to New Ideas were a common finding throughout student retention policies across programs, due to them being a part of the Professional Performance Review Policy (PPRP) and the Professional Characteristics Evaluation Form (PCEF), both being dispositional rubrics used by many programs throughout the country. The PPRP is the most recent rubric of the two and an influential addition to the discussion of student evaluation and professional dispositions, because it provides definitions along a rubric detailing specific behavioral indicators of what the desired dispositions look like and behavioral indicators of when the dispositions are insufficient or lacking (McAdams, Foster, and Ward, 2007).

With regards to the specific node of Willingness to Accept and Use Feedback, the behavioral indicators detailed in the PPRP share the theme of seeking supervisory input and incorporating it into practice, without students reacting defensively. The total number of codes under this specific node not only account for the categories mentioned among the PPRPs and PCEFs of different graduate programs, but also specific wordings that defined the appropriate response to receiving feedback, either from supervisors or peers. Other common word choices included openness to feedback, receptivity, and willingness to accept constructive criticism. Most often, the context of these codes within retention policies encouraged an openness in learning about the self and others, while trusting faculty's role in that process. Openness to New Ideas, a separate node, is another criterion of the PPRP and shares many language similarities with Willingness to Accept and Use Feedback. The behaviors specified for this disposition include soliciting others' opinions and perspectives and inviting constructive feedback for one's own work.

Initiative and Motivation is the second largest node in the category. The language of the PPRP details the behaviors and attitude a student demonstrates toward classroom activities and the creativity displayed in assigned work. Most retention policies defined this disposition as seeking advice and feedback and setting goals for one's own self-improvement. While initiative and motivation are two distinct dispositions, graduate programs often used these terms together and interchangeably, as the motivation to learn and grow and the initiative to actively find and attend opportunities to learn can be considered two sides of the same coin, and that one without the other would mean little.

Valuing Professional and Personal Growth is the third largest node in this category and graduate programs used this node to describe the student's commitment to professional and

personal growth, as well as their ability to do so. The separate nodes, Values Introspection, Commitment to Lifelong Learning, and Willingness to Grow Professionally, share a lot of similar language and the prevalence of these nodes found among many graduate programs is that these dispositions were not part of any specific rubric or evaluation. For many programs, dispositions listed in student retention policies were ones that faculty created, and the prevalence of this node demonstrates a shared belief in the importance of students demonstrating this disposition.

Willingness to Learn and Work with Diverse Populations is a node that deals specifically with the openness to learn about privilege and systems of oppression, and demonstrating a commitment to continually learn about diverse issues and work with diverse populations. This node is only one of a larger, more complex set of dispositions that the counseling profession expects of its students regarding multicultural competence and being sensitive to diversity, specifically in the openness students would need to learn about it.

Openness and Openness to Supervision are nodes that both detail the student's openness to growth, both in regard to feedback from supervisors and a general attitude to learning and change. The least occurring nodes that make up this category are in order; Seeks Supervision, Cooperates with Remediation Plans, Receptive to Feedback, Responding to Supervision, Effective Use of Supervision, Openness to Take Interpersonal Risks, Critical Thinker and Self-Directed. Because of the specific nature of these nodes, little explanation is needed, though they were considered the best fit for this category due to the shared theme of students' fully utilizing supervision and faculty input, and being open to learning new perspectives and relational dynamics.

Awareness of Self and Others. The second largest theme of the study centers around dispositions that demonstrate an Awareness of Self and Others. This category had 19 different nodes and a total of 186 codes (Table 5). This theme speaks to the dispositions that demonstrate students' ability to be introspective of their own needs, strengths and areas of improvement, but also an awareness of others in regards to recognizing and being sensitive to their differences and the importance of working within those differences.

Awareness (Self and Others)	
Self-Awareness	40
Accept Personal Responsibility	39
Awareness of own impact on others	30
Sensitivity to Diversity	15
Sensitivity (to others)	13
Personal Awareness of Strengths & Limits	12
Reflective	8
Reflections	9
Awareness of Power Differences in Therapy	4
Awareness of cultural influences of self and others	3
Introspective to self-care needs	3
Wellness	3
Sensitive to MH needs of clients	1
Mindfulness	1
Capacity for insight	1
Demonstrates realistic expectations of self	1
Learns from Experience	1
Awareness of how Environ. Factors influence client succ	1
Appropriately addresses limitations in work w/ clients	1
Tally	**186**

Table 5

Self-Awareness is the largest node with this category and was defined by several programs as the ability to recognize one's own values, perspectives and attitudes, and how they relate to one's behavior. This node is not part of a specific category of commonly used rubrics, though it was still a common reference among student retention policies throughout the country. Though definitions of self-awareness varied, the common themes included self-examination,

self-acceptance of one's own strengths and weaknesses, and recognizing how one's own sense of self can influence others.

Accept Personal Responsibility and Awareness of Own Impact on Others were the second most occurring nodes of this category, and share being two categories within the PPRP and PCEF. Not all codes within these nodes reflect programs that use those rubrics, with both nodes referenced in student retention policies independent of any form or evaluation. The language that defines behavioral indicators of these two nodes includes students who recognize and monitor the impact their actions and beliefs can have on others. The language within the PPRP also details behaviors that demonstrate one's willingness and ability to correct relational problems, which are both indicators better suited for other categories. However, considering the context of the two nodes within student retention policies, and that the awareness to recognize one's own attitudes and the subsequent impact on others is foundational to correcting any problems, this makes these two nodes best suited for the current theme.

Sensitivity to Diversity is a node that directly relates to a student being sensitive to others in areas of culture and differences, while Sensitivity to Others relates to a more broad sensitivity of others' opinions and beliefs that differ from one's own. Sensitivity speaks to both an awareness of others' differences and a respect of it. Though respect is found in another category, the awareness of others' differences is foundational in being able to be sensitive, thus a more appropriate fit for the current theme.

Personal Awareness of Strengths and Limits is a node that details the self-evaluation that various programs feel appropriate and necessary for students. The context in which this node occurs within retention policies includes accurately assessing one's own strengths and weaknesses while accepting them and being able to speak of them to others. Reflections and

Reflective both have overlaps with this node, in that they speak to programs encouraging students to become reflective practitioners who are able to be honest in their self-evaluations and continually assess themselves for areas of improvement.

Awareness of Power Differences in Therapy, Awareness of Cultural Influences of Self and Others, Introspective to Self-Care Needs, and Wellness are all nodes mentioned less frequently, though were mentioned more than once in programs that were unique from one another. These nodes all share the theme of awareness as indicated by the specific wording of the node. The node Wellness may be considered a better fit for another category, but in looking at the language provided within the policies of specific graduate programs, many include a strong emphasis on assessing one's own need to practice wellness and recognize when one is approaching burnout or impairment.

Sensitive to Mental Health Needs of Clients, Mindfulness, Capacity for Insight, Demonstrates Realistic Expectations of Self, Learns from Experience, Awareness of How Environmental Factors Influence Client Success, and Appropriately Addresses Limitations in Work with Clients were all nodes that were distinct from one another and mentioned in single programs, yet still considered to fall within the current category. The node Mindfulness specifically mentions the observing of one's own thoughts and feelings when interacting with others and presenting a here-and-now awareness. Though this node was considered to be a better fit for another category by some on the research team, the majority thought it to align best with the current category based on the need around awareness of self.

Integrity. This category tied with another for the third most prominent themes of dispositions and consisted of the largest node within the data set, as well as including the least

amount of nodes. Total, this category accounts for seven nodes, with a combined total of 158 codes (Table 6).

Integrity	32
Attention and Adherence to Ethical Practices	93
Judgment	12
Respects Privacy & Confidentiality of others	11
Respect professional & personal boundaries	7
Trustworthiness	2
Exhibits personal courage & Strength	1
Tally	**158**

Table 6

Integrity is defined as the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles, and though Integrity is only the second largest node within this category, it became the name of the category because of agreement that the shared theme among the nodes of this category related to the moral judgment and character that programs expect of their students. Integrity was a common disposition listed among student retention policies because of it being a category within the Professional Counseling Performance Evaluation (PCPE), a commonly used rubric found among graduate programs throughout the country. The behavioral indicators that are used within the PCPE indicate a student's integrity include being honest, avoiding dual relationships, and upholding to the fundamental rights and differences of others (Kerl, Garcia, McCullough, and Maxwell, 2002).

Attention and Adherence to Ethical Practices is by far the largest node of the data set, with the most programs referencing students' demonstration of this disposition as being of paramount importance. This is not surprising, given that this node covers a category of the PPRP (known specifically as attention to ethical and legal practices) as well as being the most influential behavior responsible for student remediation actions (Henderson and Duffrene, 2012). The languages used to describe this node vary across programs, though there are fundamental

similarities, which include students' awareness of the ACA Code of Ethics and making best efforts to abide by the codes. Though some programs would sometimes outline specific behaviors expected of students to follow, often these behaviors were already present under a central category with the theme of ethics. For example, the language used to describe this node within the PPRP includes specific ethical practices, such as being aware of boundaries and respecting client well-being and confidentiality (McAdams et al., 2007). The distinct nodes of Respects Privacy and Confidentiality and Respect Professional and Personal Boundaries would likely fall under this node, but these were specifically mentioned in student retention policies not chunked into a larger category of ethics, and thus were coded separately.

Judgment is the third largest node of this category and student retention policies were often very brief in defining the characteristics of judgment, often listing it with other dispositions and not providing further definitions of what constitutes judgment. This made the disposition more difficult to categorize, though two programs that were distinct from one another, as measured by being in separate regions of the country, described judgment with specific regards to making moral judgments and demonstrating ethically sound reasoning. Because of these clarifiers, Judgment was chunked into this category, though it could be likely that programs may have meant this disposition to demonstrate judgments in other areas, such as clinical conceptualizations of clients.

Trustworthiness and Exhibits Personal Courage and Strength were the least occurring nodes of this category, and was decided that they both shared the theme of Integrity, as both relate to demonstrating a moral character, one through honesty and the other through taking action in doing what one feels right, though it may be hard to do so.

Emotional Stability. This category tied with Integrity for the third most prominent themes of dispositions and consisted of 10 nodes, with a combined 158 codes (Table 7). The theme of Emotional Stability is intended to be thought of less as a state of mind or being, and more regarded as a student's ability to handle different sources of stress associated with graduate study. Specifically, it relates to how well one can manage conflict with others, and what thoughts and behaviors students demonstrate that give evidence to self-care and being able to maintain a place indicative of learning from the processes inherent in graduate training and being able to serve clients. The name of this category was thought of independently, and was later discovered to share the name with the Counseling Competences Scale (CCS) of Swank, Lambie and Witta's study (2012).

Emotional Stability	
Maturity	37
Deal with Conflict	33
Stability	30
Reliability	22
Manages Stress Appropriately	19
Tolerate Ambiguity	7
Balance	5
Confidence balanced w/ humility	3
Self-Acceptance & Confidence	1
Psychologically Healthy	1
Tally	**158**

Table 7

Maturity is the most prominent node of this category and was frequently found among student retention policies due to it being a major category of the PCPE. The language used to describe Maturity from the PCPE includes students demonstrating self-control in relationships with others with specific regards to anger and impulsivity, and follows professionally recognized conflict resolution processes if a conflict should arise (Kerl et al., 2002). The PCPE also includes Maturity to be about awareness of one's own belief systems and the ability to receive

feedback from others, traits that would be better suited in the categories of Openness to Growth and Awareness of Self and Others. However, given that the PCPE has a total of six behavioral traits with four of them more centered on dealing with conflict and being emotionally stable, this node was considered to be a better fit for the current category.

Deal with Conflict was the second most prominent node of this category and its frequency among student retention policies is due to it being a major category of the PPRP and PCEF (ability to deal with conflict) as well as generally being a major theme that student retention policies at large felt a need to address. The language in the PPRP describes a student's ability to deal with conflict, included the ability to consider others' points of view, initiating and being active in problem-solving efforts, and a willingness to examine one's own role and receive critique in problem resolution (McAdams, Foster, and Ward, 2007). While the language used to describe one's ability to deal with conflict include traits and dispositions from other categories (i.e. Awareness of Self and Others and Openness to Growth), the prevalence of student retention policies including some criteria of conflict resolution and its context within emotional regulation made this node a better fit for the current category.

Stability is the third most prominent node and while not part of a pre-existing rubric, was often referenced in policies as being a component of "emotional maturity." The language used to describe stability in policies includes a tolerance of ambiguity and the ability to sustain emotional security and resolve any personal issue that may interfere with the duties of a professional counselor. In many ways, this node encapsulates other nodes in this category, specifically Manages Stress Appropriately, Tolerate Ambiguity and Psychologically Healthy, which all deal with the regulation of emotions.

Reliability is the fourth most prominent node and is defined within retention policies as the student's ability to be dependable and punctual in meeting deadlines and responsibilities, even when under conditions of stress and emotional challenges. Though a lot of the aspects within reliability could be considered more aligned with professionalism and behaviors under the Professional Competencies category, within several policies, Reliability was paired with Stability and gave specific reference to managing emotions appropriately. Thus, it was decided that Emotional Stability was foundational to being reliable, and appropriate for the current category.

The least frequent occurring nodes in order, were; Balance, Confidence Balanced with Humility, Self-Acceptance and Confidence. These nodes share the theme of balance and when outlined in retention policies gave the context of being able to manage emotions and maintain a balanced perspective, thus making the current node the best fit for these dispositions.

Flexibility. The Flexibility category is the fifth most prominent category and consists of 8 nodes and a combined total of 98 codes (Table 8). This category consists of nodes that carry the theme of students being able to adapt to new situations, both with the environment and with others, by adjusting behaviors appropriately. Of the 10 nodes, only two were a common recurrence through student retention policies.

Flexibility	39
Cooperativeness w/ others	42
Flexible (in meeting client needs)	6
Collaborate w/ Others	5
Cognitive Flexibility	2
Flexible (professional relationships)	2
Creativity	1
Maintains objectivity	1
Tally	**98**

Table 8

The nodes of Flexibility and Cooperativeness with Others were the most recurring nodes within student retention policies and make up the majority of codes within this category. Both of

these nodes are main categories within the PPRP and are defined as demonstrating an ability to adapt to both environmental and interpersonal demands (McAdams et al., 2007). Specifically, Flexibility outlines behaviors more geared toward students responding to environmental demands via independent monitoring to assess whether an adjustment in response is necessary, and the efforts given of students to adjust appropriately. Cooperativeness with Others is more specific, with language around reaching consensus through students' willingness to work collaboratively and compromise to reach consensus. While these traits may seem to fit better with other categories centered on professionalism and other competency categories, it was decided that Flexibility is foundational for students to be able to compromise and be effective collaborators.

The nodes of Flexible in Meeting Client Needs and Collaborate with Others likely need little explanation, as these were mentioned mainly word-for-word within policies and carry clear themes for the current category. The remaining nodes were; Cognitive Flexibility, Flexible in Professional Relationships, Creativity, and Maintains Objectivity and considered the most appropriate fit for the current category, due to each requiring adjustment of a response to appropriately meet a goal.

Compassion. Compassion is the sixth most prominent category and consists of 12 nodes and a total of 75 codes (Table 9). This category shares the theme of accepting and respecting others, regardless of differences and the ability to hold a positive regard of clients.

Compassion	
Empathy	20
Respect Individual Differences	13
Interested in Welfare of others	9
Respect and Appreciation of Diverse Populati	9
Respect (for others)	8
Acceptance	5
Fairness (in treating others)	3
Non-judgmental	2
Respect Client Welfare	2
Respect dignity & worth of others	2
Unconditionally believes in client growth	1
Appreciates client strengths	1
Tally	**75**

Table 9

Empathy was the largest node of this category and a common disposition listed within retention policies. This node is not part of a commonly used rubric, yet was a common reference within policies as one of several different dispositions for students to be mindful about. Most programs offered little definition of the indicators to what appropriate demonstrations of empathy are and of the several programs that did offer more behavioral definitions, the overlaps included an ability to communicate with words and actions an understanding of what clients and others are feeling and thinking. This requires a combination of being sensitive to and aware of the thoughts and feelings of another, and being able to communicate it. This node was most influential in shaping the name of this category and it was decided that Compassion was a more appropriate fit, as it includes the necessary foundation to demonstrate empathy to others.

Respect Individual Differences, Respect and Appreciation of Diverse Populations, Respect Client Welfare, Respect the Dignity and Worth of others, and Respect for Others are five nodes that share a lot of overlap in what the different graduate programs expect of their students. Specifically, these nodes expect students to demonstrate openness to the rights and feelings of peers and clients and to avoid imposing personal values. Combined, these nodes

make up almost half of the codes within the current category. It was discussed that respect for others can be present without a sense of compassion, such as a respect for authority, which would be more from a place of fear. However the language around the dispositions of Respect was more often paired with holding an appreciation of others, and demonstrating fairness and kindness, thus it was decided that nodes centering around Respect were a better fit for the current category.

The node Interested in the Welfare of Others defined students demonstrating a sincere interest in client and peer welfare and having a genuine concern and desire to be of help to others. This node had a clear overlap with the theme of Compassion. In addition, the nodes of Acceptance, Fairness in Treating Others, Non-Judgmental, Appreciates Client Strengths and Unconditionally Believes in Client Growth define the mindsets and ability to hold an unconditional positive regard for clients and fellow students, despite whatever bias or challenges students may have with them.

Personal Style. The category of Personal Style was the least occurring theme within retention policies, and included distinct personality characteristics that graduate programs felt were required for students to demonstrate in their interactions with clients and others. This category consists of 11 nodes and total of 52 codes (Table 10).

The nodes of Positive Attitude and the general listing of Attitude make up almost half of the total codes of this category. Positive Attitude was a category of dispositions from the Personal Characteristics Evaluation Form (PCEF), one of the first dispositional rubrics to be introduced to the counseling profession. Unlike the PPRP or PCPE, the PCEF doesn't offer language or behavioral indicators, but the context used in defining the traits of these nodes

included students' demonstrating an openness to the process of being a counselor, and having a positive disposition towards clients and colleagues.

Personal Style	
Positive Attitude	19
Genuiness	7
Attitude	6
Patience	4
Warmth	5
Sense of Humor	4
Authenticity	2
Congruence	2
Optimism	1
Curiosity	1
Openness to be real w/ clts and others	1
Tally	**52**

Table 10

While the word "positive" could be considered to mean a bubbly demeanor towards others, the language was more indicative of having an enthusiasm towards learning and committed to being a positive influence to clients and colleagues. Though both of these nodes are indicative of other categories, inasmuch that having an Openness Towards Growth and Compassion are usually thought to be a part of one having a good attitude, the commonality of these nodes being referenced in retention policies deemed them necessary to be independently coded and referenced for further discussion.

The nodes of Genuineness, Authenticity, and Congruence all the share the theme of demonstrating a sincerity in interacting with clients and others, and were thought to be an appropriate fit for the current category. These nodes coincide with the influential and specific theoretical branch of the humanistic perspective and for graduate programs that mainly subscribe to that approach, felt it necessary to include as evaluative criteria of students. Chunking these nodes into the Personal Style category was decided to be the most appropriate, as a majority of

programs operate from different theories, and would likely place less emphasis on these specific dispositions. In addition, the node of Openness to be Real With Clients and Others, speaks of being congruent and transparent with clients, another trait most fitting with humanistic practices, and also a better fit for a Personal Style of students' personality.

Lastly, the nodes of Patience, Warmth, Sense of Humor, and Curiosity are all specific traits of personality and considered a more appropriate fit for the current category. Though these nodes were all dispositions found in student retention policies, it is questionable how enforced they are in terms of students being evaluated, as it would be unlikely that a student demonstrating a lack of curiosity would be put on a remediation plan. This category as a whole was the least recurring, with nodes that demonstrate the personality and style that students may demonstrate with one another and clients, and because there is a strong correlation with humanistic values, has questionable validity for the counseling profession as a whole, due to the wide array of therapeutic approaches and theory that encompasses it. This will be detailed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

Professional Competencies

Interpersonal Competency. The category of Interpersonal Competency is the largest category of competencies and was a common reference within retention policies, specifically emphasizing the importance that students have in relating and communicating with others, both as a counselor and as an emerging professional. The nodes that make up the current category were considered to be distinct from professional dispositions, as each node centered around an aspect of communication, which is a skill that was decided to be something that is continually refined and taught as students progress through their respective programs. In addition, Interpersonal Competency was thought to be distinct from the other skill set categories, due to

the universality of communication and it not being limited to Clinical or Professionalism Competencies. This category consists of nine nodes and has the combined total of 156 codes (Table 11).

Interpersonal Competency	
Communication	34
Express feelings effectively & appropriately	34
Interpersonal Skills	27
Interpersonal Effectiveness	23
Listen & Hear Others	13
Communicates Feedback Appropriately	12
Communicate Ideas	6
Convey Empathy and Compassion	5
Personal Convictions (articulate)	2
Tally	**156**

Table 11

Communication is one of the more prominent nodes in this category, being a disposition commonly referenced in retention policies throughout the country. The PCPE uses Communication as one of its categories of evaluation and the language used to describe this skill set includes creating appropriate structure, via setting boundaries and maintaining time limits, the ability to respond to feelings, and to communicate one's own internal responses, if deemed appropriate to do so (Kerl et al., 2002). Other definitions of Communication from policies that did not employ the PCPE have the shared definitions of Communication being the ability to express thoughts and ideas in a consistently clear manner, and communicating views in a direct and unambiguous way. The exact category within the PCPE is Communication Skills and Abilities, and lists behaviors that specifically relate to a student's ability to work with clients, and were coded separately and chunked into the category that is specific to Clinical Competency. The other nodes of Communicates Feedback Appropriately, Communicates Ideas and Articulate

Personal Convictions all share from this theme, though were listed in a specific manner and were thus coded appropriately.

Another prominent node within the category is Express Feelings Effectively and Appropriately and was common through retention policies for it being a criteria mentioned in the PPRP and PCEF rubrics. The language of the PPRP defines this behavior as an openness and ability to express and articulate the range of one's own feeling and expressing these feelings in appropriate settings and initiating discussions around feelings in supervision. Other word choices to describe this node included ability to articulate one's feelings, effective emotional self-expression, and communicating emotions in a way that facilitates interpersonal relationships. This node was an appropriate fit for the current category due to it being utilized as both a clinician with clients, as well as a student with peers, or supervisee with supervisors and that the ability to effectively express feelings is a crucial part in being interpersonally effective.

The next most prominent nodes include Interpersonal Skills and Interpersonal Effectiveness, and had a lot of variability in the language graduate programs used to define these nodes. Specifically, retention policies would often just list the nodes or outline the behavioral indicator as the ability to form effective interpersonal relationships without giving much clarity into the specific behaviors. However, the shared theme among several programs that defined the nodes shared the theme of one's ability to relate to others, regardless of background or history, while being consistent in demonstrating courtesy and respect. This ability included using both verbal and nonverbal cues, with specific regards to expressing feelings and providing active listening cues, both of which are distinct Competencies that graduate training focuses on. The node Listens and Hear Others relates to these nodes, in that it specifically outlines the verbal and

nonverbal cues that demonstrate a listening and attentive attitude, such as eye contact and minimal encouragers.

The remaining node of Convey Empathy and Compassion is defined as the ability to convey warmth, genuineness and establish rapport with clients and fellow students. While carrying strong overlap with nodes in the category of Personal Style, this node specifically relates to demonstrating the dispositions towards others, with some programs specifically mentioning both clients and fellow students or faculty. Thus, with the active demonstration towards others, it was decided that the current category was the best fit for this node.

Professional Competency. Professional Competency was the second largest category of competencies and is made up of nodes that demonstrate the professional behaviors graduate programs expected of students, outside of the clinical Competencies for being an effective counselor with clients. Specifically, this category has nodes that detail students' professionalism with colleagues, comportment and the ability to work alongside fellow counselors and supervisors. The category is made up of 15 nodes and has a combined total of 139 codes (Table 12).

The largest node of this category was Professional Relationships and was a common reference in retention policies and program-specific rubrics and evaluations. The shared theme of definitions included the student's ability to work well with peers, faculty, and on-site staff and supervisors. Some behavioral indicators included appropriately responding to social cues, being sensitive to one's own role in the professional setting, and demonstrating a general ability to relate well with others, regardless of background or professional level. Some policies included dispositions better suited for other categories, such as Flexibility, Awareness of Self and Others,

and Openness to Growth, but were coded at the current node because of specific references in demonstrating these dispositions with other professionals.

Professional Competency	
Relationships (professional)	36
Comportment	24
Professionalism (in relation to others)	22
Professional Responsibility	18
Professional Conduct	8
Commitment to Profession	8
Leadership	6
Advocacy	5
Organization	4
Social Advocacy	2
Advocate for Profession	2
Readiness for professional role	1
Appreciation of therapeutic process	1
Professional Commitment	1
Demeanor	1
Tally	**139**

Table 12

Comportment was the second largest node of the category and defines behavior indicators that relate to students professional dress and demeanor, as appropriate for working within a professional setting. This node was commonly found to be a specific category within program-specific rubrics, with some behavioral indicators including dispositions found in other formed categories of the current study. Specifically, Comportment was often defined by demonstrating appropriate self-control in regards to anger and impulsivity (Emotional Stability) or the ability to receive feedback from others (Openness to Growth). While these indicators are clearly more suited for the professional dispositions categories of this study, clear indication was given in using these dispositions with others within a professional capacity. Additionally, other conceptual models of competency have professional dispositions as being foundational to the professional skills of the profession, justifying how dispositions can be used for behavioral

indicators of the desired Competencies. Other language used to describe comportment includes maintaining personal hygiene and the use of written and oral communication in presenting oneself as a professional.

Professionalism in Relation to Others is the third largest node of the category and was defined by how students conduct themselves as professionals with others via demonstrating a respectful attitude and sensitivity to real and ascribed power differences with others. A large number of graduate programs merely defined this node as students demonstrating "professional behavior" without clear examples of what was considered professional behavior. The language of programs that did include specific indicators, gave reference to acting in accordance to the ACA Code of Ethics, demonstrating appropriate comportment, and meeting responsibilities accordingly. This node carries a lot of overlap with the node Professional Relationships, but was coded separately due to the inclusion of the word "professionalism" and had more specific behavioral indicators.

Professional Responsibility describes behaviors that relate to a student acting in accordance with the ACA Code of Ethics, with specific mention to maintaining boundaries, respecting client confidentiality, and acting with integrity in professional situations. Professional Responsibility is a category within the PCPE and has behavioral indicators around relating well with others, demonstration of ethics and other legal requirements specific to counseling and presenting oneself in a manner that promotes confidence in the counseling profession (Kerl et al., 2002).

The node of Professional Conduct shares a lot of similar language and definitions with the node of Professionalism in Relation to Others and was coded separately because of the specific wording within retention policies. The nodes of Commitment to the Profession and

Professional Commitment were nodes defined by behavioral indicators demonstrating an openness of students in continuing their professional development, identified by membership to professional organizations and attending professional conferences. The Leadership node was a skill set listed within retention policies, with minimum clarification or specific behavioral indicators outside of generic language such as demonstrating strong leadership qualities. Nonetheless, Leadership was decided to be a distinct skill set and most appropriate for the current category. The node of Organization describes the Competencies that revolve around time management and the ability to handle multiple responsibilities at a time.

The nodes of Advocacy, Social Advocacy and Advocate for the Profession share the theme of advocating for social justice or the profession and demonstrating an understanding of the importance of doing so.

Clinical Competencies. The last category of competencies is the Clinical Competencies theme. The nodes within this category describe the specific skills taught in graduate training and are ones that retention policies described as essential in being effective counselors. The category consists of 10 nodes with a combined total of 73 codes (Table 13).

Clinical Competency	
Competence	22
Relationships (therapeutic)	19
Multicultural Competence	10
Appropriately self-discloses	7
Ability to Work w Diverse Populations	6
Competency (clinical)	3
Cognition (ability to work with clients)	2
Maintains appropriate boundaries	2
Self-control in professional relationships	1
Establish rapport w/ both men and women	1
Tally	**73**

Table 13

The generic word Competence is the largest node of the category and was a common finding within retention policies from it being a category of the PCPE and other program specific rubrics. The behavioral indicators used to determine Competence include recognizing one's own strengths and limits in clinical work and articulating these limits to clients or others, and providing services only that the student is trained in (Kerl et al., 2002). Other language used within this node includes being professional and competent, and effective demonstration of knowledge and technical skills in work with clients. The other node Competency (Clinical) had a lot of similarity with language and specific Competencies, though was coded as a distinct node, due to some programs using the "clinical" distinction in retention policies, or as a category within rubrics.

The node Relationships (Therapeutic) is the second largest node of the category and describes specific behaviors and Competencies that center around a student's ability to establish rapport and trust with clients in a therapeutic setting. Specific behaviors include interviewing skills conducive to building a working alliance, expressing appropriate empathy without over-identification, and other behaviors that demonstrate the student's potential to build working alliances with clients at different developmental levels with a varied range of needs or problems. The nodes of Cognition (Ability to Work with Clients) and Establish Rapport with both Men and Women share a lot of language, specifically including behaviors and skills that demonstrate the student's ability to flex their approach to meet clients with varying needs.

The nodes of Multicultural Competence and Ability to Work with Diverse Populations share the theme of demonstrating the specific Competencies and behaviors necessary to be effective with diverse populations. Some programs specifically mentioned that students be able to demonstrate the knowledge about, awareness of, and skills necessary to work with diverse

populations. Most policies did not offer more specific language into the specific behavioral indicators in that the words "multicultural competence" and "ability to work with diverse populations" were just listed within retention policies. One program did offer clear dispositions of open-mindedness and appreciation of diversity within a program-specific rubric, though given the recent controversial court cases around diversity, the lack of language around this skill set could be a potential liability for graduate programs.

The remaining nodes of Appropriately Self-Discloses, Maintains Appropriate Boundaries and Self-Control in Professional Relationships, share clear themes of holding professional boundaries with clients, and need little explanation.

Conclusion

The 10 categories that consist of the seven dispositions of Openness to Growth, Awareness of Self and Others, Integrity, Emotional Stability, Flexibility, Compassion and Personal Style and the three sets of professional competencies of Interpersonal Competence, Professional Competence and Clinical Competence were the most prevalent themes within student retention policies. The language and names of the categories were the combined efforts of a modest research team and the exact wording of each category is open to change. The themes presented are meant to start a discussion around building a consensus on the dispositions that the counseling profession deems necessary for students to demonstrate.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Summary

The research question for the current study examined the professional dispositions referenced in the student retention policies of CACREP accredited graduate programs. Within the 177 programs that had workable units of analysis, 116 dispositions and competencies were found to form 10 categories. Of the seven categories related to professional dispositions, the most referenced category was Openness to Growth, followed by Awareness of Self and Others, Integrity and Emotional Stability. These categories were the largest of the data set and had the greatest number of frequencies within student retention policies, with Openness to Growth and Awareness of Self and Others also having the greatest number of dispositions. The remaining categories of Flexibility and Compassion were less frequent, though still a common finding among policies. The category of Personal Style was the least frequently referenced category with dispositions that reflect a specific theory or style of practice. Of the three categories related to professional competencies, the most referenced category was Interpersonal Competency, followed by Professional Competency and Clinical Competency.

Implications

A main goal for the current study was to provide evidence of the professional dispositions most commonly found within student retention policies to provide a foundation for building a consensus within the counseling profession. The methods used in this content analysis followed the steps outlined by Stemler (2001) and Henderson and Duffrene (2012), using an emergent coding process that entailed two coders who were actively involved in coding (main researcher) and reviewing each coded disposition within respective student retention policies (additional

coder) independently. Once both coders agreed on codes, an inductive process formed categories based on shared themes, and a peer debriefer reviewed categories and offered suggestions for improvement. These methodological processes provided a reliability check of replicability through the use of two coders reviewing each code and unit of analysis independently, and semantic validity through the use of a peer debriefer who is familiar with the language and well-versed in the area of student retention and counseling dispositions. The results of this study should not to be thought of as providing consensus for the counseling profession as a whole but intended to further the discussion and provide greater clarity for counselor educators when upholding their evaluative responsibilities.

Counselor Educators can use these categories as a reference point in reviewing the criteria used in the retention policies and supervisor evaluation forms within their respective graduate programs. While not indicative of consensus, these themes are in use by a large number of CACREP accredited counseling programs, thus providing justification in using the categories as evaluative criteria. In addition, this may spark more discussions around which dispositions counselor educators can hope to facilitate in graduate students during their training process and whether the counseling profession should use certain dispositions to guide the admissions process.

Some questions for consideration are whether it could be possible to measure dispositions such as Openness to Growth and if so, whether there should be a cut-off of potential applicants. Regardless of outcome, such discussions would further evaluative processes by challenging professionals to critically look at how they wish to evaluate students. In addition, the results of such discussions could aid the admissions process, an area needing more investigation within the counseling profession (Swank and Smith-Adcock, 2014).

Diversity Issues. Students' ability to work with diverse populations is arguably the most contested area facing counselor educators in regards to remediation. The themes formed from the respective nodes dealing with dispositions related to diversity could provide some guidance when conceptualizing student deficiencies. Diversity is a complex area and graduate programs' retention policies have supported this by detailing expectations that students demonstrate behaviors that span several dispositions and competencies. One such example is that students demonstrate an awareness of cultural differences in others and how their own social location influences the work they do with clients, while remaining open to learning about systemic issues of privilege and oppression. Citing the ACA Code of Ethics as means for students to adhere to this aspect of practice has only met varying degrees of success (Ward v. Wilbanks, 2010). Should a student display deficient attitudes or practices around multicultural competence, then counselor educators can address the issue as one not solely based on Integrity, but one that is a combination of Openness, Awareness, Compassion and Clinical Competency. Counselor educators can look at the context of the student in question and focus on one or more of these areas as needed.

The categories from this study that contain nodes that center on diversity, align with the three competencies outlined as necessary for providing multicultural counseling/therapy (MCT). The three competencies of MCT include; 1) therapist awareness of one's own assumptions, values and biases; 2) understanding the worldview of culturally diverse clients; and 3) developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis, 1992). This study presented diversity encapsulating dispositions of Awareness of Self and Others and the Clinical Competency to provide multicultural competence techniques. The other dispositions that relate to diversity, Openness to Growth, Compassion, and Integrity, relate to

additional expectations that counselor educators feel are necessary for students to embody and additional multicultural competency models, or revisions, may better capture these dispositions.

According to the 2013 National Health Care Disparities Report, Caucasian adults have been the largest racial demographic to receive mental health services for depression, with 2010 and 2011 reporting approximately 20% more Caucasian adults receiving services than African Americans and Hispanic Americans and twice the number of Caucasian adolescents receiving services than African Americans (p. 82). Stigma, perceived racial discrimination, and cultural values in dealing with mental health issues independent of professionals, is still a major form of resistance for African Americans and Hispanic Americans seeking mental health services (Alvidrez, Snowden, and Kaiser, 2008: Vogel, Wester, and Larson, 2007).

Reports of more African Americans seeking services due to an increase in African Americans entering master's and doctorate level training programs and greater efforts of African American churches aligning with mental health service providers provides some optimism that this area is improving (APA Center for Workforce Studies, 2010; Bahrampour, 2013). However there are limited opportunities for African American clients to be matched with a counselor of their own race/ethnicity due to hypersegregation of African Americans resulting in limited access to services (Townes, Chavez-Korell, and Cunningham, 2009). Thus, counselor educators need to look to their multicultural education efforts, including greater evaluative practices on student dispositions that are foundational to working with diverse populations.

Connections to Cube Model. The professional dispositions deemed necessary within the psychology profession have general consensus through the Cube Model and Benchmarks Document (Fouad et al., 2009; Rodolfa et al., 2005). Specifically, the domains of competency within the *foundational* domain of the Cube Model has distinct relevance to the categories

formed from the current study. Most noticeably, the *reflective practice and self-assessment* has three subdomains including; reflective practice, self-assessment, and self-care. These three domains share very similar contexts within the Awareness of Self and Others and Emotional Stability themes, with nodes that account for being reflective, able to notice strengths and weaknesses, and having wellness practices.

In addition, the domains of competency of *professionalism* and *ethical and legal standards* have a strong overlap with the Integrity category. Though *professionalism* within the Cube Model has subdomains that were chunked within the Professional Competency category of the current study (i.e., deportment, professional identity), the subdomain of integrity captures several nodes within the Integrity category of this study. The remaining competency domains of *scientific knowledge and methods, relationships,* and *individual and cultural diversity* all have overlaps within the competency categories formed from this study, and a small overlap with the dispositional categories that relate to working with diversity (i.e., Compassion, Awareness, and Openness). The last competency domain of the Cube Model, *interdisciplinary systems* had little relevance to the categories of this study and demonstrates a greater importance placed within the field of psychology in consultation and working within multidisciplinary systems.

There should be little surprise in the overlap between the domains of competency within the Cube Model, with the areas of competency that counseling programs evaluate master's students. There are distinct differences however, insomuch that the Cube Model which considers its *foundational* domains to be more related to the dispositions of the psychology profession, consist of areas that have been grouped in the competency categories of the current study. Also interesting, is how the largest category of this study, Openness to Growth, is not an area covered anywhere within the Cube Model. Though psychology and counseling are alike in being

grounded in working with others, there are distinct paradigm differences and evidence of these differences can be seen in the dispositions that each evaluate on.

Specifically, the paradigm of psychologists is the traditional, medical model, with more attention given to problem-focused interventions, as opposed to more strengths based approaches of counselors (Russo and Kemmerer, 2006). Having a problem-focused framework explains why certain dispositions thought to be *foundational* within the psychology profession, are ones that may align more with competencies and skill sets of counselors.

With regards to the counseling profession, a more post-modern, constructivist approach requires counselors to mutually deconstruct and reconstruct the meanings that clients developed to adjust to challenging environments and potentially harmful contexts (Russo, 2005). This interplay between accurately understanding clients' meaning, and navigating the deconstruction and reconstruction process is complex and requires advanced training and guidance from more experienced professionals and supervisors. The most commonly referenced dispositions throughout the counseling profession; Openness to Growth and Awareness of Self and Others have obvious applications. Students' resistance to receiving supervisory feedback and guidance directly relates to an unwillingness to learn strategies to navigate that interplay of meaning making and gives evidence to greater implications centered on learning new perspectives, and working collegially with others. In addition, Awareness of Self and Others also contributes a major role in this interplay, as foundation to the meaning making process requires students to take an active role in trying to understand their clients' reality in how they construct meaning and to gauge how their own worldviews and biases may influence that understanding of others.

Given the approach within the counseling profession to operate from this paradigm the importance of cognitive complexity (sometimes referred to as metacognitions) is apparent.

Cognitive complexity is one's ability to incorporate and differentiate multiple environmental elements and with relation to counseling, relates to clinicians' ability to perceive, organize, and respond to multiple social behaviors (Bowler, Bowler, and Cope, 2012; Labouvie-Vief and Diehl, 2000). Theoretically, the greater the complexity, the greater number of elements counselors can distinguish within clients and themselves, thus providing more opportunity to respond in ways that facilitate the meaning making process and build on therapeutic rapport.

It is worth discussion whether the dispositions identified within the current study provide any evidence of counseling programs evaluating students' cognitive complexity. If cognitive complexity is conceptualized as the ability to perceive, organize and respond to environmental/social elements (Bowler et al., 2012), then the dispositions of Awareness of Self and Others and Flexibility have some application. In addition the competency categories of Interpersonal Competency and Clinical Competency could provide evidence to the skill sets necessary to respond to clients effectively. While evaluation of students' dispositions is not overtly tied with cognitive complexity, having an understanding of the most prominent dispositions found within counseling programs could further the discussion in how counselor educators can help support the cognitive development of students, should they deem it important to do so.

Lack of Specificity in Retention Policies. Another finding from the study was the alarming number of programs that failed to mention specific criteria within student retention policies. Of the 227 programs that had retention policies that met inclusion criteria, 47 of those programs did not mention specific dispositions from which evaluations of students were based (roughly 20% of the programs sampled). Though criteria and dispositions expected of students could have been located in other areas of the student handbook or within the graduate program,

the fact that no references were mentioned in policies in which evaluation is a central topic is concerning for two reasons.

First, the liability of those graduate programs is higher, given that students who may be dismissed from the program could use the argument of not knowing what the expectations were of the graduate program. Though the policies within these programs clearly state faculty evaluating students, no mention is given on the specific dispositions or competencies expected of students, thus little chance of students having the ability to self-monitor themselves. Another area for possible discussion is whether CACREP standards should reflect that policies within student handbooks mention specific criteria, as the language currently states that such policies only need to be referenced within programs (CACREP 2009, Standard I.L.2.d). Being sensitive to CACREP not wanting to impose standards that would reduce the autonomy of specific graduate programs, a possible revision would be that programs have to detail specific criteria, without CACREP detailing the specifics of those evaluative criteria. In addition, without graduate programs detailing specific evaluative criteria, students are unable to self-assess, an area considered a key competency for effective counselors and mental health professionals (Kaslow et al., 2007; Swank et al., 2012; Rodolfa et al., 2005).

Second, the ideal climate for which evaluation takes place is one that is transparent and fosters a sense of trust and understanding, in which students would engage in a bottom-up discourse and voice their own areas for growth with faculty and supervisors (Foster and McAdams, 2009; Kaslow et al., 2007). By not listing what is expected of students, it is unlikely that students would be able to understand, let alone trust the evaluative process. This lack of understanding and trust, could lead to a climate where students would be guarded with faculty and secretive about areas that could be of possible concern, a setting antithetical to effective

evaluation. Programs that used language more punitive in nature and listing behaviors of what not to do are arguably insufficient in promoting a climate of trust and understanding. In addition, students who graduate are likely to become supervisors themselves, with the responsibility of adhering to the gatekeeping process of their future supervisees. Providing a climate in which students are active in their own evaluative process, not only fosters greater potential for faculty meeting student needs, but also entails that students would be better suited to their future evaluative responsibilities.

Suggestions for Future Research

The goal of the current study was to provide a framework to help facilitate a dialogue on the specific dispositions expected of counseling students, with the hope of furthering consensus to better guide evaluative practices for the counseling profession. The results of this study provide a snapshot of "what is" and for consensus to occur, an agreement of "what should be" needs to take place among counseling professionals. A Delphi study using the disposition categories found with the current investigation would be a considerable step in forming the consensus process (Clayton, 1997). Experts can evaluate the fit of the categories and add or remove the areas they feel to be a necessary part of evaluation. With the results of such a study, the final categories could form an assessment and be empirically validated through predictive validity measures such as client satisfaction surveys or supervisor evaluations of competencies.

Another finding from the investigation was the wide range of variance in student retention policies among graduate programs, with some using specific evaluations or rubrics, while others not mentioning evaluative criteria at all. A repeat of Olkin and Gaughen's study (1991) which evaluated the evaluation and dismissal of master students within graduate programs would be a beneficial area of exploration to investigate policy effectiveness and the

commonality of student remediation processes. The results of that study may not have as much relevance today, though the finding that most programs indicated one to three problem students a year indicates a heavy reliance on student retention policies. If such a finding were to remain true today, then the results would demonstrate a greater need for retention policies to be transparent and specific, given that graduate programs have to operate in an increasingly litigious society.

Another study could investigate students' attitudes around faculty and supervisor evaluation, specifically investigating perceived importance and comfort around it. The results of such a study could be used to determine whether the ideal climate of evaluation exists today, and could serve as a necessary foundation for a dialogue between students and counselor educators in how such a climate could come to be created.

Limitations

Some limitations of the study include the timing of securing units of analysis via communication efforts to faculty members of specific graduate programs. The majority of efforts used to secure retention policies was near the end of the spring semester and during the summer months, a time when faculty are usually less attentive to research requests or available for correspondence. Because of this, an additional step was added to correspond with faculty members within the fall semester, which resulted in the second most effective yield of retention policies. Should other studies hope to replicate the current study's methodology, then it is advised that attempts to correspond with faculty happen more within the academic school year.

Another limitation is whether analysis of retention policies from 177 out of 274 demonstrates sufficient external validity or census. At least six programs sent policies that did not meet inclusion criteria and could not be determined as fitting the needs of the study, and of

the 224 programs originally collected, 47 did not list specific dispositions. Thus, a complete census would not have been possible due to these findings. In addition, this outcome may be indicative of a more alarming trend of counseling programs remaining purposefully vague in the area of evaluation and student retention. Nonetheless, over 80% of CACREP accredited counseling programs were originally included in the sample and an exhaustive effort was employed to secure a census of retention policies.

Lastly, shared word choices of dispositions may have different meanings and intentions among different graduate programs, and may not be as appropriate a fit within categories of the current study. Some graduate programs' retention policies listed criteria that were vague and offered little clarification or definition, and in using other programs' definitions of dispositions, may not be compatible with the intent of those programs. For example, the disposition of "demonstrating sound judgment" was a common recurrence within graduate programs, though offered little in what such a behavior entailed, or in what regard sound judgment was expected. However, this demonstrates the need for further discussion in clarifying specific criteria in student evaluation. In attempting to clump the many word combinations of dispositions into themes, more discussion can take place among counseling professionals in what they wish to see demonstrated in counseling students, which in turn would guide evaluation efforts.

Conclusion

Evaluation of supervisees within counseling have evolved to focus less on adherence to theory and specific skill sets, to more account for the factors that contribute to developing the therapeutic alliance between counselor and clients. This study, which investigated the dispositions on which graduate programs assess students, provides greater evidence that the counseling profession is evolving in kind. Much like what was proposed by Rodolfa et al.,

(2005), professional dispositions are to be seen as *foundational* to the competencies and skill sets that graduate programs focus training on. Specifically, a student's professional competency, such as upholding professional responsibilities and maintaining healthy boundaries with clients, would be severely comprised if they were shown to demonstrate a lack of integrity, as integrity is a disposition that is foundational to those competencies.

The area of professional dispositions has been a contested area within mental health, with some positing that setting established criteria is a difficult enterprise, or even impossible due to the inherent subjectivity of counseling (Robiner, Fuhrman, and Ristvedt, 1993; Dawes, 1994). There is evidence that forming consensus of professional dispositions is difficult to establish, with literature spanning three decades calling for a consensus and standardization in this area (Weiss, 1981; Borders and Benshoff, 1992; Hensley, Smith and Thompso, 2003; Rust, Rasking, and Hill 2013). It is the hope that the results of the current study provide a step forward in meeting this difficulty by providing a common language for counseling professionals to have a dialogue that leads to consensus.

While such a consensus would allow counselor educators to have greater safety in enforcing remediation policies, it also would provide greater transparency in evaluative procedures, thus fostering a more ideal climate around evaluation. The implications of such a climate are all positive, with students being able to better voice areas of growth within themselves, fostering a greater ability to self-assess and allowing faculty to better meet their students' needs. Students would also be better suited for supervisory responsibilities, haven taken direct action into their own evaluative process. Lastly, counselor educators can have greater clarity in evaluative practices, with the hope of making student remediation less a retroactive process and more a proactive one. Though there is still a great deal of research that

needs to be done before a consensus can be reached, providing a foundation to facilitate such a dialogue is a significant starting point.

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APPENDIX A

	Dispositions	Competencies
Frame and Stevens-Smith (1995) PCEF	• being open • flexible • positive • ability to cooperate with others • willingness to use and accept feedback • awareness of one's own impact on others • ability to deal with conflict • ability to accept personal responsibility • ability to effectively express feelings	
Baldo, Softas-Nall, and Shaw (1997)	• Empathic capacity • Maturity of judgment • Ability to work closely with others • Capacity to handle stress • Tolerance for deviance	
Lumadue and Duffey (1999) PPFE	• Maturity • Integrity	• Counseling skills and abilities • Professional Responsibility • Competence
Kerl, Garcia, McCullough, and Maxwell (2002) PCPE	• Anger control • Empathy • Maturity	• Basic Communication skills • Conflict resolution • Professional Demeanor
Eriksen and McAuliffe (2003) CSS	• Develops therapeutic relationship	• Shows interest and appreciation • Encourages exploration • Deepens the session • Encourages change • Manages the session

McAdams, Foster, and Ward, (2007) PPRP	• Openness to new ideas • Flexibility • Cooperativeness with others • Willingness to use and accept feedback • Awareness of impact on others • Ability to deal with conflict • Ability to accept personal responsibility • Ability to express feelings effectively and appropriately • Attention to ethical and legal considerations • Initiative and motivation	
Swank, Lambie, and Witta (2012) CSS	• Professional ethics • Professionalism • Self-awareness and self-understanding • Emotional stability and self control • Motivated to learn and grow/initiative • Multicultural competence • Openness to feedback • Professional and personal boundaries • Flexibility and adaptability • Congruence and genuineness	• Counseling Skills • Assessment and application • Professional behaviors

Table 1

Out of 274 institutions listed on the CACREP website as of 5/2014

Attempts	Browse Website for Documents	1st email attempt	2nd email attempt	1st phone call attempt	2nd phone call attempt
Program Interaction and Response	274 websites browsed and navigated for units of analysis or student handbooks	Sent 75 emails to remaining programs. Heard back from 15 institutions. 3 responded not having policies available and were excluded from list	Sent 60 emails Heard back from 5, received agreement that they would check with program coordinator and get back to me.	Called 58 programs. Spoke w/ 9 invidividuals, left remaining voicemails.	Called 53 programs. Spoke w/ 16 individuals. Of those, got 1 verbal agreement. Several faculty referenced checking updated website.
Units of analysis received/total	199 total units of analysis	Received 12 student handbooks via email attachment with units of analysis. 211 total units of analysis.	Received 1 document That met criteria. Received 1 policy that did not. 212 total units of analysis	Received 3 documents. Received 2 other policies that did not fit with inclusion criteria. 215 total units of analysis.	Received 6 more policies revisiting websites. Received 3 policies from direct contact, via email. 224 total units of analysis.

Table 2

CATEGORIES/NODE	#	EXAMPLES FROM RETENTION POLICIES
Openness to Growth		
Willingness to Accept and Use Feedback	67	"Inclined or prepared to listen to supervisors and to ungrudgingly carry out directions." "The student demonstrates the ability to receive, integrate, and utilize feedback from peers, instructors, and supervisors."
Initiative and Motivation	34	"Initiative is demonstrated by offering ideas and suggestions to others, setting goals for self- improvement, seeking advice and feedback, and independently searching for, creating, or modifying plans and materials."
Values Professional and Personal Growth	32	"Demonstrated openness to self-examination and personal and professional self- development."
Openness to New Ideas	27	"Remain open to ideas, learning, feedback, and change."
Values Introspection	16	"Value self-awareness and self-examination, and take responsibility for seeking professional help for issues that might impede one's counseling practice."
Willingness to Grow Professionally	14	"Willingness to risk self in new experiences and groups (e.g., active participation in learning experiences that challenge and develop skills and clarify values)."
Openness	8	Openness
Openness to Supervision	8	"Receptiveness to supervision."
Commitment to Lifelong Learning	7	"The competent professional is a lifelong learner."
Seeks Supervision	4	Seeks Supervision
Cooperates with Remediation Plan	3	"Cooperates with remediation plan."
Receptive to Feedback	2	
Responding to Supervision	2	
Effective Use of Supervision	1	
Self-Directed	1	
Openness to Take Interpersonal Risks	1	
Critical Thinker	1	
Awareness of Self and Others		
Self-Awareness	40	"Demonstrates ability to recognize and monitor personal stress and emotional reactions to professional responsibilities." "Candidate consistently displays accurate introspection, awareness of own strengths and weaknesses and; consistently displays an understanding of the impact of personal issues within the therapeutic relationship."
Accept Personal	39	"Exhibits ability to take responsibility for one's actions."

Responsibility		"Takes personal responsibility for one's own behavior."
Awareness of Own Impact on Others	30	"Recognizes her/his personal and professional impact upon others."
Sensitivity to Diversity	15	"sensitivity to issues of diversity and respect for individual differences."
Sensitivity (to others)	13	"Demonstrates sensitivity toward others."
Personal Awareness of Strengths and Limitations	12	"Student respects self and possesses an awareness of strengths and limitations."
Reflections	9	"Demonstrating willingness and ability to use self-reflection to promote professional growth."
Reflective	8	"The competent professional is a reflective practitioner." "Reflectiveness."
Awareness of Power Differences in Therapy	4	"The student demonstrates sensitivity to real and ascribed differences in power between themselves and others, and does not exploit or mislead other people during or after professional relationships."
Awareness of Cultural Self and Others	3	"Identifies challenges and opportunities afforded by their own culture as well as cultural identities other than their own."
Introspective to Self-Care Needs	3	"Student appears to be alert to signs of stress."
Wellness	3	"Understanding of, and decision to pursue, wellness as a lifestyle over the life span. Willingness to asses issues of wellness in one's lifestyle and life-environment."
Sensitive to Mental Health Needs of Clients	1	
Mindfulness	1	
Capacity for Insight	1	
Demonstrates Realistic Expectations of the Self	1	
Learns from Experience	1	
Awareness of how Environmental Factors Influence Client Success	1	
Appropriately Addresses Limitations with Clients	1	
Integrity		
Integrity	32	"1. The student respects the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all people." "The student respects the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and choices regarding self-determination." "The student behaves in accordance with the program's

		accepted code(s) of ethics/standards of practice."
Attention and Adherence to Ethical Practices	93	"Understand, appreciate, and adhere to professional standards of ethics and practice." "Ability to understand and demonstrate ethical and professional behavior."
Judgment	12	"Students must display sound moral and ethical judgment."
Respects Privacy and Confidentiality of Others	11	"Student maintains client/colleague/peer confidentiality as defined by the ACA Code of Ethics."
Respects Professional and Personal Boundaries	7	"Demonstrates appropriate boundaries: sexual, ethical, and professional."
Trustworthiness	2	
Exhibits Personal Courage and Strength	1	
Emotional Stability		
Maturity	37	"The student demonstrates appropriate self-control (such as anger control, impulse control) in interpersonal relationships with faculty, peers, and others." "The student exhibits appropriate levels of self-assurance, confidence, and trust in own ability." "The student follows professionally recognized conflict resolution processes, seeking to informally address the issue first with the individual(s) with whom the conflict exists."
Deal With Conflict	33	"ability and willingness to deal with conflict (Corey, 1986)." "Demonstrates the ability to manage conflict resolution appropriately."
Stability	30	"Personal stability, as indicated by consistent affective, cognitive, and behavioral management in the program, including successful management of all personal issues that may prevent performance of the duties of a professional counselor."
Reliability	22	"Reliable completion, even under conditions of stress and emotional challenge, of expected clinical and academic responsibilities including: o Meeting all obligations to staff and clients at the clinical site o Completing all necessary documentation and communication commitments at the internship or practicum placement o Completing class assignments and being an active

		learner in the classroom."
Manages Stress Appropriately	19	"Cope effectively with stressors precipitated by the academic and clinical expectations/requirements of the program and additional stressors such as jobs and family situations."
Tolerate Ambiguity	7	"Tolerates demanding workloads and stressful conditions. Demonstrates the ability to function in ambiguous situations. "
Balance	5	"Student appears to maintain a balance in his or her life."
Confidence Balanced with Humility	3	"Exhibits appropriate levels of self-confidence, competency, self-assurance and trust in own abilities in classes, peer interactions and placement situations."
Self-Acceptance and Confidence	1	
Psychologically Healthy	1	
Compassion		
Empathy	20	"Exhibit and understand the importance of respectful, genuine, and empathic attitudes toward clients, thereby promoting client dignity, self-determination, and welfare."
Respect for Individual Differences	13	"Student shows a respect for individual differences."
Interested in Welfare of Others	9	"Student conveys an interest in the welfare of others."
Respect and Appreciation of Diverse Populations	9	"Respect for and celebration of diverse people and cultures."
Respect (for others)	8	"Effectively demonstrates respect."
Acceptance	5	"Acceptance of Diverse Ideas and Values."
Fairness (in treating others)	3	"Includes all students in classroom activities. __Expresses interest in the well-being of all students. __Provides opportunities for respectful discussions on diverse perspectives."
Non-judgmental	2	
Respect Client Welfare	2	
Respect Dignity and Self-worth of Others	2	
Unconditionally Believes in Client Growth	1	
Appreciates Client Strengths	1	
Flexibility		
Flexibility	39	"The ability to adapt to situations and experiences, and to adjust one's behavior appropriately."
Cooperativeness with Others	42	"Student exhibits cooperative behavior as evidenced by a willingness to give others time and space to articulate their views."
Flexible in Meeting Client Needs	6	"Exhibit and understand the importance of the ability to engage clients, acknowledging the unique nature and

		needs of individuals at all developmental levels and across cultures."
Collaborate with Others	5	"Ability to consult/ collaborate with others."
Cognitive Flexibility	2	
Flexible in Professional Relationships	2	
Creativity	1	
Maintains Objectivity	1	
Personal Style		
Positive Attitude	19	"positive attitude (Jackson and Thompson, 1971)." "Demonstrates a positive attitude."
Genuineness	7	"This quality is most evident when you are real, authentic and congruent in interactions with others; what one sees in you is consistently portrayed in a variety of situations and circumstances."
Attitude	6	"Attitude."
Warmth	5	"Exhibits authenticity, warmth, and appropriate interpersonal skills."
Patience	4	"Shows appropriate level of patience."
Sense of Humor	4	"capable of not taking self "too seriously"; imparts joy and optimism into difficult situations."
Authenticity	2	
Congruence	2	
Optimism	1	
Curiosity	1	
Openness to be Real with Clients	1	
Interpersonal Competency		
Communication	34	"Appropriate communication skills, including the ability to engage in concrete and focused communications." "Communication skills—communicates verbally and non--verbally in a clear and effective manner."
Express Feelings Effectively and Appropriately	34	"Aware of and manages emotions and behavior in a way that facilitates interpersonal interactions."
Interpersonal Skills	27	"Establishes and maintains professional, collaborative, and collegial relationships with others (a) despite social differences and level of authority and (b) that are consistent with the AACC and ACA Code of Ethics."
Interpersonal Effectiveness	23	"Demonstrated effectiveness in developing interpersonal relationships in individual and group contacts."
Listen and Hear Others	13	"Attentiveness - the ability to attend and listen to the client."
Communicates Feedback	12	"Student conveys feedback to others in an appropriate

Appropriately		manner."
Communicate Ideas	6	"The student clearly communicates ideas and concepts."
Convey Empathy and Compassion	5	"one's ability to convey warmth, genuineness, respect, and empathy in interactions with clients, classmates, staff, and faculty."
Articulate Personal Convictions	2	
Professional Competency		
Relationships (Professional)	36	"Demonstrates ability to maintain respectful and professional collegial and supervisory relationships and peer relationships."
Comportment	24	"Exhibit professional dress and demeanor in accordance with practice settings."
Professionalism (in relation to others)	22	"The student demonstrates a respectful attitude toward peers, professors, and others."
Professional Responsibility	18	"Performs professional responsibilities in agency setting in a consistent and dependable manner."
Professional Conduct	8	"appropriate adjustment and professional conduct."
Commitment to Profession	8	"Appropriate involvement in professional development activities (e.g., professional associations, conference attendance)."
Leadership	6	"Seizes opportunities to demonstrate leadership qualities within the cohort. Take appropriate turns at stepping up to leadership and being a follower."
Advocacy	5	"Advocates for wellness and balance in others, contributes to efforts to examine and enact productive solutions to wellness."
Organization	4	"Demonstrates organization through planning, selection and preparation of materials, time management."
Social Advocacy	2	
Advocate for Profession	2	
Readiness Professional Role	1	
Appreciation of therapeutic process	1	
Professional Commitment	1	
Demeanor	1	
Clinical Competency		
Competence	22	"1. The student recognizes the boundaries of his/her particular competencies and the limitations of his/her expertise. 2. The student takes responsibility for compensating for his/her deficiencies. 3. The student takes responsibility for assuring client welfare when encountering the boundaries of his/her expertise. 4. The student demonstrates basic cognitive, affective,

		sensory, and motor capacities to respond therapeutically to the clients. 5. The student provides only those services and applies only those techniques for which she/he is qualified by education training and expertise."
Relationships (therapeutic)	19	"The student demonstrates the ability to establish relationships in such a manner that a therapeutic working relationship can be created."
Multicultural Competence	10	"Demonstrates multicultural competencies in relation to diversity, equity, and opportunity in student learning and development."
Appropriately self-discloses	7	"This quality is most evident when you only share information about yourself that fits the nature and purpose of the interaction. When personal information is revealed, it is tasteful, relevant, and is not upsetting, distracting, or confusing to others."
Ability to Work with Diverse Populations	6	"Demonstrates the ability to relate to diverse individuals."
Competency (clinical)	3	1. The student understands and accepts the importance of implementing the core conditions of counseling: unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and empathy. 2. The student demonstrates the core conditions of counseling: unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and empathy. 3. The student demonstrates a capacity for understanding the influence of others on his/her own development (e.g., family of origin). 4. The student demonstrates a willingness and an ability to explore her/his own emotions, behavior, and cognitions in order to enhance self-awareness and self-knowledge. 5. The student consistently demonstrates excellent interpersonal skills, exhibiting a genuine interest in and appreciation of others, a respect for others, and an ability to interact with others in an appropriate manner. 6. The student demonstrates a potential for working effectively with distressful emotions (his/her own and the emotions of others).
Cognition (ability to work with clients)	2	
Maintains Appropriate Boundaries	2	
Self-control in Professional Relationships	1	
Establish Rapport with both Men and Women	1	

Table 3

APPENDIX B

Dear Dr. *name of coordinator*,

My name is Jeff Christensen and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education program at William and Mary. For my dissertation, I am conducting a content analysis on student retention policies to investigate what are the most prevalent professional dispositions that counseling programs expect of their students and was hoping you could email me a pdf of your program's counseling student handbook, or any other documentation that would contain the policy for your *list of specific counseling track(s)*.

This study has IRB approval and your specific program will remain anonymous in the final results. If you would like to receive any more information about my study, please do not to hesitate to ask. You can reach me best at this email address, or contact my dissertation chair, Charles F. Gressard at cfgres@wm.edu.

Thank you again for your help.

Sincerely,

Jeff Christensen
PhD Candidate Counselor Education
The College of William and Mary

APPENDIX C

Dear Dr. *name of coordinator*

My name is Jeff Christensen and I am sending a final email request for a pdf for your program's counseling student handbook any other documentation that would contain your counseling student retention policy for your *counseling track(s)*. This request is to conduct a content analysis on all CACREP accredited counseling programs to determine what professional dispositions we as a profession assess our students on. This study has IRB approval and your specific program will remain anonymous in the final results. If you would like to receive more information about this study, you can reach me at this email address, or contact my dissertation chair, Charles F. Gressard at cfgres@wm.edu.

Thank you again for your time and I hope this email finds you well.

Sincerely,

Jeff Christensen
PhD Candidate Counselor Education
The college of William and Mary