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## How Supervisors Describe the Development of Competence in Trainee School Counselors

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Suen Yan Leung

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Walden University  
2023

Abstract

How Supervisors Describe the Development of Competence in Trainee School

Counselors

by

Suen Yan Leung

MA, Palo Alto University, 2018

LLB (Hons), University of Edinburgh, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

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## Abstract

School counselors serve an important role in providing frontline counseling services to students in local school districts. Professional associations and educational institutions emphasize the importance of professional competence. However, research on professional competence is fragmented, outdated, and unintegrated. This qualitative study explored the development of competence in trainee school counselors during supervision, from the supervisors' perspectives. Using the conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy and professional identity development, 16 experienced supervisors were interviewed and asked to describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors and how they instructed the development of competence. Thorne's interpretive description method was combined with a reality-testing framework to guide the research procedures and data analysis plan. Following an inductive process, 663 codes were distilled into 37 themes, which resulted in 17 assertions. It was found that competence was gained across a continuum of growth and was recognized as either self-confidence or self-initiative development; and that supervisors could cultivate self-efficacy through the acquisition of skills and professional identity along with the development of values and beliefs. Recommendations for further research included using the Delphi method and participatory action research to build consensus statements and guidelines. Sharing these findings can inform positive social change by supporting supervisors as they prepare school counselor trainees for a successful career, in turn improving the social emotional development of their students in their local districts.

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## Dedication

For my friend and wife Valerie. In awe and love: per constantiam et dilectionem  
disce vivere.

For my children, Lien, Haywood, and Lana. In hope and expectation: nam  
principium mentis.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore how supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors. This is an important area of study, as it is recognized within the profession and the research community that counseling trainees need to feel competent to meet the challenges of their profession when they enter their practicums (Morgan et al., 2014; Parikh-Foxx et al., 2020). However, the knowledge of how professional competence is cultivated to meet these challenges is incomplete (Hunsley et al., 2016; Rodolfa & Schaffer, 2019). The definitions and descriptions of competence in this field have not been fully developed and are not consistent among school counseling professionals (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Ridley et al., 2005; Rodolfa et al., 2013; Zyromski et al., 2021). Approaching the meaning of competence from the supervisors' perspective can open new directions for understanding and training for professional competence. The results of this approach can be applied to improving the effectiveness of school counselor training and result in greater preparedness of school counselor trainees. The more competent school counselors are in providing essential adolescent and child mental health services, the greater their contribution to the successful academic, career, and social emotional development of their students (Collins, 2014; Ford & Finning, 2020; Martinez et al., 2020; National Institute of Mental Health, 1999).

This chapter opens with a summary of the topic, the main themes, and areas where more research needed. The research problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions are presented. Two conceptual frameworks, self-efficacy theory and

professional identity development are introduced. This is followed by a description of the rationale of the research design, which is an interpretive description method combined with a reality-testing framework. The definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations are outlined before a conclusion on the potential contributions and significance of the study.

### **Background**

Three areas of study emerged from the literature review of school counselor competence. First, there is a considerable amount of research and professional opinions on the importance of school counseling in supporting the academic success and mental health of students (e.g., Feiss et al., 2019). The research also has revealed that school counselors are not comprehensively supported by their professional bodies (Fye et al., 2018) and do not feel effective in meeting their challenges (Parikh-Foxx et al., 2020).

Second, researchers addressing the problems faced by school counselor trainees with professional competence have uncovered deficient knowledge on its meanings. Chiefly, there is a lack of clear definitions of key concepts like competence (Kitchener, 2000; Lichtenberg et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2005). Concepts like professional identity and self-efficacy have been defined and developed as part of professional guidelines and competence (McMahon et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014). However, only a few studies have systematically examined the close links of professional identity development and self-efficacy to school counselor competence (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Beijaard et al., 2000; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022).



Third, self-efficacy and professional identity have been well-studied in the related field of educational psychology and they have been shown to influence professional competence (Guiney et al, 2014; Mentkowski et al., 2000; Park and Schallert, 2020). Rodolfa and Schaffer (2019) opined that a culture of including competency frameworks for assessing the competence of trainees has been adopted without the profession agreeing on what it means to be a competent professional. This study intended to further the knowledge on how the components of professional competence are described by supervisors in their work with trainees.

In sum, it is of importance to understand the meaning of competence and the role of supervision in cultivating competence because school counselors provide broad reaching benefits to school students, their families, and their communities (Ford & Finning, 2020; Huppert & So, 2013). As future entrants to the profession, school counselor trainees depend on their supervisors for developing their professional competence to meet their challenges and becoming better prepared to deliver these benefits. This research inquiry aimed to add to the knowledge on trainee supervision and preparedness to benefit local communities with restricted resources and the school counseling needs that they serve.

### **Problem Statement**

There is consensus in the mental health fields that professional competence and effective supervision are essential to lifelong professionalism and professional functioning (Elman & Forrest, 2007; Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Gonsalvez et al., 2021). But the definitions of professional competence have been described as fuzzy, ill-

defined, or of minimal utility (Falender & Shafranske, 2012; van der Klink & Boon, 2003). Professional identity formation and self-efficacy development are recognized as components of counselor competence, but few studies have investigated how supervisors promote their development (DeKruyf et al., 2013; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019; Stoltenberg, 2005). The need for more research on the supervision experience has been clearly asserted in both research and by the professional associations responsible for curriculum design (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007; Roberts & Morotti, 2001; Sutton & Page, 1994).

In sum, the need to better understand how school counselor training supervisors train and develop professional competence has been identified in school counseling training literature. School counselor trainees depend on their supervisors for developing a pathway to professional competence formation. They need professional competence to be efficacious to meet the challenges of their profession.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand how supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors. The primary phenomenon of interest was competence, as described by school counselor supervisors. My intent was to explore the meaning of competence and describe how supervisors train competence. The nature and roles of the development of self-efficacy and professional identity were also explored, as these concepts were identified as essential in other helping professions yet were not well-studied in the literature on school counseling.

## **Research Questions**

The study's two primary research questions (RQ) were:

Primary RQ1: How do supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors?

Primary RQ2: How do supervisors train the development of competence in trainee school counselors?

In addition, two secondary research questions were:

Secondary RQA: How do supervisors describe the development of self-efficacy in trainee school counselors?

Secondary RB: How do supervisors describe the development of professional identity in trainee school counselors?

## **Conceptual Frameworks**

The key concept of this study is supported by the dual conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy theory and professional identity development. Self-efficacy theory originated as a construct of building capability in tasks by the regulation of effort applied. It also describes the personal judgement of one's ability to deal with a situation (Bandura, 1977). The theory has since been incorporated into the field of counseling as its own conceptualization of counselor self-efficacy (CSE) and it is recognized as essential to any discussion of competency (Bandura, 1982; Larson & Daniels, 1998). Professional identity development is defined as the attitude and responsibility for one's professional role to form a personal and professional framework. It is inextricably tied to personal identity, self-confidence, and self-worth (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Friedman & Kaslow,

1986). It has been conceptualized as counselor professional identity (CPI) and is related to serving career, educational, mental health, and wellness goals for families, groups, and individuals (Kaplan et al., 2014).

Self-efficacy and professional identity development of school counselors have been linked to levels of supervision received by them (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). Self-efficacy theory has mainly been related to the functions and skills of school counseling. For instance, Romi and Teichman (1995) related it to how counseling trainees deal with ambiguous, stressful, or unpredictable situations (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). But self-efficacy has also been tied to promoting professional identity development in school counselors. For instance, recent research supports the influence of self-efficacy (and supervision) on the ethical priority of ensuring that they develop the requisite behaviors, dispositions, and skills for their profession (Lambie & Stickl Haugen, 2021).

While there have been few studies linking professional identity to skills-based competences, several investigations have linked professional identity with the wider aspects of professional competence and professional development of trainees. Recent directions in this area of research have also tied professional identity development to promoting professional competence in school counselors. For instance, Gibson (2016) described this as assuming internal responsibility for professional development and developing a systemic identity in their professional community. In sum, self-efficacy has been found to be effective in addressing the management of skills and anxiety of trainees

while professional identity development has been found to be attuned in addressing identity and role challenges faced by the trainees and their profession.

### **Nature of the Study**

For this basic qualitative study, I combined a reality-testing inquiry with a basic interpretive description design for data collection and analysis. The interpretive description research design interprets empirical evidence, lived reality, and observed experiences in a defensible, logical, and systematic manner (Schwandt, 1994; Schwandt, 2001; Thorne, 2016). Reality-testing inquiry is related to the theory of logical empiricism. This inquiry approach enabled me to record what objects exist, even if the participant did not have a cognitive or conscious awareness of their existence (Epstein, 2012; Patton, 2015). This entire design was appropriate for objectively uncovering actual and real cognitions of the supervisors of school counseling trainees. It allowed me to explore how supervisors experienced their training of school counseling trainees even if they themselves were not aware of the challenges posed by the literature regarding the concept of professional competence.

I collected primary interview data using a purposive sampling of counseling supervisors. Supervisors are mostly located either in private sector agencies, schools, training institutes or universities, or in the public sector in school districts. My main recruitment methods were maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling and snowball sampling. The latter was based on requesting potential study volunteers to forward their digital invitation to other potentially suitable study volunteers in the school counselor supervision community and counseling professional associations.

## Definitions

The lack of availability and clarity of definitions of important terms (i.e., *professional competence*, *self-efficacy*, *professional identity development*, and *supervision*) in this field is a key phenomenon in the study. Indeed, the field of school counseling features several professional terms. For instance, the challenges of school counseling trainees, which will be described in the introduction to the literature review, are also characterized by specific terms (i.e., *noncounseling activities* and *role ambiguities*).

*Noncounseling activities* describe administrative and non-guidance counseling-related tasks which trainees perform in their training which are deemed as inappropriate school counseling activities (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019). The inconsistency of these tasks with their counseling roles contribute to the role conflicts that they face (ASCA, 2019; Kolodinsky, et al., 2009; Trolley, 2011; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). The effects of these activities have also been related to burnout and stress in trainees (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003; Pyne, 2011). They are examined in greater detail in the introduction to Chapter 2.

*Role ambiguities* are designated to school counseling trainees in their school settings and systems, for example by their school administrators (Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010). This term covers a broad category of similar conditions like role ambiguity, role confusion, and role stress (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Whiston, 2002). These ambiguities often result in the assignment of noncounseling activities and can also lead to

a reduction of overall counselor efficacy (Blake, 2020). They are also described in greater detail in the introduction to Chapter 2 and are also specifically covered under a separate section on the challenges of school counselor's roles.

*Professional competence* is an inadequate and unclear concept (Lichtenberg et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2005) on which research knowledge is not complete (Kitchener, 2000). A longstanding description is of an individual's proven ability to comprehend and perform tasks consistently with their profession's expectations due to their appropriate and effective education and training (Kaslow, 2004). More recently, Falender and Shafranske (2004, 2012) advocated for dual views of competence which include both the multiple roles and skills of the counseling profession and the attitudes and values that define its professional practice. Skills development, professional identity, and supervision are understood to be components of competence (McMahon et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014). This key concept and its components which support its definition form the crux of the review in Chapter 2 and are also integral to the central concepts of the research described in Chapter 3.

*Self-efficacy theory* describes the expectations of efficacy which determine an individual's coping behaviors, efforts, and perseverance to overcome challenges (Bandura, 1977). The theory has been adopted in the counseling field as counselor self-efficacy (CSE) and has been expanded to describe the behavioral, cognitive, and social skills required by a counselor (Larson & Daniels, 1998). This skills-oriented component of professional competence is closely linked to regulating the commitment and motivation of school counselor trainees (Parikh-Fox et al., 2020). Its role in the

conceptual framework of professional competence is examined under its own section in Chapter 2.

*Professional identity development* is an elusive and a fluid construct (DeKruyf et al., 2013). The concept has been adopted in the counseling field as counselor professional identity (CPI). It has been described as an attitude and responsibility for a professional role and its personal and professional frames of reference based on the personal identity, self-confidence, and self-worth of a therapist (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Friedman & Kaslow, 1986). Further, it has been expanded to describe the serving of career, educational, mental health, and wellness goals by a counselor (Kaplan et al., 2014). Its maturation process was described as developed on the job through the reciprocal interactions of envisioned past and future identities of a trainee professional (Brott & Myers, 1999; Henderson et al., 2007; Park & Schallert, 2020). The institutional aspects have been defined by the American Counseling Association (ACA) as: “Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals” (Kaplan et al., 2014). But successful progress to develop a shared identity in the counseling profession has been elusive. Current efforts to define an interprofessional identity incorporate elements of accreditation and licensing, advocacy, developmental, ethics compliance, and prevention (Brat et al., 2016; Burns, 2017; Klein & Beeson, 2022; Mellin et al., 2011; Myers et al., 2002). The role of the development-oriented element in the conceptual framework of professional competence is described under its own section in Chapter 2.



*Supervision* describes a process of feedback on skills, structured learning, and problem-solving skills; as well as the forming of a critical connection to professional identity development (Clevinger et. al., 2019; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006). Supervision, professional identity development, and self-efficacy are understood to be critical and integral to developing competence (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Collins, 2014; McMahon et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014). Supervision provides the practice-oriented setting through which competence formation takes place and can be observed by practicum supervisors. How these supervisors describe these experiences forms the subject of this research study.

*Trainees* are persons fulfilling mandatory practice training credit hours which are necessary for academic degree graduation as practicum students or for postgraduates attaining their professional licensing as trainees. School counselors in practicum training are often joined by other prelicensed mental health professionals from other related fields (e.g., counseling, psychology, or social work) as interns in the same school counseling settings. The latter are completing their general counseling qualification training and have chosen to fulfill their mandatory supervised practicum or trainee hours in school settings. In this study, the terms *trainees* and *training* are applied broadly to describe the nature and process of any prelicensed mental health professionals in graduate practicums or post graduate traineeships. *Supervision* applies to the direction of trainees in school counseling practicum and traineeships by *supervisors*.

### **Assumptions**

The research data were collected from interviews. I assumed that sufficient study participants could be identified and interviewed to make honest and relevant contributions to answering the research questions for the study. I assumed that they could be effectively examined through a qualitative study in the research tradition of interpretive description. The latter is a research method for exploring complex and real-world research questions in the field of mental healthcare. Furthermore, it specifically addresses certain shortcomings of other qualitative research methods. For instance, it was designed to counteract the perceived cultural relativism of ethnography, the potential biases and subjectivity in grounded theory, and the possible generalizations of phenomenology. In addition, I assumed that it could be supported with a reality-testing viewpoint to uncover and record the lived reality and observed experiences of supervisors in a logical and systematic manner (see Schwandt, 1994; Schwandt, 2001; Thorne, 2016).

I also assumed that the selection method of purposive sampling would identify a suitable sample of sufficient counseling supervisors who had worked in either the private or the public sector of this field. It was also assumed that I could extract honest responses from study participants with appropriate interviewing techniques like iterative questioning as well as subsequent member checking of study participants. I was seeking to generate thick descriptions from the interviewees using prompts and encouragements to provide narrative examples to the research interview questions. This was enhanced by my own experience as a former school counseling trainee and allowed me to enrich the descriptions from an emic standpoint of being connected to this field of applied

healthcare. In terms of transferability and trustworthiness in the study, it was also assumed that I could take on an adaptable, holistic, immediate, and responsive personality by applying techniques of clarifying, sensitivity, and summarizing (see Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The combination of these research measures and my emic standpoint are rooted within the interpretive description method which pertains to research in healthcare.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study explored how professional competence and its components are described by supervisors in their work with school counseling trainees. I appointed school counselor supervisors as the only study participants. The supervisors were in the United States.

In terms of the scope of the study, the target group of interest was supervisors. To qualify as study participant, they needed to be actively supervising school counselor trainees and have more than two years of supervisory experience at the time of being invited. Nonactive and less experienced supervisors were excluded. School counselor trainees and school administrators, like school principals, were excluded.

Research in this field is dominated by opinion articles. The qualitative research is dominated by phenomenological studies. These have covered a broad range spanning counselor education, supervision, identity development, and self-efficacy (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Flasch et al., 2016; Reisetter et al., 2004). But my study adopted an interpretive description research design and not a phenomenological approach. This design is more firmly oriented to applied healthcare settings and its technique is understood to be well-

connected to the knowledge being extracted (see Thorne, 2016). It is noted that I was the sole researcher and therefore could not implement certain multi-researcher tools (e.g., investigator triangulation or inter-coder reliability checking).

Professional competence is the primary phenomenon of interest and key concept. But its definitions have been described as fuzzy, loose, or minimally useful (American Psychological Association, 2006; Elman & Forrest, 2007; Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014; van der Klink & Boon, 2003). From the review of the literature, self-efficacy theory and professional identity development emerged as its most closely aligned definitional components in this field. Thus, they became the conceptual frameworks for this study.

### **Limitations**

I pursued an emic viewpoint for this study, and I am also a former counseling trainee (Merriam, 2009). It was important for the study both that I was not limited in my ability to manifest my own actions, choices, experiences, feelings, opinions, presuppositions, and thoughts, and that I was not restricted in my ability to acknowledge them in the research study's design as well as in the generation, analysis, and interpretation of the data (see Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008). While I protected my subjectivity as a researcher (see Russell & Kelly, 2002), I limited the negative effect of any biases on my part (see Ortlipp, 2008). As a method to manage these potential limitations and restrictions, I followed the strategy of reflexivity which includes insider and outsider stances, positionality, and the dialectic process of interchange between the

study participants and me as the researcher (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This strategy was implemented by my use of a self-reflective journal (see Ortlipp, 2008).

In addition, I was also the sole researcher in this qualitative research study. Therefore, I had limited physical resources available for my study. This influenced my capacity for the number of interviews that I could cover. It also restricted my utilization of certain instruments like triangulation of data sources, coding (e.g., inter-rater reliability) and analysis of data (see Shenton, 2004). However, to compensate for such restrictions, I used other strategies including audit trails and reflective journals. As for the number of interviews that I undertook, I targeted a sufficient sample size to achieve saturation of data (see Sandelowski, 2008; Thorne, 2016).

Qualitative research findings can be subject to limitations in dependability and transferability. To enhance dependability, I clearly documented the two-step coding process (described in Chapter 3) in the audit trail and reflective journal (see Malterud, 2012; Saldaña, 2015; Shenton, 2004). To enhance transferability, I used maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling both to encourage diversity in participant experience (see Patton, 2015) and to document how I arrived at the results so that readers have sufficient dependable information to determine the meaning of the results in their own context (Shenton, 2004).

Last, the review of the literature identified challenges regarding variance in how well supervisors are trained (Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2012). Therefore, another limitation was that participating supervisors may not have had the knowledge or experience to provide in-depth responses. In order to address this, I added a reality-testing framework

to my research design to incorporate study participants' responses in the context of whatever knowledge or experience they reported (see Epstein, 2012; Patton, 2015).

### **Significance**

Creating greater awareness of the challenges of supervision provides additional guidance and understanding on how school administrators and school counseling's professional bodies can improve the preparedness of their trainees (McMahon et al., 2009). School counselor trainees face challenges which include the lack of nationally or uniformly accepted or adopted accreditation, education, and training standards (Dollarhide, 2003; Heled & Davidovitch, 2022, Milsom & Akos, 2007; Morgan et al., 2014; Trolley, 2011). By improving trainee satisfaction with the reduction of noncounseling and role challenges faced by trainees, schools and boards can create more effective counseling services in the short term and increase the numbers of trainees retained by the profession in the long term.

In terms of the significance of improving the research knowledge of how supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors, the importance of this research topic has found recognition. The clarity of definitions and descriptions of the key concept is insufficient, especially on professional competence and professional identity development in school counseling. The state of training of school counselors has been described as deficient and inadequate (Heled & Davidovitch, 2022). The research in this field is dominated by literature reviews, summary reviews, and opinion articles. Indeed, the knowledge on the definitions of key terms in this field is dominated by opinion articles (Elman & Forrest, 2007; Falender & Shafranske, 2012).

Critiques of the lack of conclusive definitions of key terms like *professional development* and *professional identity development* are also dominated by opinion articles (Elman et al., 2005, Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, Hensley et al., 2003; VanZandt, 1990) or surveys (Borders & Benshoff, 1992). Key writings on professional identity developments are also largely addressed through opinion articles (Brat et al., 2016; Brott, 2006; Gibson et al., 2012; Gibson, 2016; Kaplan et al., 2014. Reissetter et al., 2004). Similarly, the formative writings on self-efficacy and counselor self-efficacy are based on theoretical writings and opinion articles (i.e., Bandura, 1982; Larson & Daniels, 1998). With the noteworthy exception of Larson and Daniels' (1998) summary review, further research studies on self-efficacy are dominated by quantitative studies (Kozina et al., 2010; Melchert et al., 1996; Mesrie et al., 2018; Mullen et al., 2015; Sutton & Fall, 1995; Tang et al., 2004). This dominance of literature and summary reviews, opinion articles, and quantitative studies reveals a noteworthy absence of qualitative studies.

In sum, the literature on professional competence is highly fragmented, outdated, and under-researched in key areas, and offers very little integrated insight on professional competence development in the field of school counseling training (e.g., Falender & Shafranske, 2012). It is hoped that the results of this qualitative research study from the viewpoint of supervisors contribute to a holistic understanding on how professional competence formation is described by its practitioners and better prepared trainees.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Competent school counselors provide essential adolescent and child mental health services which contribute to their successful academic, career, and social emotional development (Collins, 2014; Ford & Finning, 2020; Martinez et al., 2020; National Institute of Mental Health, 1999). However, the understanding of the definition and development of professional competence to meet the challenges and demands of working in modern school systems is incomplete. In further studies, researchers have added that the national standards set for school accreditation, education, and training are not consistently implemented (Dollarhide, 2003; Milsom & Akos, 2007; Morgan et al., 2014; McConnell et al., 2020; Trolley, 2011).

There is a consensus in other mental health fields that *professional competence* and effective *supervision* are intrinsic to lifelong professional functioning (Elman & Forrest, 2007; Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Gonsalvez et al., 2021). Nonetheless, these two terms have not been well-defined and well-differentiated for school counselor trainees. Definitions of professional competence have been described as fuzzy, ill-defined, or of minimal utility (Falender & Shafranske, 2012; van der Klink & Boon, 2003). Supervision plays a unique role as the link between school counseling trainees progressing from counseling education to gaining their professional practice (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2009; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007; Roberts & Morotti, 2001; Sutton & Page, 1994). However, the body of literature on the relationship between trainee school counselors and their supervisors remains limited (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).



There is an acceptance that supervision, professional identity, and self-efficacy are integral components to defining competence for other professions (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Collins, 2014; Mullen et al., 2015; Trolley, 2011). However, few studies have cogently linked both professional identity and self-efficacy to school counselor competence (Beijaard et al., 2000; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019). Furthermore, as important as counselor supervisors are to the cultivation of competence, few researchers have investigated how supervisors promote school counselor development (DeKruyf et al., 2013; Goodman-Scott, et al. 2020; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022; Stoltenberg, 2005). Therefore, the main purpose of the qualitative study was to understand how supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors.

This chapter begins with the presentation of the iterative search strategy and main keywords. This is followed by a contextual introduction to important factors for understanding the training of school counselors. I outline the current professional settings for school counseling trainees and their challenges. Professional competence is presented as a key concept to meet these challenges. This key concept is supported by three foundational pillars. First and second, it is supported by two conceptual frameworks: self-efficacy and professional identity development. As the third pillar, supervision is presented as the setting where the effectiveness of professional competence and its components are observable for supervisors. Then, the utility of these pillars is explored through two viewpoints: (a) what challenges are faced by school counseling trainees, and (b) how the nature and timing of the professional competence formation is understood to

meet these challenges. The chapter concludes with a summary of their relevance to the methodology of the research study.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature review search process was both thematic and iterative as I explored the sources cited by authoritative core research publications. The literature review search process examined these main themes and major topics: for instance, emergence of school counseling, history of school counseling, competence, professional competence, professional identity development, self-efficacy, counselor professional identity, counselor self-efficacy, supervision, supervisors, and school counselors. Additional keyword searches were added to the main themes: *school counselors, counselors, counseling students, counseling trainees, psychology students, and training*. Additional keyword searches were conducted of frequently reoccurring themes in adjacent fields and related professions: *self-belief, self-competence, self-esteem, self-perception, coping strategies, effectiveness, and metacognition*.

Literary reviews, systematic reviews, quantitative, qualitative, and metaanalytical studies were applied to broaden the perspective of significant research themes and the understanding of key issues and research needs, especially where the school counseling field was less developed than older professions. These more holistic searches were conducted with keywords *psychology, psychologists, and school psychologists*. Books, classic texts, and conference papers as well as supplementary journal articles were applied in the literature search process to provide a broader historical context. The extended search encompassed older texts by Bandura (1977). Public associations and

government agencies researched included the American School Counselor Association (2019), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013), Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (2016) and National Institute of Mental Health (1999). Well-known conference publications included *Professional Identities in Schools, Conference Papers—American Sociological Association* (Smardon, 2003) and *The Competencies Conference: Future directions in education and credentialing in professional psychology* (Kaslow et al., 2004).

## **Literature Review**

### **School Counseling: An Overview of Traineeship**

School counseling provides students with academic, emotional, and interpersonal skills and support. The activities of school counselors encompass advocacy for individualized education programs (IEPs); collaboration with families, school administrators, and teachers; mental health counseling, and; academic goal setting and planning (American School Counselor Association, 2021a). School counselors are engaged in a variety of challenging activities to develop the social and emotional wellness of students, which includes responding to their academic, career, and mental health needs (American School Counselor Association, 2020b; Ernst et al., 2017).

In general, school counselors are required to earn a bachelor's or master's degree in school counseling (or a related field like counseling, psychology, or social work) from an accredited institution and meet state certification requirements (i.e., licencing). School counselors are usually educated for the counseling field at accredited academic institutions. CACREP is the foremost accreditation body (Branthoover et al., 2010;

Milsom & Akos, 2007; Trolley, 2011). Their standard qualification training requirements stipulate both coursework and supervised practicum hours as interns in school settings.

Supervisors of these dedicated school counseling and general mental health practicum interns in schools (collectively known as school counseling trainees) are usually either affiliated with school districts or contracted via mental health agencies or via educational training institutions (American School Counselor Association, 2021b). During both their practicums and traineeships, prelicensed trainees are usually required to be supervised individually or in groups for their clinical and professional development (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Rutter, 2007; Somody et al., 2008).

### ***School Counseling-Effectiveness***

School counselors are well-positioned to provide essential adolescent and child mental health services with short-term clinical interventions that contribute to student academic success (Collins, 2014; Ford & Finning, 2020; National Institute of Mental Health, 1999). In research on the effects of school counseling, scholars have identified its positive benefits, efficacy, and value to schoolchildren (Whiston & Quinby, 2009; Zyromski & Dimmitt, 2019). As early as 1958, researchers at the Wisconsin Counseling Study demonstrated school counselor effectiveness across student ages, genders, interventions, and treatments (Gysbers, 2004). Researchers on the broader influence of counseling interventions found that they significantly predicted positive student change, as well as academic success, career, educational, personal, and social development (Scarborough & Luke, 2008; Trolley, 2011; Whiston & Sexton, 1998; Whiston & Quinby, 2009; Whiston et al., 2011). For example, in a metaanalytic study of school

counseling interventions, Whiston et al. (2011) found that students with school counseling interventions scored higher on outcomes but that the varying effectiveness of interventions necessitated further research on types of treatment. Even more broadly, participation in school counseling has been shown as useful for managing college preparedness, discipline problems, divorce and parental separation, family adjustment issues, and social skills (Pedro-Carroll & Alpert-Gillis, 1997; Pedro-Carroll et al., 1999; Poli et al., 2017; Villares & Brigman, 2019; Whiston & Sexton, 1998). More recently, Feiss et al.'s (2019) metaanalysis and systematic review described how school-based mental health treatment programs reduces anxiety and depression symptoms in adolescents.

Researchers have proposed that school counseling is most effective when performed under ideal circumstances, programmatically, and with the support of students' parents and teachers (Atkins et al., 2006; Gysbers, 2004; Rothney, 1958; Whiston & Quinby, 2009). Additionally, recent metaanalyses and systematic reviews have confirmed that school counseling effectiveness is highest when targeted and implemented with accuracy, fidelity, integrity, and understanding of treatments (Liu et al., 2020; Sanchez et al, 2018).

Examinations of the reasons behind any deleterious effects of counseling have identified factors like resource and time constraints, a small proportion of unresponsive populations as well as possible underreporting of negative findings. For instance, while Nicholson et al. (2009) were generally supportive of the effectiveness of counseling, they also highlighted unintended effects of specific treatments due to the lack of counselor

knowledge or experience. Such missteps included comorbid presenting circumstances, inappropriate treatment combinations (Merrell, 2001), or pairings of incompatible group members for disruptive behaviors and social skills training (Arnold & Hughes, 1998; Atkins et al., 2006; Lochman et al., 2019). Researchers have also found that these unintended deleterious effects can be addressed by greater resources, time, and higher levels of care and clinical skills (Arnold & Hughes, 1998; Atkins et al., 2006; Lochman et al., 2019).

In sum, schools are an ideal and key entry-point for accessing of mental health services by adolescents and children. The proficient school counselor is well-positioned to offer key adolescent and child mental health services using short-term interventions as well as contributing to the academic success of students (Collins, 2014; Ford & Finning, 2020; National Institute of Mental Health, 1999). Concordant research from several sources revealed that effective school counseling interventions require school counselors to be competent across a broad range of treatment techniques. These include consultation, classroom guidance, evidence-based, group, humanistic, peer and individual counseling to preventive stress inoculation with assertiveness training, cognitive restructuring, and progressive muscle relaxation (Borders & Drury, 1992; Kiselica et al., 1994; Stafford et al., 2018; Villares & Brigman, 2019; Zyromski & Dimmitt, 2019). Thus, school counselors need to be competent across a broad range of treatment needs. These include anxiety, depression, some stress conditions, psychological distress, as well as academic performance and school learning-based anxiety (Feiss et al., 2019; Güvendir et al., 2020; Kiselica et al., 1994).

### **School Counseling: Historical Context**

The counseling movement emerged in the early 1900's and after the First World War, and stemmed from two confluences. These were the career guidance and testing field and the clinical psychology field. The professional school counselor (PSC) profession developed when child and student counselors formed a professional body in the early 1950's. In the century between the two major milestones of its origins in the early 1900's and the first professional standards set by the ASCA in 2004 (ASCA, 2004), the identity of the school counseling profession evolved from providing career counseling vocational guidance into the professional school counseling known today (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Super, 1955). The present-day profession of school counseling continues to reveal a conflicting blend of multiple identities and theoretical groupings.

The major organizational milestones of the general counseling profession were the foundation of the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA) in 1913, which was merged into the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) and then became the American Counseling Association (ACA) of today. The composition of these associations began with the post-school vocational guidance movement formed by Frank Parsons, which combined with the field of psychometric testing developed by Alfred Binet for the World War I returnees, guidance educators like John Brewer (Brewer, 1932), and aptitude testing psychologists like Clark Hull (Hull, 1928). This amalgamation of diagnostic pioneers became more tightly bonded due to the vocational hardships caused by the Great Depression. The literature also attributes the theoretical orientation of the profession to other leading thinkers of the epoch. Alongside Frank Parsons, another

influential thinker in this field was Carl Rogers with his practice of clinical psychology (Rogers, 1942), which branched into the counseling psychology of the present-day. The realm of child-focused guidance was driven by John Dewey's movement of cognitive development (Dewey, 1938). The realm of school counseling stemmed from Edmund Williamson's work on counseling students (Williamson, 1939). These realms narrowed into one body for the profession (i.e., ASCA) with several bodies for accreditation, education, and training standards (e.g., CACREP).

### ***Accreditation, Education, and Training Standards***

CACREP is the main credentialing body for accrediting the education and training of individuals and institutions for becoming all counseling professionals, which includes school counselors. But CACREP is only one of the institutional educational accreditors and its standards have not been universally adopted. Even to the present-day, this national model for guiding the standards of the school counseling profession was still found to be under-implemented (Fye et al., 2018). As a result, school counseling educators have struggled to establish broadly accepted standards (Milsom & Akos, 2007; Trolley, 2011).

Divergent voices from institutional associations, boards, and research opinions exerted further professional stress on trainees. The credentialing system for school counselors distinguishes between the credentialing of educational institutions and individuals. On an institutional level, CACREP was recognized as the main body for accrediting professional counseling programs for institutional counseling programs (Branthoover et al., 2010, CACREP, 2009; Trolley, 2011). CACREP also sets out the



core areas of competence necessary to prepare professional counselors. However, CACREP is not the sole body for the accreditation process. State bodies, like the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and professional organizations may also set their own additional credentialing, educational and licencing requirements. CACREP has also not yet been universally adopted by all counseling educations. Diversity and lack of uniformity mean that there is no single national certification standard for individual school counselors (Milsom & Akos, 2007). Another influential body in the profession is the ASCA. It created a national model for school counselor roles in 1980 and now guides the roles of over 100,000 school counselors in the United States (ASCA, 1980, 1981, 2019).

### ***Professional Bodies and Standards***

Today's school counseling profession emerged from the grouping of professional school counselors into the ASCA when it was joined by the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) in 1953. Professional school counseling became institutionalized and publicized with the work on development, supervision, and training of school counselors by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) and the publication of a professional journal, the *School Counselor*. Funding for guidance and school counseling was provided under the National Defense Education Act (1958) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965). School counseling was further instituted with the passing of the Vocational Education Act (1963) for disadvantaged students and disabled people and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975). which also integrated the services of school counselors. The

movement came full circle with the formal transition from guidance counseling to school counseling by the ASCA in 2003.

ASCA created the ASCA National Model as a framework for the definition of appropriate duties and roles as well as for the alignment of school counseling professional practice with educational standards. This was implemented with a comprehensive and program-based school counseling program for school counselors (ASCA, 2012; Hilts et al., 2019). The model is the most broadly accepted school counseling program (Burnham et al., 2008) and considered as the standard for professional best practices (Cinotti, 2014). Other positive effects on school consultation, coordination, counseling interventions, and curriculum interventions stemmed from the ASCA National Model (Ernst et al., 2017). Since then, the ASCA has defined the roles of Professional School Counselors in a series of published national standards and templates covering guidance of the curriculum, individual student planning, program evaluation, and the responsiveness of services which guide the profession. These reached their fourth version by 2020 (ASCA, 2019; Whiston & Quinby, 2009).

### **School Counseling: Challenges and Responses**

#### ***Challenges***

Early research on the challenges of school counseling by Burnham and Jackson (2000) focused on school counselor's systems. They found that the role is viewed ambiguously, differently or ignored and misunderstood by the main parties (i.e., parents, schools, teachers, and principals). Then researchers added the terms of *role ambiguity*, *role confusion*, and *role stress* to these challenges (Heled & Davidovitch, 2022, Lambie

& Williamson, 2004; Whiston, 2002). Later researchers concurred on the challenges of problematic role ambiguities, unclear role definitions, high caseload, and role conflicts (ASCA, 2020a; Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Kolodinsky, et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014; Trolley, 2011; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). In terms of other directions of research on this subject, the time spent on non-guidance activities, and its consequences on burnout and stress, have also been found to remain an area of concern to the present-day (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Pyne, 2011).

The academic challenges faced by school counselor trainees include the lack of nationally or uniformly accepted or adopted accreditation, education, and training standards (Dollarhide, 2003; Milsom & Akos, 2007; Trolley, 2011). In Morgan et al.'s (2014) phenomenological study, school counselors' perceptions of their lack of competency were associated with a measure of perceived or real insecurity and incompetence as career entrants. Even beyond the training phase, new professionals who have already undergone their traineeship can still not feel highly prepared. Their new challenges comprise other important components of professional life like preparing budgets, grants, or financial management (Guyjet et al., 2009).

Additional challenges for trainees arise from the composition and volume of their workloads. Notwithstanding the organizational principles of school counseling defined by ASCA, counseling trainees are also tasked with non-counseling activities, including administrative and non-guidance-related tasks. Researchers have found these activities to

be inconsistent with their counselor roles and to contribute to the role conflicts among school counselors (ASCA, 2019; Kolodinsky, et al., 2009; Trolley, 2011; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). An excessive ratio of students-to-counselors (i.e., a national average of 430-to-1 ratio compared to the ASCA's recommended ratio of 250-to-1; ASCA, 2020a) has also been identified as causing high workloads school counselor trainees (ASCA, 2020a; Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). These researchers also joined the voices cataloguing the consequences of these challenges on school counselors. The list of identified consequences is extensive. They included attrition (Greenham et al., 2019), burnout and lower levels of coping skills (Fye et al., 2018; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006), frustration (Kolodinsky, et al., 2009), job overload (Sears & Navin, 1983); perceived stress (Fye et al., 2018; Mullen et al., 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006), job dissatisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Mullen et al., 2018), and role stress (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Coll & Freeman, 1997; Culbreth et al., 2005; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen et al., 2018).

### ***Responses-From Professional Bodies***

In response to these issues by the professional bodies, ASCA's holistic framework for school counseling advocated school counselors spending 80% or more of their time providing direct and indirect services to address the academic, career, and emotional needs of students (ASCA, 1980, 2012, 2019; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). ASCA also differentiated between activities which were appropriate and inappropriate for school

counseling activities (ASCA, 2019). Among several similarly oriented research opinions, Myrick (1993) and Gysbers and Henderson (1988) proposed further models of school counseling standards with up to 100% of school counselor's time to be spent on delivering direct and indirect guidance services only (i.e., consultation, classroom guidance and counseling; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Trolley, 2011).

***Responses: From Research Studies***

This section described the context of efficacy of school counseling as well as duties and challenges of school counseling trainees. The main review will describe the responses from the researchers in this field. In the next section, the main review opens with the literature on professional competence and its components, the conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy theory, and professional identity development. The following part provides a description of the practice of supervision where competence formation is developed. Lastly, two viewpoints on competence formation will be described: (a) the challenges faced by school counselor trainees, and (b) how and when, these components of professional competence respond to them with competence formation.

**Professional Competence as a Key Concept**

The academic and professional background to the professional challenges of school counseling trainees was described in the beginning of this chapter. In this part of the chapter the literature on the key concept of professional competence to meet these challenges will be reviewed. Skills development, strong professional identity, and regular supervision are understood to be key elements of forming school counselor competence (McMahon et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014). Consequently, the conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy,

professional identity development which support the key concept will be explored in this chapter. Then the training of professional competence with supervision will be examined.

### **Definitions of Professional Competence: The Problem?**

This term has suffered definitional challenges for a long time. It was already concluded in the early 2000's that it is easier to instruct trainees to be competent than to define the term itself (Kitchener, 2000). Subsequent researchers continued to agree about the lack of knowledge on the term. For instance, they considered the available definitions of *competence* to be inadequate (Roberts et al., 2005). They also identified a lack of clarity, coherence, and fidelity in the assessment tools of attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Lichtenberg et al., 2007). It was concluded that if a profession is unable to define, regulate, and self-assess its competencies then the profession itself put at risk (Rodolfa et al., 2013). For 20 years, commentators continued to critique a lack of empirical validation of competency frameworks and are still researching appropriate structures.

One of the most comprehensive definitions of counselor competence was developed by Kaslow (2004). It defined competence holistically. It described a combination of capability with a proven ability to comprehend and perform tasks appropriately, effectively, and consistently with the expectations of their profession based on their education and training. Only a few researchers also proposed such a holistic combination. Indeed, Falender and Shafranske (2004, 2012) came from a supervisory perspective. They also advocated for dual views of competence in their works on clinical supervision. They defined a spectrum of *competency* as an acquisition of a narrow set of skills with a dynamic, evolving process targeting personal and professional capabilities.

Their approaches form a connection between studies which only researched components of competence at either ends of that spectrum.

Theory and research on counselor trainee professional competence has commonly been approached in two separate ways: (a) cataloguing the multiple roles and skills of the counseling profession, or (b) describing the attitudes and values that are aligned with their effective practice (American Psychological Association [APA], 2006; Epstein & Hundert, 2002; Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014). For instance, Tan and Chou's (2018) study found that self-efficacy and competency improved with supervision. Moreover, Ridley et al.'s (2011) study advocated for a wider definition of professional competence to include affective, behavioral, and cognitive domains. In later attempts to address the ill-defined definitions, Gonsalvez et al.'s (2020) research took the route of identifying new clusters of competencies of knowledge, skills, metacompetencies (like metacognition and metaaffect), and relationship competencies (like empathy). The relevance of the findings of earlier researchers like van der Klink and Boon (2003) of *competencies* as a fuzzy concept with minimal utility still endures today.

### ***Professional Competence: Historical Context***

The professional associations who developed the school counseling profession had to identify categories of competence for the definition of professional functioning (American Psychological Association Board of Educational Affairs, 2005). These categories were generated from their own working groups' reports. The first parameters of competency were established in 2003 by APA's Board of Educational Affairs Competency Benchmarks Task Force. Regulatory guidelines for competence were then

established in 2005 by the APA Task Force on the Assessment of Competence in Professional Psychology which was sponsored by APA's Board of Directors (APA, 2006). The work of these commissions and task forces culminated with benchmarks established by the Assessment of Competency Benchmarks Work Group in 2007.

The original definitions and guidelines of *competency* were drawn from related bodies like the American Psychological Association Commission on Education and Training Leading to Licensure in 2000 (APA, 2000; Kaslow et al., 2004, 2009). These were followed by the Council of Chairs of Training Councils (CCTC) / Association of Directors of Psychology Training Clinics (APTC) on practicum competencies in 2001, the Competencies Conference: Future Directions in Education and Credentialing in Professional Psychology in 2002, and finally, the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC). The work of APA's Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) Task Force on Assessment of Competence in Professional Psychology was completed in 2009. It arrived at a toolkit for assessing professional competency in professional psychology.

However, it was recognized that these APA-originated initiatives were focused on education and addressing the public-at-large rather than the trainee counselors. Consequently, based on a large survey of US and Canadian psychologists (Greenberg & Jesuitus, 2010), the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) proposed that a *competency model* should be applied for the entire professional pathway beginning with education, training, licensure to independent private practice. ASPPB's work was oriented towards professional development by promoting a competency-based



model which addressed the needs of public as well as the profession's educators, psychologists, regulators, and trainers (Rodolfa et al., 2013). This ASPPB model was the hitherto last large-scale reform of professional competence demonstrating the need for a broader perspective. Consequently, limited progress has since been made in operationally defining and implementing such categories for practicing school counseling trainees.

***Professional Competence: Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills***

Turning back to the work of the research bodies, Lamb was among the main researchers who advocated for defining specific counseling skills (Lamb et al., 1987; Lamb & Swerdlik, 2004; Lambie & Stickl Haugen, 2021). These skills were described as expectations on trainees and identified as categories of competence within frameworks for defining their professional functioning. The need for assessing and assisting trainees by their supervisors was identified due to impaired trainee competence development during internship. Consequently, skills-based competence was promoted for training settings for trainees and supervisors (DeKruyf & Pehrsson, 2011). ASCA also accepted them in their position statements (ASCA, 2008). Thus far Lamb's work has withstood the test of time. It has been updated (e.g., by Simon et al., 2020) rather than superseded by more recent research. As will be further discussed in the next section, the assessment of narrowly defined skills is closely connected to the theory of self-efficacy.

Researchers have taken one of two approaches to summarizing the skills-based approaches. First, one school of researchers took a descriptive approach to defining these new skills as themes. For instance, Epstein and Hundert (2002) described *skills-based competence* as the development of clinical knowledge, communication, emotions,

knowledge, reflection, technical skills, and values being applied habitually and judiciously for the client individuals and communities. Another commentator from that era, Parham (2002), agreed by adding further descriptions of behaviors, dispositions, and skills that enable a counselor to provide effective and ethical clinical services. Rodolfa et al. (2005) expanded them to describe behaviors for appropriate and effective capability, qualification, understanding of peer, ethical and professional guidelines, and standards for the public benefits. Eight years later, Rodolfa et al (2013) continued by developing a competency “cube model” for trainees which is described in the later section on models of competence formation. Along a parallel stream of research in this field, Rubin et al. (2007) added principles and recommendations of integrated multiple competencies to perform at an acceptable level. Two years later Fouad et al. (2009) expanded them with the development of benchmarks for an overall professional suitability based on the integration of attitude, knowledge, and skills which is developed incrementally). More recently, Gonsalvez et al. (2020) changed course by directing both streams of research away from only focusing on trainees and towards exploring the assessment of competencies of trainee supervisors as well.

Second, another school of researchers took a more catalogue-like approach to studying school counseling competence skills. Most of their contributions were made in the decade from 2004 onwards. They are numerous, vary across structures and tiering systems and can themselves be segmented into two approaches. One group developed large multitiered systems of skills. For instance, by operationalizing 15 foundational principles with four superior outcomes (i.e., determining, evaluating, facilitating, and

sustaining positive clinical therapeutic outcomes), five metacognitive drivers (i.e., motivation, purposefulness, selection, sequencing, and timing) and 12 subordinate competencies (Hurt-Avila & Castillo, 2017; Ridley et al., 2011). Other examples of such systems were: (a) Rodolfa et al.'s (2013) lists of categorizations with six compartmentalized clusters, (b) four fields of general professional competencies in counseling psychology (Kaslow et al., 2004; Summerall et al., 2000), or (c) multitiered clusters of six foundational competencies for psychological interventions, five intervention implementation competencies, two intervention evaluation competencies, and other non-technical abilities, knowledge, and skills which define efficacy (Spruill et al., 2004). The other group took a narrower approach to structuring systems by addressing specific themes. For instance, ensuring that trainees are trained competently, understand the ethical guidelines, free from observable psychological problems (Rust et al., 2013), assessing culturally competent psychological competence (Krishnamurthy et al., 2004), and assessing their practicum competence (Hatcher & Lassiter, 2007).

Recent efforts to evolve the codification of competence skills have drifted away to spreading these principles internationally rather than updating them for their contemporary applications. For instance, in recent years studies on their adoption have been conducted in regions like Australia and the Caribbean (Gonsalvez et al., 2021; Forbes & Hutchison, 2020).

### ***Professional Competence: Wider Values for Professional Development***

Turning to wider perspectives on professional competence, Kaslow et al.'s (2009) viewpoint formed an axis between the movement of defining narrow skills and a movement which promoted definitions of wider professional development. This viewpoint described competence as context-dependent and developmental to combining various affective, moral, cognitive, habits of the mind, integrative, and relational dimensions with demonstrable and integrated components of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. As the Chair of the Competencies Conference on the Future Directions in Education and Credentialing in Professional Psychology in 2002, Kaslow conceptualized such foundational competencies as a developmental process and recognized environmental and situational factors. These factors included critical thinking, cultural and individual diversity, practicing ethically, interpersonal, and relationship skills and self-knowledge for professional credentialing and education purposes (Kaslow, 2004).

This was not the first attempt in this direction. Wider factors of competence had already been developed in the early 1990's with Borders and Benshoff (1992) and VanZandt (1990). They expanded the field into broader dimensions like a sense of responsibility for the promotion or maintenance of the standing of the profession, and an internalized sense of professionalism that drives the setting of high standards. Even earlier in the 1980's, researchers identified the later stage of a trainee's development when they concretize their confidence, equality, and independence (Lamb et al., 1982).

Compared to the extensive cataloguing of narrow skills uncovered in the previous section, the literature in this side of the research field has been less comprehensive in

cataloguing the wider factors. The continuing significance and shortcomings of further studies in this sector was reiterated by Roberts et al. (2005). They described the attempts to define professional competence as inadequate and pointed out that a professional culture requires a definition of its good habits and significant values. Since then, research has taken different directions. For instance, later research focused on the need for valid measures of assessments. This was a response to criticisms of bias based on the dual roles of supervisors when using supervisor ratings (Borden & McIlvried, 2020).

**Competencies-Based and Development-Based Perspectives.** Meanwhile an alternative list of categorizations and learning frameworks entered the field from educational theory. The work of Mentkowski et al. (2000) differentiated between *competencies* and *competence*. They described *competencies* as complex clusters of abilities, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, concepts, dispositions, motivations, personal characteristics, self-perceptions, strategies, and values that facilitated the execution of a profession with multiple outcomes. This viewpoint matched how Falender and Shafranske (2004; 2012) broadened their approach away from cataloguing narrow sets of skills to describing a process of development. Thus, a newer school of researchers captured *competencies* within a foundational, dynamic, and evolving process. They described this process as a pathway for trainees as they journeyed towards professional development. Their developmental viewpoint found recognition with researchers like Fouad et al. (2009), Gonsalvez et al. (2015) and Lumadue and Duffey (1999). Assessment criteria for professional development, on which there had previously been a low level of consensus, were then also added (Borders & Benshoff, 1992; VanZandt,

1990; Weiss, 1981). The utility of Falender and Shafranske's work (2012) within this wider school was connecting competence and competencies to professional development both a conceptually and practically. In the following years, Falender and Shafranske's later work on wider competence values returned to its roots in the field of assessment of clinical supervision and its application in new settings (Gonsalvez et al., 2021; Patel, et al., 2021). However, it did not provide further clarifications of the definition of professional competence itself. These themes will be further illuminated in the later sections on professional development and identity development.

### ***Professional Competence: Reflections on Incompetence and Competency***

**Incompetence.** There have been few studies on incompetence. The definitions of incompetence and the personal and professional impairments that were opined to lead to it (Lamb et al., 1987; Solway, 1985) emphasized the difficulties of defining competence; without adding clarity to it (Rust et.al., 2013). However, the lack of clarity and the condition of incompetence did support the need for supervision (Elman & Forrest, 2007; Rapp et al., 2018).

Among the few researchers in this field, Lamb et al. (1987) associated incompetence with the impairment of professional functioning. They included conflicts or personal distress as causes for such impairments. Lamb and Swerdlik's (2004) work added links to a professional developmental view of traineeship across stages and to the importance of clinical supervision. The terms of personal impairment were understood by Solway (1985) as being caused by one of the three factors: clinical supervision, institutional, or personal stressors. Later researchers attributed problems of professional

competence (PPC) to trainees suffering impairment in the ethical and functional domains of competence were; which can worsen to a diagnosis of becoming trainees with problems of professional competence (TPPC) (Elman & Forrest, 2007; Shen-Miller et al., 2011). PPC were originally composed of three areas of student counselor impairment, which were competence, ethics, and personal functioning (Lamb & Swerdlik, 2004). Rust et al. (2013) concluded that trainees with PPC presented with maladaptive behaviors on a consistent basis (and not due to developmental training deficits). These problems were understood to be due to cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, mental, and physical functioning which prevent the professional provision of services (Rust et al., 2013).

While the focus on the causes of incompetence due to impaired professional functioning did not add greatly to the knowledge on definitions of competence, it did strengthen the connections between the concept of professional competence and the importance of supervision. During their internship, trainees undergo substantial professional developmental transitions for which they require specific assistance (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982; Solway, 1985). In response, supervisory models have been developed to gatekeep the profession from counselors who are impaired and fail to meet the standards of professional competence (Elman & Forrest, 2007; Rapp et al., 2018). Since the impairment of counselor trainees leads to clinical and ethical problems of professional competence, it was opined that the development of professional competence was the responsibility of educating counselors (Rust et al., 2013). Past and more current research were in agreement: educators had an ethical responsibility to both gatekeep for the profession and train their professionals (Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995)

and to ensure that best practices are met and that client welfare is safeguarded (Rust et al., 2013; Swank & Lambie, 2012). But in essence, little new research on professional competence has emerged through the lens of *incompetence*. Rather than addressing professional competence itself, researchers in this field have continued to focus on its relevance to professional developmental approaches to clinical supervision (Simon et al., 2020) and gatekeeping the profession from the negative effects of PPC (DeCino, et al., 2020).

**Competency.** The research on *competency* is equally limited. But at least it also offered support for the dual views of professional competence and the importance of supervision. Competency has been associated with the maturation of both core personal characteristics and professional clinical skills beyond their academic coursework (American Psychological Association, 2016; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Newman, 2010). These authors also assigned a professional gatekeeping role to supervisors of trainees for the evaluation and maintenance of competency standards. Rodolfa et al. (2013) agreed and added that competence describes a profession's areas of competency and as defining its competent service provision. The APA also supported the need for gatekeeping student competency by enshrining the attainment and maintenance of professional competency, including the expectation of trainees to receive adequate education and supervision, as a core value (American Psychological Association, 2016; Newman, 2010). Recent research in this small subsegment continues to focus on the links between student competency and gatekeeping (DeCino et al., 2020). But it has been neglected for furthering the definition and tightening of its links to competence.



In summary, the definition of professional competence still lacks clarity and comprehensiveness. But there is noteworthy support for Falender and Shafranske's (2004, 2012) broad approach which spanned both skills-oriented and development-based directions. These themes will be explored further in the next section which explores definitions and descriptions of professional competence through the conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy and professional identity development.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The conceptual frameworks for the study are *self-efficacy* and *professional identity development*. Their origins and relevance to the key concept of professional competence are described below.

#### **Definitions of Self-Efficacy**

The concept of self-efficacy development originated as a clear and established construct of building capability by regulating the effort applied to tasks and described a personal judgement on one's ability to deal with a situation (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) proposed that an individual's expectations of their efficacy are determinants of whether there will an initiation of coping behavior, the amount of effort to be extended, and the duration of perseverance in the face of adverse experiences or obstacles (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy theory was then appropriated and encapsulated into the field of counseling under its own conceptualization of CSE (Bandura, 1982; Larson & Daniels, 1998).

As a theoretical conceptualization, self-efficacy theory proposed that experiences of personal mastery were based on: (a) performance accomplishments, (b) vicarious

experiences from observing other people's successful efforts, (c) verbal persuasion that an individual has successful coping capabilities, (d) physiological arousal states where individuals self-judge their anxiety or stress vulnerability levels, and (e) social persuasion (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Adams, 1977). These factors can be closely related to the experiences of trainees meeting the challenges of school counseling and working with their peers and supervisors. The theory also proposed that while social persuasion was an insufficient source of an enduring sense of personal efficacy on its own, it could create successful experiences with corrective performance (Bandura, 1977). This can be related to how a training process and supervision can develop expertise in school counseling.

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory proposed that expectations of efficacy could be derived from information from specific sources. Romi and Teichman (1995) related them to counseling trainees as they deal with ambiguous, stressful, or unpredictable situations (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Researchers agreed in further literature reviews and quantitative studies. They supported the promotion of professional identity development and supervision through self-efficacy. Researchers also continue to support the benefits of self-efficacy for the development of professional identity. These include having a positive effect on effort, functioning, and persistence of counselors, as well as mediating and reducing the causes of burnout in school counselors (Bardhoshi & Um, 2021; Daniels & Larson, 2001; Gunduz, 2012; Sutton & Fall, 1995). Self-efficacy has also been found to have a positive effect on effort, functioning, and persistence of counselors as well as reducing the causes of burnout in school counselors (Daniels & Larson, 2001; Gunduz, 2012; Sutton & Fall, 1995). Recent researchers continue to

support the role of self-efficacy (and supervision); for instance, as a contribution to the ethical priority of ensuring that school counselors develop necessary behaviors, dispositions, and skills for their profession (Lambie & Stickl Haugen, 2021).

In previous applications of this theory, notably by a well-recognized summary review of this field by Larson and Daniels (1998), the theory was absorbed into the counseling field as CSE. This was conceptualized as a generative capability which organizes behavioral, cognitive, and social skills into integrated action for various purposes which exactly mirrors the causal determinants, definition, and expectations of a counselor (Bandura, 1982; Larson & Daniels, 1998). More recently, self-efficacy was linked to the levels of commitment and motivation among school counselor trainees when their experience and training levels were found to be disconcertingly low (Parikh-Foxx et al., 2020).

### ***Rationale***

The rationale for choosing this theory for the study is supported by its specific application and relevance to levels of challenges faced by school counseling trainees. These are considered tantamount to those faced by experienced counselors (Johnson et al., 2016; Matthes, 1992). In support, self-efficacy has been found to be effective in mediating or extinguishing anxiety arousal and as a coping mechanism (Bandura & Adams, 1977). CSE can be generated from arousal of affect, experiential experiences, and modeling the skills of counseling (Larson & Daniels, 1998).

### ***Relevance to the Study***

The close links of self-efficacy to professional competence as one of its components was described at the beginning of this chapter. The theory of self-efficacy has also been applied to developing interview questions and analysis plans for exploring how supervisors understand the challenges of traineeship of school counselors (Brown et al., 2017; Flasch et al., 2016; Kozina, et al., 2010; Mullen, et al. 2015; Parikh-Foxx et al. 2020). The body of this research work continues to evolve; for instance, through the development of new instruments to explore the self-perceptions of school counselors on their efficacy through advocacy (Nice et al., 2021). As will be discussed in the following section, a review of the literature has also revealed that self-efficacy has been most closely linked to the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of the counseling profession. More light onto the key concept is shed below.

### ***Self-Efficacy: Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills***

There has been a steady flow of research literature exploring the relationships between self-efficacy and skills-based viewpoints on competence. Bandura (1977) already heralded the close connections between them. It was proposed that self-efficacy is based on beliefs in causal outcomes and positive beliefs in one's personal determination of outcomes together with the requisite skills. Bandura (1989) also acknowledged the role of skills (as well as thoughts and self-influence) as drivers of self-efficacy and personal agency. Flasch et al. (2017) agreed with this proposal and specified by relating higher self-efficacy to microskills and the management of challenging client sessions.

Besides contemporary applications in counseling practice, further connections between competence and self-efficacy have arisen from the challenges of school counseling and supervision. The progression of traineeships has not always been found to be linear and smooth. It has been characterized by ambivalence, feelings of incompetence uncovered through self-evaluation, and questioning of competence and uncertainty (Skovholt & Rivers, 2004; Thériault & Gazzola, 2005). In agreement, this self-evaluative process was further explored by both Flasch et al. (2019) and Stoltenberg and McNeill (2010). They found that when counseling trainees experience performance anxiety their focus shifts away from their clients and towards their own levels of competence and mastery of counseling interventions and skills. In response, other researchers have supported self-efficacy's positive influence on the variable factors related to school counselor's work routine including lowered anxiety, performance, job satisfaction, traits, and work environment (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019).

As for training interventions by supervisors during internships and practicums, these have also been found to improve competency and perceived self-efficacy. For instance, these interventions were found to provide learning experiences for performing tasks and learning vicariously (Easton et al., 2008; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Watson, 2012). The availability of further research in this specific field is limited. However, recent studies of counseling students have shown positive links between interventions of cognitive flexibility and emotional literacy on counseling self-efficacy (Malkoç & Sünbül, 2020). Further research was also performed on how to extend these skills and techniques to online counseling students (Dixon-Saxon & Buckley, 2020).

### ***Self-Efficacy: Wider Values for Professional Development***

The availability of literature specifically supporting the relationships between self-efficacy and the wider viewpoints of professional competence and professional development of trainees is limited. However, the conceptualization of proximal subgoals with self-efficacy theory might have offered new insights. Bandura and Schunk (1981) included competence as one of the self-motivators and subgoals which heighten perceptions of self-efficacy and proposed that mastery can be gauged, judged and measured by a proximal subgoal like competence (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Bandura (1989) also included competencies, interests, or values as examples of the social influences which promoters of the belief of efficacy (alongside mastery and vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion). Such notions were included by Barnes (2004) who confirmed the understanding of a school counselor trainee's self-efficacy to be a measure of competence. But hitherto little research has been pursued in this field. Ridley et al. (2011) belong to the few. They attempted to broaden their generic description of competence (“determination, facilitation, evaluation, and sustaining of positive therapeutic outcomes”) beyond the acquisition of competencies and microskills to wider affective, attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive domains. Yet their later research direction has been towards other topics, like multicultural competence, rather than investigating how self-efficacy belongs to these domains (Kemer et al., 2022; Ridley et al., 2021). Without further research, this area of research exploration remains a niche.

The exploration of the combined literature on the conceptual frameworks of professional competence now continues with the next section. It covers the contribution

of professional identity development as a further conceptual framework supporting the key concept.

### **Definitions of Professional Identity Development**

Professional identity development is a broad construct. It has been utilized to clarify the definitions of both professional competence and professional development. Specifically in the field of school counseling, it has also been adopted to clarify role ambiguities and role conflicts of school counseling trainees, forming the professional competence of trainee school counselors, and providing direction for development-based trainee supervision.

Professional identity has been described as the attitude and responsibility for one's professional role to form a personal and professional frame of reference and sensemaking; which is inextricably tied to their personal identity, self-confidence, and self-worth of therapists (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Friedman & Kaslow, 1986). Professional identity has been divided into the group-level expectations and perceptions of school counselors and their personal level of professional self-identity (Heled et al., 2022, Heled & Davidovitch, 2019; Tickle, 1999). It was also observed that perceptions: a) differ over time, and b) evolve independently of biographical, contextual, and experiential factors (Beijaard et al., 2000). There is also concurrence from the field of teaching which defined professional identity as a composite of different and distinct areas of expertise. Yet, it has been opined both that the school counseling profession itself lacks a clear and unambiguous definition of its professional identity, and that school counselors

themselves lack a role definition regardless of their professional seniority (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019; 2020).

***Professional Identity Development: Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills***

As opposed to the availability of findings on self-efficacy in the previous section, there is only a limited amount of literature on direct relationships between professional identity development and skills-based viewpoints on competence. Only some aspects of skills-oriented approaches have been integrated into professional identity development models (Brott & Myers, 1999; Hall, 1987; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Watts, 1987). Recent research in this part of the field remains limited and is of less direct relevance. For instance, in their recent study on defining specific competence indicators for credentialing in school counseling with play therapy, Turner et al. (2020) explored the scaffolding for the conceptualization of professional identity. They detected a requirement for both operational definitions and markers of competence like professional engagement, knowledge, and skills. Other recent researchers on this subject have shifted their focus to identifying an increasingly complex school counselor identity and have sought to develop tools for them to meet these needs (Zyromski et al., 2021).

***Professional Identity Development: Wider Values for Professional Development***

In contrast to the prior section, a substantial body of literature has been generated on the wider values of professional competence development of trainees. Numerous researchers supported the view of professional identity development and counselor development through a combination of internal (academic) experience and external (practicum) reality (Brott & Myers, 1999; Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Hogan, 1964;



Loganbill et al., 1982; Reising & Daniels, 1983; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Typical among them, Brott and Myers's (1999) grounded theory study presented a wider view of professional identity development as a developmental and evolutionary process, which begins in training and consolidates across the entire professional career. They identified the main themes as the interaction between wider attitudes and narrower structures of growth to form identity, the close connections with the field of professional development, and the disconnection between school counselor preparation and practice. They also highlighted the importance of traineeship on the self-conceptualization of trainees.

Lambie and Williamson (2004) added their congruous view of an evolving process which integrates both external forces (e.g., administrative and training perspectives) and internal forces (e.g., attitudes and self-concepts) into a professional role. More recently, these views of fluid lifelong development were supported by an opinion that age and seniority in the profession are not an indicator for the attainment of a professional identity (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019; Lafleur, 2007). The longevity of these views is supported by a cluster of more recent studies with similar viewpoints. For instance, a group of researchers proposed to better equip school counselor trainee roles through the acquisition of a leadership identity (McMahon et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014) and an advocacy role (Cheatham et al., 2021). Developmental models have also provided a broader perspective on personal and professional identities. This is a model of phasal dynamic interplay of interacting phases of activities and strategies development for counseling psychologists. For instance, Brott and Myers (1999) described this as a

maturation process of how each individual school counselor's experiences are self-conceptualized within a unique individual and personal process.

**Further Usages of Professional Identity Development.** The list of research examples of other models developed during that era is extensive. These included a career spectrum model describing bundled socialization experiences (Hall, 1987), a stage model describing exploration, integration, individuation, and integrity (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992), and a tripartite model describing career goals, theoretical perspectives, and values through a sociopolitical professional identity (Watts, 1987). The latter model delineates a full professional life span through stages of exploration, integration, individuation, and integrity. It traces how a professional person progresses from relying on sources of external authority to sources of internal authority (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). In later decades, these concepts reemerged as an evolutionary model, which described a process of interactions with peers and practitioners as socially integrated with other cultural and environmental factors (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019; Kozminsky & Klavir, 2010; Rogers & Scott, 2008). This externally directed view of professional identity has been extended to wider factors. These include senses of public recognition, of belonging to a professional community of a solid professional understanding, public representation, professional functioning, and senses of confidence, pride, and stability (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Lafleur, 2007; Lanman, 2011; Pistole & Roberts, 2002; Watson, 2006).

This field of research continues to be active. For instance, more recent explorations of professional identity development have drawn attention to the negative effects or role conflicts (like burnout) and advocated for greater leadership practice and

self-efficacy training by supervisors (Fye et al., 2020b; LeBlanc & Borders, 2021). Geesa et al. (2020) contributed to the connecting links of these new directions by proposing greater collaboration with school principals.

### ***Professional Identity Development: Perspectives on Professional Competence***

This section explores how professional identity development can shed light on the clarification of professional competence. An important link is the connection between professional competence and professional identity development through the concept of professional development. Due to their assessments, consultations, counseling, and guidance, school counselors are important for the educational and personal development of their students as well as their acquisition of essential skills (Borders & Drury, 1992; Myrick, 1987; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Sears, 1999). Due to their influence on the academic and after-school quality of life of their students, the importance of school counselors receiving appropriate consultation, training in skills development, promotion of professional identity, and supervision has also been emphasized in the literature (Erford, 2010; Morgan et al., 2014; Paisley & McMahon, 2001).

Professional identity development was described as a process of fusing professional attributes, attitudes, and skills with professional self-labeling and self-perception (Nugent & Jones, 2009). In this context, Paisley and McMahon (2001) understood professional development as an ongoing lifelong process which begins in graduate school and continues into practicum as school counselor trainees identify with their professions. Therefore, two directions of describing professional competence through the lens of professional identity can be distinguished. First is a narrower lens

which shows the acquisition of accountable and concrete skills like advocacy, assessment, collaboration, research skills and, increasingly, leadership (ASCA, 2003; ASCA, 2005; Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2012, Hilts et al., 2022; Peters & Vereen, 2020). Second is a broader lens which shows a more abstract experiential maturation process, which can be developed on the job and through reciprocal interactions of envisioned past and future identities (Brott & Myers, 1999; Henderson et al., 2007; Park & Schallert, 2020). These two viewpoints are each further explored in the next two sections.

**Professional Identity Development: Perspectives on Professional Competence (Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills).** Early commentators on the lack of preparation of school counselors described the effect of its practical challenges as evolving from a position of isolation towards a process of survival (Matthes, 1992). A narrower skills-based professional identity view handles the challenges of identity development of school counselor trainees through gaining professional competence. Paisley and McMahon (2001) framed this competence-based view by describing the two components of professional development. These are developing specific skills and receiving supervision. The former enables trainee school counselors to meet client needs with specific skills that are not acquired in a formal education setting (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). This narrower skills-based definition of professional identity formation has since been recommended by the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) and was adopted as a comprehensive and data-driven school counseling program (CSCP). As for supervision, experienced mentorship has been found to assist novice school counselors to face the

challenges of their professional role (Nelson & Jackson, 2003). Beyond supervision, Reisetter et al. (2004) added that a further path towards professional identity development can be derived from pursuing research routes (i.e., for the development of congruence on skills, congruence on theory, congruence on worldview, research identity and a comprehensive understanding of experiences and perceptions).

As indicated in the prior section, only a limited number of professional identity development models include skills-oriented aspects (Brott & Myers, 1999; Hall, 1987; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Watts, 1987). For example, Henderson et al. (2007) described them as developing a commitment to services, understanding the counselor's appropriate role, gathering the competencies for the role, and selecting mentors and supporters from the profession. But later research remains limited on this topic and on any close links to skills development. For instance, Carrillo and Rubel's (2019) grounded study only showed support for the development of an individual identity by building a collective identity with mentors and peers.

**Professional Identity Development: Perspectives on Professional Competence (Wider Values Through Professional Development).** In contrast to the findings of the preceding section, researchers have extensively laid out a broader view of professional identity focused on the identity development of school counselor trainees. As an example, Gibson et al. (2010) and - alone as - Gibson (2016) generate prominent research in this field. Two descriptions of professional identity development are provided. The earlier work described a *therapeutic self* which is composed of personal and professional selves. Gibson's (2016) later work added taking internal responsibility for professional

development and developing a systemic identity (i.e., in relation to their professional community). She also described a progressive process of transformation of counselor's holistic identity including their personal and professional aspects. This view complemented Auxier et al.'s (2003) earlier description. This described a path to counselor identity formation by recycling one's own identity through learning conceptually and experientially. Three different phases of professional competence based on an identity-driven view emerge from the further review of the literature: individuation, immersion, and maturation.

***Individuation.*** Gibson et al. (2010) described a holistic route of professional identity development stemming from interpersonal and intrapersonal development routes. They ascribed interpersonal routes to the professional culture's attitudes, problem solving, thinking and values (Gibson et al., 2010; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006). Intrapersonal routes towards achieving individuation emerged through acquiring skills via a cycle of autonomous and dependent identity development. This complemented earlier research which described this phase as the merger of a novice professional's personal and professional identities when a newly developed professional locus of evaluation becomes internalized (Auxier et al., 2003; Brott & Myers, 1999; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). In recognition of the role of supervision, individuation could also be driven by conceptual, experiential, and guided learning, which can be derived from external reassurance and validation from experts and supervisors (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2012).

***Immersion.*** The next phase of acculturation and immersion can also be derived from through consultation, observation, practice, and supervision. In this phase, the

trainee was found to learn the counseling profession's attitudes, expectations, language, strategies, and thinking (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Gibson et al., 2012; O'Byrne & Rosenberg, 1998).

***Maturation.*** In a series of opinions beginning with Brott and Myers (1999) and then culminating with Henderson et al. (2007) and Gibson et al. (2010; 2012), researchers found that this final phase of professional development occurred with on-the-job experience. It was described as the maturation of a trainee's self-evaluation and self-validation in a professional rather than just a personal context. The research also identified certain signposts of its attainment. An earlier view of trainee maturation was articulated by Friedman and Kaslow (1986). It defined the moment of their autonomy to dispute and power struggle with their supervisors and teachers. Later work by Bruss and Kopala (1993) concurred by identifying a reformative moment. It described when a trainee's feelings of emotional crisis and weakened functioning (e.g., after the erosion of their healthy positive self-image) was reconstituted under the stress and supervision of a practicum setting. As a different signpost, Gibson et al. (2012) identified maturation when trainees become new professionals, join the professional community through associations and organizations, as well as becoming supervisors themselves. Regarding advocacy, in a later phenomenological study, Havlik et al. (2019) proposed that greater support for counselors is required from school administrators since they are at the upper echelons levels of system. These findings will be echoed and developed in the explorations on the nature and timing of competence formation towards the end of this chapter.

**Competencies-Based and Development-Based Perspectives.** An additional list of definitions and frameworks entered the school counseling field from professional associations. Their definitions of professional identity include topics of career, mental health, and wellness, serving individuals with less power, considering environmental factors, family perspectives, multicultural competence, and social influences (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2011). These definitions of counseling have added the concepts of diversity, empowerment, and education to cover families, groups, and individuals (ACA, 2011; Gibson et al., 2010). Professional associations have also instantiated the identity challenges of school counselors in roles as either counselors or educators (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Anderson, 2002; ASCA, 2003; Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Trusty, 2005; Erford et al., 2003). In response, some researchers suggested that this historical identity issue could easily be resolved without contradictions by embracing both roles (Gibson et al., 2012; Paisley et al., 2006).

From the standpoint of the supervision of these skills, it has been established that a strong professional identity of school counselors is required for their growth into educational leadership, advocacy for their clients, and fulfillment the directives of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2003; ASCA, 2005; Gibson et al., 2012; Gibson, 2016; Havlik et al., 2019). In more recent quantitative research, Perry et al. (2020) agreed with Havlik et al. (2019) and found that advocacy training and its manifestation in the self-advocacy of school counselors was a predictor of their self-efficacy. Researchers like Gibson and Dollarhide continue to update their extensive body of research work on this subject (Gibson et al., 2018). Most recently they were developing tools to apply



transformational leadership identity to support professional identity development (Gibson et al., 2018; Hilts et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the research in this segment of the field is still fragmented and incomplete. In the prior sections, it was also found that there was limited literature directly linking professional identity development with the narrower skills-based competences the counseling profession. This contrasts with the strong links made by researchers between professional identity development and wider values through professional development.

In sum, this section examined the efficacy of the concept of professional competence. A lack of clarity on its definitions was revealed. The key concept of professional competence was then explored through the conceptual frameworks of *self-efficacy* and *professional identity* development. These interconnected constructs add further definitions and directions for understanding the narrower skills-based and wider professional development-based dimensions of professional competence. In the next part of this chapter, there will be an exploration on how the process of supervision develops the definitions and descriptions of professional competence.

### **Supervision as a Key Process**

#### **Definitions of Supervision**

In the prior part of the chapter, it was shown how researchers have connected the process of supervision with the main components of professional competence (McMahon et al., 2009). The real-life practice of supervision is integral to developing competence (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Collins, 2014). Supervision's key influence on the

characteristics of trainees and their overall professional environment has long been confirmed (Hogan, 1964; Loganbill et al., 1982; Reising & Daniels, 1983).

Taking a broader view, researchers have highlighted supervision's generative function of fostering career support, commitment, satisfaction, mentoring, leadership, social and vocational support to trainees (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Ensher et al., 2001; Harris, et al., 2001). These views were echoed in Bledsoe et al.'s (2021) research on the experiences of early school counselors of supervision. In their phenomenological study, they revealed six themes which included *self-efficacy* and *professional identity*. It also described early-stage school counselors as a population facing personal and professional challenges and dilemmas. They described *supervision* as the imparting of knowledge for counselors to deliver comprehensive school counseling programs according the student needs prescribed by the ASCA. In related recent research, Fye et al. (2020a) also confirmed the significant relationships between implementing the ASCA National Model and supervision satisfaction with meeting school counselors' challenges (e.g., burnout).

From a development perspective, several researchers have found supervision to play a unique role as the link between trainees moving from counseling education to gaining their professional practice (CACREP, 2009; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007; Roberts & Morotti, 2001; Sutton & Page, 1994). Clinical supervision has also been supported as promoting professional development, entrenching newly acquired skills, resolving workplace issues, and evolving a trainee school counselor's professional identity (Brott & Myers, 1999; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). A

further development view of supervision was added by several researchers who described it as a rite of passage for novice trainees (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Roberts & Morotti, 2001; Magnuson et al., 2000; Roberts et al., 2001; Sutton & Page, 1994). Such a rite of passage enables them to integrate and refine their skills, to explore their professional identities and bridge the gap between basic counseling competence from education to real-life skills needed for acute and complex cases.

From a supervisor's viewpoint, Bledsoe et al.'s (2021) research on supervision themes identified a need for counselors to seek support from supervisors who had undergone similar experiences. In agreement, further benefits of supervision were identified as a key role of supervisors in managing and monitoring the emotional exhaustion and work overload borne by their trainee supervisees (Bakker et al., 2005; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Supervisors have been found to provide other beneficial interventions. These include developing appropriate duties, autonomy, positive feedback, self-efficacy, district and peer supervision, organizational and social support for their trainees (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bakker et al., 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). But in terms of process, a trainee's professional development has been found to depend on a supervisor's ability to adapt and address to the changing needs of their trainees (Friedman & Kaslow, 1986). Indeed, the adequacy and competence of supervisors themselves can also be an issue and is explored later in this section ("Adequacy of Supervisors: A Problem?").

In summary, supervision for counseling trainees was supported as a training mechanism for developing competence through a necessary and systematic pathway to

professional excellence (Miller & Dollarhide, 2006; Stoltenberg, 2005). This has been widely accepted. Researchers studying supervisors internationally also confirmed that they adopted the primary ethical goal and responsibility of supervisees towards client welfare (Schultz et al., 2021).

### ***Supervision: Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills***

The close connections between supervision and skills development were presented in the previous section. In terms of the acquisition of skills, clinical supervision was found to enhance counseling competences like conceptualizing cases, interventions, and processes (Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Henderson & Lampe, 1992; Herlihy et al., 2002). Supervision was also found to develop competence for later clinical practice and to stimulate lifelong learning (Lucock et al., 2006). To promote this, researchers have proposed competency-based supervision models for the development of the skills and metacompetence of supervisees (Falender & Shafranske, 2017). These supervisory models are described in further detail (“Professional Competence Formation: Supervisory Models”).

### ***Supervision: Wider Values for Professional Development***

The support for the benefits of supervision from a development perspective was also outlined in the opening to this section. There is broad endorsement for the key role of supervisors as trainees undergo substantial developmental transitions (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982; Solway, 1985). Fouad et al. (2009) agreed and added that the developmental expertise levels required for meeting their professional standards are

attained with professional competence through the support of clinical supervision. (An example of such a development-oriented supervision pathway is outlined in Appendix A.)

### ***Supervision: Perspectives on Professional Competence***

In terms of the contributions to the concept of professional competence, supervision, professional identity, and self-efficacy have been identified as interconnected and integral to developing competence (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Collins, 2014). High levels of professional competence by trainee school counselors were found to be key to improving the level of mental health services in schools. This is because most novice counselors are expected to assume the same school counseling responsibilities as experienced counselors (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Johnson et al., 2016, Matthes, 1992).

By providing feedback on skills, structured learning, and problem-solving skills, supervision contributes to both skills and professional identity development (Clevinger et. al., 2019; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006). From a professional identity development viewpoint, the positive influence of supervision was also cited in Perera-Diltz and Mason's (2012) survey of school counselor supervision. These supporting voices endure to the present-day. Both the enhancement of self-efficacy and the strengthening of professional identity viewpoint were jointly included in Bledsoe et al.'s (2021) review of the benefits of supervision.

Researchers have also explored the deleterious consequences of inadequate supervision. For instance, a lack of competent clinical supervision has been shown to lead to the limitation of the development of counselor clinical skills, a decline of clinical

skills, and a resulting lack of guidance and clinical support (Bledsoe et al., 2019; Brott et al., 2021; Herlihy et al., 2002; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007; Page et al, 2001; Swank & Tyson, 2013). A lack of adequate clinical supervision, peer references, and clear expectations has also been linked to the assignment of novice school counselors to burdensome noncounseling duties (Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Matthes, 1992). Researchers from that earlier era also found trainee school counselors to be physically distanced and isolated from the systematic learning and supervision opportunities necessary for their professional development (Crutchfield & Borders, 1997). In addition to causing service delivery issues (Barret & Schmidt, 1986; McMahon & Patton, 2000), other commentators also linked a lack of supervision to problems with professional identity development (Crespi et al., 1998). The list of negative factors of inadequate supervision continues to grow. In their metaanalytic study, Keum and Wang (2021) also found further evidence of the importance of supervision and its working alliances to the process and outcomes of therapy. Lastly, at the level of the *métier* itself, these challenges were determined to contribute to the school counseling profession's struggles to develop a consistent and recognized professional identity (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; McMahon & Patton, 2000; Portman, 2002). The consequences of inadequate supervision on their trainees will be explored later in this section ("Adequacy of Supervisors: Consequences for Trainees").

### ***Supervision: Perspectives on Self-Efficacy***

The relevance of Bandura's (1997) theory to supervision is built on the communication of efficacy through the evidence of improved performance and the

modeling of guided performance to generate successful coping skills for stressful situations. Bandura (1977) proposed that these coping skills and their modeling correct or translate the conception of behavior into appropriate actions (Bandura, 1977).

Researchers from the counseling field have also linked skills-based learning with self-efficacy. For instance, the positive effects of supervision were found to include an increase of professional dialogues, invigorating professional experience (from the analysis and observation of one's work) and the exchange of new ideas, goals, and strategies (Henderson & Lampe, 1992; Somody et al., 2008). Earlier researchers found supervision to be valued by school counselor trainees for guidance received on the appropriate action for client problems, their development of skills and techniques, and their formulation of treatment plans with near and long-term goals (Sutton & Page, 1994). In response, interventions for trainees (like supervision) were built on strengthening the varying individual coping capabilities to build a self-direction and a sense of self (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Fye et al., 2018; Trolley, 2011). Recent researchers utilized the subject of homelessness to assess school counselor proficiency, and revealed that training and multicultural self-efficacy are significant predictors of their knowledge and skills (Camp et al., 2019). Other researchers found that clinical supervision builds a positive connection between performance and self-efficacy; the latter is also one of the indicators of competence in counselors (Brown et al., 2017; Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Cinotti & Springer, 2016). These supporting voices endure to the present-day. Bledsoe et al. (2021) also confirmed self-efficacy as a theme. They linked higher levels of counseling self-efficacy to improved enhanced counseling skills. Finally, in their

metaanalytic study, Park et al. (2019) are in agreement and also found that the working alliance between supervisors and counselor trainees is positively correlated to self-efficacy.

### ***Supervision: Perspectives on Professional Identity Development***

Early researchers on professional development and professional identity development, found supervision to act as a bridge for transferring counseling expertise from one generation to the next (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Bernard, 2006). These seminal works continued to be referred to for addressing contemporary issues in supervision; for instance, on social justice (Dollarhide et al., 2021). The pathway of supervision has been described as an immersive process by which novices become inculcated with the attitudes, strategies, thinking, and values of a professional culture to develop a professional identity (Auxier et al., 2003; O’Byrne & Rosenberg, 1998). In more recent studies, resilience and vulnerability have been added to these factors as promoters of empowerment, self-efficacy, and control (Roebuck & Reid, 2019).

From a broader professional standpoint beyond the mental health sector, supervisor support is considered a key component of fairness of treatment. The latter is itself a major component of the concept of perceived organizational support (POS). POS has been as described as the foundation of an employee’s belief that an organization values their contribution and cares about their wellbeing (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Other potential benefits of supervision were found to include the delivery of professional identity development for school counseling trainees with a mentoring model (Freeman & McHenry, 1996; Haynes et al., 2003; Page et al., 2001; Sutton & Page, 1994; VanZandt



& Perry, 1992). Bledsoe et al.'s (2021) research also confirmed the importance of professional identity. It describes how clinical supervisors can apply it to offset the role ambiguity of school counselors for administrators and to provide role clarity for school counselors (Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010). They also identified the extension of supervision goals to improve counseling services with better skills and goals as one of its main themes. It is noteworthy that, although this study has been regularly cited throughout this section (as the main themes were repeatedly echoed by its researchers), it did not explicitly address the topic of professional competence.

In the next two sections the research knowledge on supervisory models and tools for assessment of professional competence will be explored.

### ***Professional Competence Formation: Supervisory Models***

The aim of supervision of transforming the professional competence of trainee school counselors is acknowledged in the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2003; Miller & Dollarhide, 2006). Clinical supervision was also understood as a central component of the training and practice of supervisees (Falender & Shafranske, 2008). As for supervisors, their role was understood to be the development of this professional competence by diligently and intentionally supervising the field experiences of trainee counselors (Hurt-Avila & Castillo, 2017).

Supervisory development models for professional competencies have been catalogued extensively by associations and accreditation boards. They are also intrinsically linked to the accreditation, assessment, teaching, and development of counseling intern-level counseling trainees (Rubin et al., 2007). The models range from

narrower competency-based models (Falender & Shafranske, 2004, 2007, 2008; Fouad et al., 2009) to broader multifaceted models like the “Cube” Model (Rodolfa et al., 2005), the Integrative Developmental Model (IDM) of supervision (Stoltenberg, 2005) and Self-Conceptualization-based models. While there no such clear-cut differentiation is explicitly expressed in the research literature, it can be observed that competency-based models appear more aligned with skills-based viewpoint while developmental models also incorporate a professional identity development dimension.

**Competency-Based and Skills-Based Models.** In a series of opinion articles, Falender and Shafranske (2012) described competency-based methods as an essential part of a successful supervision program (Falender & Shafranske, 2004, 2007, 2008; Fouad et al., 2009). Already in their earlier work, Falender and Shafranske (2008) had defined the supervisory alliance for dealing with multiple trainee issues. These issues included pressures and disruptions, diversity and technical competencies, ethical and legal competencies, and evaluation and feedback of supervisees. In their model they identified the core competencies of trainees with an evidence-based supervision approach to define the knowledge, skills, and values required for clinical competency. Throughout their works, they also provided evaluation procedures and learning strategies to meet criterion-referenced standards (Falender & Shafranske, 2007, 2008, 2010). They were officially integrated into the Benchmarks for Professional Competence from the Competencies Conference in 2002 (Kaslow, 2004; Kaslow et al., 2004) with an extended catalogue of Competency Benchmarks (Fouad et al., 2009). Their catalogue was supported in the Competency Assessment Toolkit for Professional Psychology (Kaslow et al., 2009),

which enshrined the path of supervision towards a competency-based model movement (Kaslow et al., 2012). More recently, Falender and Shafranske (2020) came to describe their approach as molecular, that is, composed of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA).

**Development-Based Models.** In contrast to the competency-based models, a developmental school of research was represented by Rodolfa et al.'s (2005) "Cube" Model and Stoltenberg's (2005) Integrative Developmental Model of supervision in the same year. The "Cube" Model (Rodolfa et al., 2005) was a broader conceptualization of competency in counseling psychotherapy across two dimensions of: (a) foundational competencies (e.g., broad-based horizontal concepts of professionalism like ethical standards, self-correction, self-reflection, and cross-cultural diversity), and (b) functional competencies (e.g., vertical pillars of knowledge and skills like assessment, diagnosis, supervision, and teaching). Support has come from other fields. This model has also been adopted into new assessment tools; for instance, Neimeyer and Taylor's (2019) Professional Competencies Scale (which focuses on foundational, functional, and continuing competencies).

The Integrative Developmental Model of supervision delineated a path of self-focus, client focus, and the assemblage and integration of several domains for professional practice (Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Stoltenberg, 2005). A developmental path was promoted with a trajectory for the acquisition of skills developed by supervisors (Newman, 2010). This echoed Lamb and Swerdlik's (2004) earlier view that the transition from academic learning to supervised professional training is a critical passage in a trainee's development to become competent professionals. Stoltenberg's model has

survived and been adopted into new forms. For instance, Zeligman (2017) combined it with narrative therapy for a developmental narrative model (DNM) based on a collaborating and questioning supervisory relationship.

**Self-Conceptualization-Based Models.** The assessment of counselor competencies has been considered as challenging due to its focus on attaining a threshold level of knowledge rather than assessing a level of distinction which would also demonstrate capabilities within a domain of competence (Fraser & Greenhalgh, 2001; Kaslow et al, 2004). For instance, these critics pointed out that while attitudes are also a part of the categorizations of competencies, they were neither commonly nor easily assessed (Kaslow et al., 2007; Lichtenberg et al., 2007). It was also proposed that competence in psychotherapy should be measured across time and not at a single time point (Lichtenberg et al., 2007). Earlier dissenters also argued that, since the interpretation of professional codes and standards is complicated, their implementation is inconsistent and imprecise (Hensley et al., 2003). As a result, there was a separate movement towards extending the assessment of professional competence beyond academic performance towards personal characteristics and qualities, and evidence of readiness to deliver therapy (Baldo et al., 1997; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999). As this debate continues, Hanks et al. (2021) proposed a model for educating *capability* in their case study research. This was a reaction to their continued dissatisfaction with the dependence on the standardized testing of competence and their narrow focus on knowledge and skills rather than an elevated level of personal qualities and professionalism.

### *Supervision-Tools of Assessment*

No clear-cut differentiation is explicitly expressed in the research literature on this point. But it can be observed that most established assessment tools appear more aligned with a skills-based viewpoint. In addition, more recent critiques and debates incorporated a professional identity development dimension.

**Competency-Based and Skills-Based Tools.** Assessment tools of professional competence are mostly skills-based in their usages. A narrow category of competencies is well-suited for measuring professional competence across time. Tools like the Competency Evaluation Rating Forms (CERFs) have been developed for measuring the build-up of competence across early to late trainee placements (Deane et al., 2018; Kaslow, 2004). The most common form of assessments are scales. Examples include the Counseling Competencies Scale (CCS; Swank, 2010; Swank & Lambie, 2012; Swank et al., 2012; University of Central Florida [UCF] Counselor Education Faculty, 2009), the Counseling Strategies Checklist, the Counselor Interaction Analysis Scale, and the Skilled Counseling Scale (SCS; Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003; Urbani et al., 2002).

**Development-Based Tools.** Researchers also identified a need for empirical research for validating further dimensions. These research needs include: (a) clinical and educational observers, (b) methods which work for counseling supervisees and trainees, and (c) how to train them (Hatcher & Lassiter, 2007; Stoltenberg, 2005). As mentioned in the prior section, these models have evolved more recently and serve as the basis of new models like the Professional Competencies Scale (Neimeyer & Taylor, 2019). Their evolution is in line with Hatcher and Lassiter's (2007) developmental view of supervision

processes; where researchers gather empirical evidence on how professional competencies are added incrementally. Callahan and Love (2020) agreed and described this as occurring within a mutualistic relationship between their professional expertise development and supervision.

A review of the supervisory models and the tools for assessment of professional competence in these last two sections revealed a broad spectrum of implementation options and styles. But it was noteworthy in both topic areas that the original and predominant orientations were more skills-based approaches before being expanded towards developmental approaches. In the next section, this exploration of supervision will be concluded with a review of the literature on the adequacy of supervisors.

#### ***Adequacy of Supervisors: A Problem?***

The levels of clinical credibility of clinical supervisors, the quality of their working alliance, and their perceptions of the confidence of supervisors in their abilities increase the levels of confidence in the capabilities and self-efficacy of trainees (Morrison & Lent, 2018). In Murphy and Kaffenberger's (2007) view, it was important for them to have the competence to supervise and to value the importance of their own accountability, boundaries, confidentiality, evaluation, and liability (Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). But the literature includes numerous voices who detected challenges for supervisors. For instance, already isolated and facing unclear expectations, trainees also faced a low availability of counselor-competent supervisors (Bledsoe et al., 2019; Borders & Usher, 1992; Henderson, 1994; Herlihy et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992; Roberts et al., 2001; Rutter, 2007; Studer, 2005). One explanation was that the shortage

in numbers was due to a marked and general unwillingness among counseling professionals to become supervisors (Page et al., 2001).

In addition to the issue of supervisor quantity, trainees also face the challenge of a lack of supervisor quality. This has been identified by numerous voices. Except for a limited number of clinical supervisors who are adhering to the high standards set by CACREP for the supervision of doctorate-level trainees, most clinical supervisors were found not to have been instructed in supervision (Bledsoe et al., 2019; Henderson, 1994; Herlihy et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992; Roberts et al., 2001; Rutter, 2007; Studer, 2005). Several researchers found that most supervisors are educated to a master's level and lack both additional formal supervision training at a doctoral level and a supervisory framework and structure within which to operate (Borders & Usher, 1992; Borders et al., 1991, Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2009; DeKruyf & Pehrsson, 2011; Magnuson et al., 2001, Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Roberts et al., 2001). They even suggested that most school counselors have no training in the supervision of trainees and that most counseling supervision is provided by noncounseling supervisors (DeKruyf & Pehrsson, 2011; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Herlihy et al., 2002; Kahn, 1999; Miller & Dollarhide, 2006; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007; Page et al, 2001; Roberts et al., 2001; Studer, 2005).

### ***Adequacy of Supervisors: Historical Context***

Issues concerning supervision which were identified in the early 2000's and remain pertinent at the time of this review. For instance, that the profession perpetuated trainees entering a negative cycle of poor supervision whose ineffectiveness included

lack of balance, immaturity, and intolerance (Herlihy et al., 2002; Magnuson et al., 2000). To add to these problems, the profession's main guiding body, ASCA, did not prescribe the provision of supervision to trainees as a responsibility of master's level counselors (ASCA, 2003; Bledsoe et al., 2019; Page et al, 2001). Lastly, both supervisors and their trainees were understood to be frustrated by a lack of consistency of supervision standards across the United States (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006). Gaete et al. (2017) responded in their phenomenological study by steering their research towards exploring the professional development needs of supervisors (for instance with supervisory conversations).

### ***Adequacy of Supervisors: Perspectives on Challenges of Supervisors***

Supervisors also face their own challenges. There is a focused body of researchers who began to explore this phenomenon. First, they considered the information on actual supervision models and evaluation procedures to be limited (Lamb & Swerdlik, 2004). Second, they detected a lack of training for clinical supervisors and evidence-based practice offering fidelity, implementation, and transportation of supervision methods for unprepared supervisors (Falender & Shafranske, 2008). Third, Lamb and Swerdlik (2004) warned about the risks they pose to trainee supervisees who had already been exposed to complex and difficult clinical experiences. They found concentrated, frequent, and intense supervision: (a) to expose their vulnerability on a personal and professional level, (b) to cause evaluation, scrutiny, and stress, and (c) to reveal impaired or problematic behavior.



Some supervisors have been found to feel unprepared for their role and displayed limited self-efficacy in resolving their training needs (DeKruyf & Pehrsson, 2011; Uellendahl & Tenebaum, 2015). Several researchers agreed that as frontline role models, the competence and self-efficacy of supervisors was reflected in trainee counselors' competence and self-efficacy (Frick & Glossoff, 2014; Steward, 1998). The view that professional skills, professional identity, and self-efficacy of school counseling trainee were negatively affected if their clinical supervisor is not trained in school counseling, elevates the importance of supervisor competence (DeKruyf et al., 2013; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). Nevertheless, it was found that the belief of insufficiently prepared supervisors to successfully provide adequate supervision and their own self-efficacy can also be increased with training (Brown et al., 2017).

A general lack of recent peer reviewed research on the challenges of supervision and supervisors is identified by this review. Perera-Diltz and Mason's (2012) survey research on school counselors who themselves were providing supervision still survives as one of the few recent and significant studies. A need for more school counselors to learn supervision in their graduate training to improve and increase supervision levels was also detected. The influences of these challenges are detrimental to the trainee system and are unaddressed by the professional bodies in a consistent state-wide structure. More recently, Bledsoe et al. (2021) still identified a lack of research on the clinical supervision experiences of early career school counselors.

### *Adequacy of Supervisors: Consequences for Trainees*

Although trainee school counselors face identical challenges to licenced school counselors, supervisors are not always fully available or prepared to help them. This has been described as a glaring absence of qualified school counselor supervision (Benshoff & Paisley, 1996). These challenges have been found to negatively influence the fulfillment of trainee school counseling duties as well as their skills and professional development. Several commentators agreed and argued that this undifferentiated role integration exposes trainees to the pressures of trained counselors, like acute and complicated counseling caseloads and of leaving them isolated and unmentored (Herlihy et al., 2002; Page et al., 2001; Borders & Drury, 1992; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Matthes, 1992; Johnson et al., 2016). The continuing interest on this topic is reflected Atli's (2020) finding in their qualitative study that incongruence between definitions in training and in work was one of main themes for first year counselors.

The list of professional consequences from a lack of adequate and sufficient clinical supervision is lengthy. It includes: a reduction in career commitment, career satisfaction, and self-efficacy (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006); uncertainty over roles and confusion over regulatory standards and state-mandated accountability testing (DeMato & Curcio, 2004; Herlihy, et al., 2002); increased risk of burnout, isolation, reduction of job satisfaction, and stress (Rutter, 2007); disconnection from knowledge on best practices and sharing peer knowledge (McMahon & Patton, 2000); reduction on confidence over their counseling abilities and an erosion of their counseling skills,

(Brown, 1989; Crutchfield & Borders, 1997; Peace, 1995; Spooner & Stone, 1977), and; overburdening with noncounseling duties (Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Matthes, 1992).

These challenges are a major concern for the profession because counseling site supervisors have a crucial and major influence on trainees and stand at the apex of optimizing the internship experiences of trainees (Magnuson et al., 2004; Swank & Tyson, 2013).

As a consequence, school counseling trainees were found to fall behind trainees from other counseling professions in terms of receiving and understanding supervision as a key component of their professional development (Sutton & Page, 1994). This lack of accessible and adequate skills development and supervision has driven some trainees to seek more accessible and less threatening alternatives instead (like peer or group consultation and supervision) (Benshoff & Paisley, 1996; Borders, 1991; Crutchfield & Borders, 1997; Hillerbrand, 1989; Remley et al., 1987; Runkel & Hackney, 1982). The benefits of the latter have continued to find support in a later case study (Golia & McGovern, 2015).

Overall, this summary of the core value of professional competence for the preparation of trainees highlighted both its utility and its definitional shortcomings. Self-efficacy and professional identity development added meaningful supporting definitions. Their connections were strengthened with supervision. The final part of the chapter described how the practice of supervision has been found to develop the knowledge on when and how professional competence is formed. The professional development and skills effects of supervision were shown to add a unifying meaning through the practice

of training. Its mechanisms were demonstrated by the models and tools of supervision. It was also revealed that established supervisory orientations were more skills-based while more recent critiques and debates pointed towards developmental orientations. The review of the adequacy of supervisors found that supervisors to be insufficient in numbers and insufficiently trained (Newman, 2010). The shortcomings faced by the supervisors themselves and the consequences for their trainees were also exposed. It was found that there is still a lack of research on the experiences of early career school counselors and on their clinical supervision experiences (Bledsoe et al., 2021). It was concluded that there is a lack of recent peer reviewed research on the challenges of supervision. In the next section it will be explored how the literature applies these viewpoints on competence formation to address the challenges faced by trainees.

### **Challenges of Trainees**

The review of the literature in this chapter has so far uncovered the contributions of self-efficacy, professional identity development, and supervision to clarifying the concept of professional competence. A picture emerged of professional competence being supported by three foundational pillars of self-efficacy, professional identity development and supervision. The next two parts of the chapter will shed light on: (a) what the challenges faced by school counselor trainees are, and (b) how and when the components of professional competence respond to them with the formation of competence.

## **Challenges of School Counselors' Roles**

School counselors are ideal, main, and often sole, frontline providers for meeting acute, essential, and serious mental health needs. They fulfill functions which are tantamount to the roles played by experienced counselors (Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Crutchfield & Borders, 1997; Duncan et al., 2014; Keys & Bemak, 1998; Sutton & Page, 1994). Novice counseling trainees have even been described as assuming the same responsibilities as the experienced counselors (Johnson et al., 2016; Matthes, 1992). Even so, and as already established in the prior sections, the school counselor's role is still described as lacking boundaries, presenting vague demands and uncertainty over their most effective utilization (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022). These authors also identified further role ambiguity arising from the outside influence of the school systems of the school counselors (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019). More recently, Blake's (2020) ethnographic study reconfirmed this ambiguity and added that, particularly in the US, school counselors suffered from poor boundaries from noncounseling duties which reduced their efficacy. (The topic of noncounseling duties was also described in the introductory section to this chapter). School administrators have compounded the problem by burdening school counselors with quasi-administrative rather than counseling roles (Cinotti, 2014).

Earlier views on this topic explained these challenges as systems-based and ascribed them to the intrinsically complex and multifaceted nature of school counselor roles which have been complicated by further developmental, preventive, and systemic

counseling approaches (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). In response, Geesa et al.'s (2020) research proposed greater collaboration between counselors and school principals.

### ***Challenges of School Counselor's Roles: Historical Context***

Within a historical context, the establishment of a clear professional identity in contemporary school counseling has been hindered by discrepancies and incongruities in the professional standards advocated by the ASCA. This has added to the numerous burdens of conflicting role ambiguity, role conflicts, misperceptions and stress of actual duties performed by school counselors (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Lambie, 2002; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Sears & Navin, 1983). In the opinion of Zyromski et al. (2021), such role complexity could benefit from new data-based decision-making tools to support their student clients.

The roots of the role confusion and conflict for school counselors were born from the conflict between the counseling and the educational functions of school counselors encapsulated by the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2003, 2012). Conflict and dissonance in the educational preparation and working realities of trainees were already understood to be constituents of the professional self-conceptualization of school counselors into a professional identity (Brott & Myers, 1999). It was broadly agreed that the professional development of school counselors posed unique challenges due to the profession's problems of credibility and the duality of educator-counselor roles which led to role confusion (ASCA, 2003, 2005; Aubrey, 1993; Baker, 2000; Cinotti, 2014; Collins, 2014; Gibson et al., 2012; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The issues posed by these dual

roles were referred to earlier in this chapter when discussing competencies-based and development-based perspectives on professional identity development.

As was described in the introduction to this chapter, the clinical counseling profession itself had already experienced its own role confusion from its origins as vocational school guidance counseling in the early 1900's and its fusion into professional school counseling by the ASCA National Model in 1950's (DeKruyf et al., 2013). An effort was made by the ASCA to reconstitute the professional identity from its historical origins in vocational guidance to a developmental model (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Despite the availability of ASCA's national model for school counseling, its adoption has been slow which created conflicting and confusing messages for school counselors and restricted the standardization of counseling and its supervision (Cinotti, 2014). In terms of solutions, some proposed the adoption of a conjoint professional identity for school counselors which blended both counseling and educational roles (DeKruyf et al., 2013). But the issues remain pertinent. Later researchers continue to identify a split role profile of school counselors, which negatively affects the public perception of their efficacy and creates confusion and a lack of credibility (Baker et al., 2021).

**Dissenting Voices.** The number of dissenting voices disputing the burdensome nature of these role challenges is limited. As part of a so-called 20/20 Vision for the Future of Counseling ("20/20") sponsored by the American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB) and the American Counseling Association (ACA), the Chief Professional Officer of the ACA presented the lack of identity of counselors as a "myth." It was argued counselors received an identity from their profession's

credentialing associations and from standards like the CACREP Standards and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)'s National Certified Counselor (NCC). In addition, it was contended that counseling is a specialization with multiple professions and not a sole profession with multiple specialties (Canfield, 2008). It was also contended that there was lower need for licensure than is prescribed (Kaplan, 2006). Some researchers have responded critically to these assertions (King and Stretch, 2013). Nonetheless, one milestone from the conference was the identification of a *Counselor Professional Identity* which was also referred to earlier in this chapter (Kaplan et al., 2014).

### ***Challenges of School Counselor's Roles: Consequences for School Counselor Trainees***

Researchers have found numerous negative consequences of these role-related challenges. In general, personal impairments to professional competence have been found to result from the inadequacies of these clinical supervision, institutional or personal stressors (Solway, 1985). As for the developmental consequences, Langher et al. (2014) conducted research on career choices with cluster analyses of university interns. They found discontinuities between both training and internship as well as internship and the labor market (Caputo et al., 2020). Further examples of these types of consequences are set out below.

**Stressor-Related Consequences.** The ambiguity and incongruence of school counseling roles were found to leave school counselors overwhelmed (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Due to the work pressure of fulfilling conflicting roles with limited resources and professional guidance, school counselors have even experienced



dissatisfaction and frustration (Astramovich et al., 2014; Collins, 2014; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022; Moracco et al., 1984). Role diffusion was also found to arise from being assigned tasks in fields where other professionals are equally well qualified (Astramovich et al., 2014).

These pressures on trainees also create increased risks of burnout (especially for counselors in training), challenging ethics- and workplace-related dilemmas and cause disillusionment, loss of equilibrium, loss of self-esteem, and stress (Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Butler & Constantine, 2005; Moracco et al, 1984; Ohrt et al., 2015; Parr, 1991; Sears & Navin, 1983; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Other consequences were found to be the burdening of the self-coping skills and equilibrium of school counselors (Lee et al., 2010; Wilkerson, 2009).

**Development-Related Consequences.** The research also extended the list of negative consequences to a broader series of potential side-effects for the profession. As mentioned in the prior section, the burdening of trainees with noncounseling duties (e.g., non-professional activities like completing forms) has also hindered the development of a professional identity (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Blake, 2020; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). The increasing workload of noncounseling administrative tasks was also found to accentuate their roles as educators and to underemphasize their roles as counselor (Cinotti, 2014). The ambiguities of daily practice work and their role confusion have therefore been found to represent a challenge to the maturation of a school counselor professional identity (Crosslin, 2006). The role confusion of novice professionals has

even been linked to limitations on counselor to perform ethically (Erikson, 1994; Studer, 2007).

Recent explorations of the consequences of these challenges have taken new directions. For instance, after evaluating a consistent flow of research supporting these findings in a pair of recent works, Hemi and Maor (Hemi & Maor, 2020; Maor & Hemi, 2021) detected that noncounseling factors (like bureaucracy) create greater stress than counseling roles (including managing conflicts and violence). Other researchers investigated the effects on school counselor retention. In their study on the predictors of job turnover intentions among school counselors, Greenham et al. (2019) found that they were related to length of tenure, increased effort and stress, lower organizational commitment, and in-group affect of organizational identification.

### ***How Self-Efficacy Addresses the Challenges of Trainees***

In terms of how the components of professional competence manage these challenges, a positive effect was linked between school counseling work performance and levels of self-efficacy (Ernst et al., 2017; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). It was also found that organizational settings of locus of performance and task complexity had moderating effects on this relationship (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Parikh-Foxx et al. (2020) added that a lack of adequate and successful experiences and training led to a lack of commitment and motivation in school counselors. They also related a lack of important preparation in counseling and skills to school counselor training, supervision and the level of mastery attained by school counselors.

In quantitative and qualitative studies, researchers have proposed that novice practitioners experience a higher level of anxiety and erosive emotions on their confidence and require a higher level of guidance, instruction, and support (Heppner & Roehlke, 1984; Kozina et al., 2010; Thériault & Gazzola, 2005). This confirmed earlier studies by Bandura (1956), which had already found that increased anxiety was connected to decreased levels of therapeutic competence. In response, self-efficacy, or perceived self-control, were identified to be effective in mediating or extinguishing anxiety arousal and as coping mechanisms (Bandura & Adams, 1977; Bandura et al., 1985).

Perhaps the most influential contribution made by this component of professional competence is that higher self-efficacy has also been identified to help school counselors to meet the challenges of noncounseling activities (Ernst et al., 2017) and to have a positive effect on their performance (Bardhoshi et al., 2019). Bardhoshi and Um's (2021) findings on the mitigating effects of self-efficacy on burnout and stress support the findings of this earlier research.

### ***How Professional Identity Development Addresses the Challenges of Trainees***

The negative effect of these challenges on professional identity formation was already noted in the previous section. An effective argument was made that the greatest positive change towards constituting a professional identity requires school counselors to resolve the challenges of role ambiguities and role incongruence of their roles (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Later researchers also identified a need for school counselors to develop an updated professional identity to manage the challenges of school counselor

trainee roles and acquire a mindset and stance of a leadership identity (McMahon et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014). In agreement, Heled & Davidovitch (2019, 2022) determined that a lack of a clear role definition for school counselors has often been closely linked to the lack of professional identity of the school counseling profession. On a related topic, recent research has addressed a lack of knowledge on the education of leadership in both counselors and their supervisors (Hilts et al., 2022; Luke & Peters, 2020; Peters & Luke, 2021b).

### ***How Supervision Addresses the Challenges of Trainees***

It has been found that supervision plays a key role in developing and protecting the development of the professional identity of school counselors. Due to the positive effects on the reduction of the risk of counselor burnout (e.g., by being less burdened by noncounseling activities), there has been support for focusing counselors on their counseling duties and on resolving their administrative and systemic challenges (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Collins, 2014). Lambie & Williamson (2004) offered further solutions for school counselors which included appreciating the historical origins of the profession, becoming advocates for the profession, and moving away from being administrative assistants towards consciously becoming professional school counselors with a clear responsibilities and roles. Fye et al. (2020a) concurred. They are among several researchers whose research supported the positive effect of supervision satisfaction on managing school counselor challenges (like burnout).

Not only has it been found that supervision is not easily accessible for all counselors who need it, but also that supervisor training is difficult to access for

supervisors (Duncan et al., 2014). Equally, it has been shown that school counselor trainees are not receiving sufficient support from their clinical supervisors and peers (Culbreth et al., 2005; Emerson and Markos, 1996; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). In response, in recent phenomenological research on prepracticum students, researchers reiterated the importance of supervision. They stated their preference for a structured and well-organized training experience as one of their main themes (Havlik et al., 2019).

In sum, this part of the chapter reviewed the main challenges faced by trainees and how the components of professional competence (i.e., self-efficacy, professional identity development, and supervision) meet them. Novice trainees in practicum were found to assume a major frontline role in providing mental health services but to lack a clear role definition of their traineeship roles (Trolley, 2011). This reverberated in the broader observation, that the profession also lacks a unified collective identity due to the diversity of professional counselors (Gale & Austin, 2003). Both concerns are addressed in recent research by Heled and Davidovitch (2020, 2022). Numerous negative consequences for trainees were identified; both from a stressor-based and a development-based perspective. In response, self-efficacy was found to be particularly effective in addressing the mastery of skills as well as the management of anxiety by trainees. In turn, professional identity development was found to be particularly effective for addressing identity and role challenges faced both by the trainees and their profession. Supervision was found to be the conduit through which trainees receive support to manage these challenges. In the next part of this chapter, the literature on when and how the professional competence to meet these challenges is understood to be formed is reviewed.

## **Professional Competence Formation by Trainees**

In the prior part of the chapter, it was discussed how the components of self-efficacy, professional identity development and supervision are understood to develop the professional competence of school counselor trainees to meet their challenges. The final part of the chapter explores how these components contribute to the understanding of the process of professional competence formation. Originally, the nature and timing of competence formation are reviewed under the key concept of professional competence.

### **How Self-Efficacy Addresses the Nature and Timing of Professional Competence Formation of Trainees**

The nature and timing of the formation of self-efficacy in school counseling trainees has been subjected to an abundance of debates. Numerous researchers have explored the levels of CSE and the timing of their emergence during the training period. Yet, they still disagree on the locus of the timing of self-efficacy development in trainees (e.g., Schiele et al., 2014). The theories on the timing of the formation of self-efficacy are crystallized from the literature review under three terms: *prepracticum*, *early practicum*, and *late practicum*. This trinity of theoretical schools is exemplified by the following scholars. First, researchers led by Tang et al. (2004) closely associate competence with self-efficacy and concluded that self-efficacy is developed from either past experiences or actual involvement in related tasks during internships (i.e., in prepracticum). Second, Mullen et al. (2015) differentiate themselves by leading a group of researchers who recommended that actual competence and perceived self-efficacy of supervisees can be assessed early (i.e., in prepracticum or in early practicum during their initial clinical

experiences). Third, Kozina et al. (2010) also argued that self-efficacy is gained later (i.e., in late practicum and during the clinical training phase).

### ***Self-Efficacy: Timing of Competence Formation in Prepracticum***

In terms of quantity of studies, a preponderance of voices has favored the view that self-efficacy is formed at a prepracticum phase. To the fore, Tang et al. (2004), and Mullen et al. (2015) up to an extent, found that the period of completion of initial counseling coursework preparation program has a larger influence on self-efficacy levels than the completion of initial clinical experience. This implies a need for trainee supporters and supervisors to be engaged earlier with trainee preparation programs (i.e., before trainees begin their clinical program). Barbee et al. (2003) reiterated how prepracticum counseling training was found to have a positive influence on increasing self-efficacy and reducing student anxiety as well as being more influential than service learning for counseling novices. Flasch et al., (2016) added their support and emphasized the importance of preclinical experiences on self-efficacy in counselors.

### ***Self-Efficacy: Timing of Competence Formation in Early Practicum***

Earlier work in Larson and Daniels' (1998) summative review on the literature in this field identified that an increase of self-efficacy at an early counselor trainee practicum stage can increase the perseverance through difficult client sessions, the motivation to learn difficult subskills, the management of anxiety, and the effectiveness of performance. Coupled with Bandura's (1989) proposals that self-efficacy was found to be more effective for acquiring and refining new skills than advanced skills, it was deduced that CSE increased more during early practicum periods. Later work from a

competence and skills perspective has also found that training and clinical experience have a positive influence on the general self-efficacy beliefs and micro skills of novice and practicum students (Kozina et al., 2010). Preclinical assessments of the levels of self-efficacy of counseling psychologists have also been found to provide insights into the efficacy of their future client work (Flasch et al., 2017). But perhaps most importantly, Mullen et al. (2015) also warned that findings may be inflated since their participant population had yet to enter the clinical program (Mullen et al., 2015). The view supporting early phase acquisition has stood fast. It was more recently supported by Turner et al.'s (2020) study on play therapy whose conclusion indicated that skills-based competency arose with practice based on the application of theoretical knowledge of theory (rather than clinical experience).

### ***Self-Efficacy: Timing of Competence Formation in Late Practicum***

The voices supporting capabilities and self-efficacy formation during practicum, emphasized the levels of clinical credibility of clinical supervisors, the quality of their working alliance with trainees, and perceptions of a supervisor's confidence in their abilities (Morrison & Lent, 2018). Kozina et al. (2010) are often cited as leading proponents of the view that CSE is gained in these later phases due to their clinical experiences. Supporting views include that the attachment of trainees to their supervisors has been found to affect their self-efficacy because higher avoidance leads to lower self-efficacy (Mesrie et al., 2018). Self-efficacy has also been found to be a main approach for exploring the process of developing domain confidence and self-confidence (Melchert et al., 1996). They also found self-efficacy to be developed and enhanced by counseling



trainees with clinical experience and training (Melchert et al., 1996). More support for the later phase viewpoint came from Sutton and Fall (1995). They proposed that self-efficacy is more strongly predicted by administrative and collegial support and lower levels of noncounseling activities (Sutton & Fall, 1995). McCarthy (2014) agreed and associated higher levels of self-efficacy with more positive effects on counseling sessions due to lower levels of critical self-evaluation. The later phase formation view was also supported by Parikh-Foxx et al.'s (2020) study, whose conclusion indicated that self-efficacy rose with the amount of training received.

While prior literature on timing has mainly focused on promoting single viewpoints, this summary involves all the main viewpoints from a professional competence standpoint. It exposes a dissonant body of research which continues to support different sides of the debate on timing. It was also noted that it is more difficult to measure self-efficacy in the late practicum stages because advanced trainees are more engaged with other personnel and professional factors (Larson & Daniels, 1998). However, research in the related fields of professional competence and professional development (Lamb et al., 1982), and professional identity development (Friedman & Kaslow, 1986) has also supported the timing of identity formation to occur in the later phases of practicum. As for the more recent state of knowledge, Brown et al. (2017) observed that the continuing levels of disagreement in findings about the timing of its acquisition supported the need for further research on the topic. Mullen et al. (2019) agreed that CSE still remains a common area of study.

### ***Self-Efficacy: How Supervision Models Support Competence Formation***

Moving to a supervisory viewpoint, training has also been broadly agreed to have positive effects on forming self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982; Daniels & Larson, 2001; Larson et al., 1999; Romi & Teichman, 1995). It was already noted how the self-efficacy of school counselor trainees can be threatened by the burdensome roles that arise when carrying out the counseling prescribed under the profession's ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012; DeKruyf et al., 2013). The theory of self-efficacy and the practice of supervision are therefore closely connected.

Larson and Daniels (1998) found that supervisors play a key role during training with interventions to increase CSE and decrease anxiety. This is achieved by developing the self-determination of the counselors which increased their efficacy for their clients (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Bandura (1977) had proposed that efficacy can be conveyed with both evidence of improved performance as well as modeling with guided performance. Larson and Daniels (1998) interpreted this proposal as supporting supervision and adduced that positive feedback increases CSE while negative feedback decreases CSE.

**Models for Self-Efficacy Formation by Supervisors.** Several different models are available to supervisors. Murphy & Kaffenberger, (2007) described a culturally competent and ethically sound model led by supervisors. This concentrates on the four areas of a school counselor trainee's formation of: (a) counseling interventions and skills, (b) cognitive counseling skills, (c) personalization of personal issues or personality, and (d) professional behaviors and standards. Alternatively, a group supervision model has

also been found to increase competence and self-efficacy in counseling trainees leading to increases in job involvement and self-worth which are also attributed to self-efficacy (Fu, 2015; Ridley et al., 2011; Tan & Chou, 2018). More recently, it was proposed that the experience of group supervision atmospheres, group working relationships, and meaningful supervision relationships can lead to greater professional commitment and identity development (Hanetz Gamliel et al., 2020). Lambie and Stickl Haugen's (2021) development of an Assessment of School Counseling Competencies (ASCC) instrument was another more recent proposal. It also belongs to the school of developmental supervision which was described in earlier sections of this chapter.

**Measurements of Self-Efficacy Formation for Supervisors.** An overview of measurement issues resonates with issues raised in the earlier debate over the timing of self-efficacy acquisition by trainees. Researchers have found that levels of self-efficacy fluctuate across the developmental training stages according to the advancement of academic degrees, experiences of counseling, and hours of supervision received (Larson et al., 1992). This was confirmed by Melchert et al. (1996), who measured levels of self-efficacy across several instruments and over four different stage models. They found that levels vary significantly and that other factors had important effects. These factors include cognitive complexity, dependency, motivation, predominant effect, and self-awareness (Melchert et al., 1996). Their view of the influence of these moderating variables was supported by Friedlander et al. (1999), who also found that self-efficacy in counseling trainees increased over time, but independently of the supervisory relationship. Measurement periods were also found to fluctuate as self-efficacy levels can

increase over short durations of counselor training (Kozina et al., 2010). Indeed, a leveling out of self-efficacy was indicated by a group of researchers, who proposed that it decreases after the advanced graduate counseling training has been reached (Larson et al., 1996, Melchert et al., 1996; Sutton & Fall, 1995). Conversely, Sipps et al. (1988) found different results; with increased levels of confidence and efficacy expectations in later graduate trainee years than earlier graduate years. Mesrie et al. (2018) supported the view that experience and self-efficacy are positively linked. Alternatively, researchers have also proposed that levels of self-efficacy fluctuate across the developmental training stages as academic degrees knowledge and counseling experience years increase (Larson et al., 1992). The debate continues and echoes the similar debate around the timing of self-efficacy discussed earlier in this section. Lastly, a different explanation for the fluctuations in results (and the leveling out of self-efficacy levels) was also provided. It points out the lack of adequate measurement tools and proposes a developmental view. This view explained that advanced trainees reach a further stage of counselor development which is characterized by ambivalence, confusion, and fluctuation (Larson & Daniels, 1998; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987; Studer & Oberman, 2020).

### **How Professional Identity Development Addresses the Nature and Timing of Professional Competence Formation of Trainees**

Earlier in this chapter it was found that professional identity development provides clarity on the wider development-related definitions of professional competence development. This exploration of the research investigates the timing of professional identity formation.

### ***Professional Identity: Timing and Models of Competence Formation***

Professional identity formation was understood as the constitution of an attitude and a responsibility for one's professional role which equips a professional with sensemaking for their work and life (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Friedman & Kaslow, 1986). These authors tied professional identity formation to the personal identity, self-confidence, and self-worth of therapists. As mentioned at the outset, Bruss and Kopala's (1993) work remains foundational for studies on professional identity development, especially regarding the obligations of academic institutions to foster the self-conceptualization of trainees with attitudes and structures. The notion of Counselor Professional Identity was developed out of a consensus between professional bodies to incorporate career, education, mental health, and wellness goals (Kaplan et al., 2014). But conclusive progress towards a definition of a shared or unified professional identity has proved to be elusive. Efforts have been made to define it with a connection to an interprofessional identity, which incorporates accreditation and licencing, advocacy, developmental, ethics compliance, and prevention goals (Brat et al., 2016; Burns, 2017; Mellin et al., 2011). However, widespread acceptance and success in these regards remain limited (Klein & Beeson, 2022).

As a sign of the strong level of interest in this field in the era of this research study, there is also a body of non-peer-reviewed student dissertations on this subject available as well as international research undertaken on efficacious interventions (e.g., Amodeo et al., 2017). In general, it can be observed that many of the models presented by researchers under this framework are developmental. As early as the 1960's, such a

model was presented in four stages. It described trainees as being driven by a method of choice, to adapting method to one's own personality, reversing the method to fit the trainee's personal idiom, and then culminating in developing one's own method as an outgrowth of oneself (Hogan, 1964). Brott and Myers (1999), who remain a bastion for researchers in this field, presented a similar structural framework process of maturation during the education phase which is moderated by professional experience and individually self-conceptualized. This has also been described as the multidimensional character of professional development and growth (Erikson, 1950; Kaufman & Schwartz, 2003).

***Maturation: The Identification of a Turning Point?***

In contrast to the divergence of viewpoints on the formation of self-efficacy, the early literature in this field on the timing of professional identity formation in trainees was mostly congruent. This high level of agreement is reflected on the steadfastness of the authority of those earlier researchers. Professional identity formation was authoritatively defined as a turning point in the learning phase of identity and independence when trainees enter autonomy by developing the capability to dispute and power struggle with their teachers (Friedman & Kaslow, 1986). In line with this view, Stark et al. (1986) added details. They identified an intrapersonal turning point when trainees begin to accept and test the binding obligations and traditions to their professional community. These researchers also acknowledged a skills-based component with the finding of a positive correlation with a sense of mastery of the knowledge and skills of the profession (Stark et al., 1986). Lastly, they also identified interpersonal signs

when students reconnect with their original motivations to enter the profession like the nature of training and the social prestige attached to the profession (Stark et al., 1986). This point on professional connection was taken up by other writers, who also proposed that formation develops when school counseling trainees understand their professional field and their identity within its traditions. They have associated this understanding with a sense of belonging, reference, and uniqueness (Heck, 1990; Friedman & Kaslow, 1986; Pistole & Roberts, 2002; Stark et al., 1986). A different but complementary view of trainee maturation was presented earlier by Bruss and Kopala (1993). They identified the turning point of trainees challenging their supervisors as their initial phase of anxiety and dependency turns into autonomy, confidence, and excitement. Their influential view also described maturation as internal experience aligning with external reality. This was more recently echoed in two findings from a study on the effect of novel interventions on professional identity development on mental health professional. They identified professional identity formation by the distancing of oneself from a medical identity of being a “fixer” of illness and connecting with one’s personal identity (Schubert et al., 2020).

As for deficiencies in the literature on this topic, Brott and Myers’s (1999) still concluded that there is a lack of knowledge on how the meaning making framework of school counselors matures into a professional identity. The latter would allow their roles and functions to be better defined and trainee school counselors to be better trained. Nevertheless, in comparison with the discordant debate from the research writings on the

timing of self-efficacy formation over the last 20 years, the voices in the debate on professional identity formation are now notably more concordant and established.

### **How Supervision Addresses the Nature and Timing of Professional Competence**

#### **Formation of Trainees**

The topic of how supervision models develop professional competence was described earlier in the main part of this chapter (“Professional Competence Formation: Supervisory Models”). To reiterate, supervision was found to be an integral part of the development of trainee competence (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Collins, 2014). It was also found to be interconnected with self-efficacy and professional identity development as the other components of competence. However, the review also noted the challenges faced by the supervisors themselves and the consequences for trainees. The section also described the variety of models of measurement as well as its models.

The common models of supervision proposed by the professional bodies and research literature are also reiterated. These models include the ASCA Model, which is based on principles of transformation (ASCA, 2003), the closely related Comprehensive Delivery System (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000), the School Counselor Supervision Model (SCSM) practice-oriented model (Luke & Bernard, 2006), and the systemic approach of the Goals, Roles, Functions, and Systems Model (GRFS) (Wood & Rayle, 2006). A common guidepost at the developmental end of the spectrum is Stoltenberg’s Integrative Developmental Model of Supervision (Stoltenberg, 2005). This model took a holistic approach within the context of the pathway toward professional competence through the milestones of behaviors and skills. An alternative view presented supervision as a



formalized mentorship by which experienced professionals guide, educate, gatekeep, mentor, and vet trainees from the counseling profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Roberts & Morotti, 2001). In their study on how counseling students view their fellow supervisees, Baltrinic et al. (2021) shifted their debate on supervisory models to identify the suitable learner roles and types for each model. To summarize the current state of approaches: there is a common acceptance of coexisting supervision models across a spectrum of orientations.

In summarizing this part of the chapter, the exploration of the challenges faced by trainees illuminated the knowledge on how self-efficacy was particularly effective in managing noncounseling challenges and anxiety, while professional identity was effective in managing role-related challenges. As for the knowledge on the nature and timing of their professional competence formation, up until this section of the review, the different views on the timing of self-efficacy formation were summarized and compared to the prevailing view on professional identity development. As a result, it was found that the levels of agreement on the timing of competence formation in the field of self-efficacy were low but high among studies in the field of professional identity development. The diversity of approaches and models suggests that there are multiple pathways for the formation of competence (e.g., examples in Appendix A).

In terms of conclusions on this part of the chapter, this section explored how the components of self-efficacy, professional identity development, and supervision develop the knowledge on when and how professional competence is formed. It was confirmed that increases in the degrees of self-efficacy and professional identity development

gained by school counselors have been linked to their supervision (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). But while both professional identity formation and self-efficacy have been identified as measures of counselor competence, it was also confirmed that few studies have investigated how and when supervisors can promote their development (DeKruyf et al., 2013; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019; Stoltenberg, 2005).

In summarizing the whole chapter, it is recalled that it opened with a description of the state of the knowledge on professional competence, and how self-efficacy and professional identity development make their contributions to addressing the limited knowledge in the field. Then, the perspectives from the process of supervision were provided. In the next part, the utility of these elements for understanding the trainee experience was summarized. It was uncovered that supervision was already found to be an integral factor in developing competence, but that little was known on how supervisors describe competence development during their supervised practice. Therefore, further knowledge in this field will contribute to the knowledge on professional competence development in trainees. It was also concluded that there was a lack of recent research on the competence and adequacy of supervisors.

In addition, few researchers have summarized the different views on nature and timing of self-efficacy formation and compared them to the literature on professional identity development. This was provided in the last part of this chapter. It was found that there are low levels of agreement on the timing of competence formation in the field of self-efficacy but high levels of agreement among the studies in the field of professional

identity development. But there was also concordance among the findings, especially on the nature of the formation of competence by trainees. This can be taken to indicate that there is scope for future research to develop a holistic view of the issues raised.

### **Current State of Knowledge and Major Themes**

A review of the background to the current professional settings for school counseling trainees confirmed that the importance of delivering school counseling under ideal circumstances is well accepted. The problems that effective school counseling is only partly supported by the professional bodies and strongly undermined by the challenges faced by school counseling trainees are well understood.

School counseling is known to be most effective when performed under ideal circumstances, programmatically, and when supported by student's parents and teachers (Atkins et al., 2006; Gysbers, 2004; Rothney, 1958; Whiston & Quinby, 2009). It is also known that there is lack of uniformity and adoption of common and national credentialing standards for school counseling educational institutions and individuals (Milsom & Akos, 2007; Trolley, 2011). It was found that school counselor's roles are viewed ambiguously and misunderstood by the main parties (e.g., school administrators). It was also found that counseling trainees are tasked with non-counseling activities which are inconsistent with their counselor roles and contribute to their role conflicts (ASCA, 2019; Kolodinsky, et al., 2009; Trolley, 2011; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Therefore, the research study is centered on how professional competence is formed to meet the challenges imposed upon school counseling trainees.

Several themes emerged from the review. First, an incompleteness of clear definitions on key terms in this field recurred throughout the review of the research. For instance, the knowledge on *professional competence*, which is required to meet these challenges, is only partially complete (Kitchener, 2000) and the definitions of professional competence are also inadequate and unclear (Lichtenberg et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2005). Second, researchers have accepted components for defining and describing professional competence of the school counselor trainees. These are supervision, professional identity, and self-efficacy. But the linkages between them are inconsistent and incomplete. Third, there is limited availability of research on the role of practicum supervisors in the development of the competence of school counselors (Bledsoe et al., 2021, DeKruyf et al., 2013; Goodman-Scott, et al. 2020; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022; Miller & Dollarhide, 2006; Stoltenberg, 2005).

In terms of findings, the review shows that the conceptual frameworks of professional identity development and self-efficacy each support different sectors of competence development. It also revealed that few studies have yet been performed to closely bind them to school counselor competence (Beijaard et al., 2000; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019). Similarly, while the importance of supervisors to the cultivation of competence is acknowledged in the research, few studies have investigated how supervisors promote school counselor development (DeKruyf et al., 2013; Goodman-Scott, et al. 2020; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022; Stoltenberg, 2005). Further insights have also been sought on professional identity development. For instance, Brott and Myers's (1999) found that there was still a lack of knowledge on how school counselors

develop and mature a professional identity. In terms of supervision, both the ASCA National Model and the research acknowledge the central utility and value of supervision and supervisors in developing trainee professional competence (Falender & Shafranske, 2008; Hurt-Avila & Castillo, 2017). But the efficacy of supervision was found to be limited due to the challenges faced by supervisors themselves (i.e., their own competence and adequacy). These challenges are a lack of information on adequate evaluation procedures, supervision models, and supervisor training (Falender & Shafranske, 2008; Lamb & Swerdlik, 2004).

It was then examined why, when, and how the combined components of supervision, self-efficacy, and professional identity development contribute to professional competence formation. The challenges faced by school counseling trainees, explain why the need for self-efficacy, profession identity development and supervision has been supported in the research. It is well-known that higher self-efficacy helps school counselors to meet the challenges of noncounseling activities (Ernst et al., 2017), has a positive effect on their performance (Bardhoshi et al., 2019), and has a mitigating effect on burnout and stress (Bardhoshi & Um, 2021). But the research on professional identity development in this field is not complete. First, it has been positively linked to addressing the role ambiguities of school counseling trainees (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Second, Heled and Davidovitch (2019) determined that the unclear role definition of school counselors is also closely linked to the school counseling profession's lack of professional identity. The positive effect of supervision satisfaction on managing school counselor challenges is well-known. For instance, there is persistent research supporting

supervision as a training mechanism for developing an essential and systematic pathway towards professional excellence and developing the competence of counseling trainees (Miller & Dollarhide, 2006; Stoltenberg, 2005). But there are only a small number of studies in this area.

Then the nature and timing formation of professional competence was reviewed. It was uncovered that there are high levels of complementarity between its components on “how”, but not on “when”, professional competence is formed. It was also revealed that few previous research studies have compared and structured the literature on the nature and timing of the formation competence by integrating these components. On the subtopic of the timing of competence formation through self-efficacy, equally strong voices were identified either supporting its prepracticum, or early practicum, or late practicum occurrence (e.g., Mullen et al., 2015; Tang et al., 2004; Kozina et al., 2010). This was also observed by Brown et al. (2017) who concluded that these continuing levels of disagreement in findings about the timing of its acquisition supported the need for further research on the topic. When it comes to the subtopic of the timing of competence formation through professional identity development, the research is in far greater agreement. For instance, early works by researchers like Bruss and Kopala (1993) and Friedman and Kaslow (1986) already inextricably linked professional identity formation to personal identity, self-confidence, and self-worth of therapists. These views remain relevant and accepted to the present-day (e.g., Amodeo et al., 2017). On the subtopic of the nature of competence formation, there is a high level of agreement and congruity within the research across its components. For instance, Stark et al. (1986)

encapsulated competence formation as an intrapersonal turning point when trainees begin to accept and test the binding obligations and traditions to their professional community. In sum, the body of research in this field is not only noncomprehensive but also non-cohesive.

### **How the Present Study Extends the Research Knowledge**

The present study fills the lack of knowledge on the following topics. The first main theme of this study is the incompleteness of clear meanings on key terms in this field. Both the terms of *professional competence* (Lichtenberg et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2005) and *professional identity development* (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022) have been identified as still lacking adequate and clear definitions. Without them, they remain unclear concepts (van der Klink & Boon, 2003) and pose a risk to the profession (Rodolfa et al., 2013). While the definition of self-efficacy is clearly defined, there is a lack of further research on how professional identity development and self-efficacy jointly describe school counselor competence (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Beijaard et al., 2000; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022). There is also scope for developing the definitional ties to other related terms, like *competency*, *competencies*, *incompetence*, and *maturation*, which are neither fully completed nor integrated by researchers. In addition, the connections between the key concept of professional competence and its components need to be further illuminated. The positive influence of self-efficacy on performance and meeting the challenges of noncounseling activities and other stressors is well-documented (Bardhoshi et al., 2019; Bardhoshi & Um, 2021; Ernst et al., 2017). But little is known about the relationships between self-efficacy and the wider aspects of professional

competence and professional development of trainees. Conversely, while there is strong research support for the role of professional identity development in promoting wider growth of school counselors and confronting their role ambiguities (Gibson et al., 2018; Lambie & Williamson, 2004), there is a lack of recent research on how it promotes narrower skills-oriented approaches (Brott & Myers, 1999; Hall, 1987; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Watts, 1987).

These topics also shed light on the deficiencies in the literature on the second main theme. These are centered on how further terms are required to define and describe professional competence. While *professional identity formation* and *self-efficacy* are recognized as measures of counselor competence, there are few studies which investigated how supervisors can promote their development (DeKruyf et al., 2013; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022; Stoltenberg, 2005). For instance, while Bledsoe et al. (2021) confirmed the importance of professional identity and how clinical supervisors can clarify the high role ambiguity of school counselors (Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010), they did not address the role of professional competence. Indeed, their study stems from an identified lack of research on the experiences of early career school counselors and on their clinical supervision experiences (Bledsoe et al., 2021).

There were three other noteworthy shortfalls in the literature. First, a lack of recent peer reviewed research on the challenges of the quantity and quality of supervision, and the adequacy of the supervisors themselves, was also identified. Second, it was also noted that few studies have previously compared the timing and nature of professional competence formation. Third, a dissonance and inconclusiveness in the



views on when competence formation from a self-efficacy viewpoint was also detected. Conversely, this review also identified a high accordance between these viewpoints on how the formation of professional identity occurs. Based on these opposites, it was indicated that further research could explore professional competence from a holistic viewpoint.

### **Summary**

In sum, this chapter explored the level of the knowledge on professional competence which is required by school counseling trainees to meet the challenges of their profession. In review, it was found that it is not well-known that the literature on defining professional competence in this profession is incomplete. It is also not well-known that the literature for defining and describing professional competence is composed of self-efficacy, professional identity, and supervision. Each of the components of professional competence were examined individually and in terms of their effectiveness and interconnectivity in constructing the meaning of professional competence. Supervision was confirmed to be a key factor for the development of professional competence. But knowledge on the challenges faced by supervisors (e.g., inadequate supervision training and low levels of knowledge on development-oriented methods) was found to be less widely available. The review culminated with a summary of the utility of these components for understanding the trainee experience of professional competence formation. The process of competence formation was also viewed through the challenges that trainees face and its nature and timing. Once the review revealed the efficacy of the components of competence to meet the challenges, it was discovered that

few studies had compared the literature on these components on how and when professional competence is formed. It was also revealed that while there was a high degree of complementarity on the former, there was less agreement on the latter (especially for self-efficacy).

Chapter 2 described the research strategy, theoretical foundations, and conceptual frameworks of the study. In the review of the literature on the key concept of professional competence, its foundational pillars of conceptual frameworks and the activity of supervision were examined. It was found that little is known on how supervisors themselves describe competence development in trainees during their supervised practice. This forms the basis for this research study. Further knowledge in this field will contribute to the knowledge on professional competence development in school counseling trainees.

Chapter 3 describes the purpose of the research study and its detailed qualitative research questions and explains the research designs of interpretive description and reality-testing frameworks. It includes descriptions of the research methods, recruitment strategy, interview protocol, and the detailed steps of the research process.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The aim of this generic qualitative study was to understand how supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors through supervised practice. Professional identity and self-efficacy have been identified as essential to the development of competence (Collins, 2014; Mullen et al., 2015; Trolley, 2011). Consequently, I explored how they are described by supervisors in their work with trainees.

Chapter 3 opens with a restatement of the research questions and the key concept. The description of the research design and rationale includes an elucidation of the interpretive description research method. The framework of reality-testing and the role of the researcher are introduced. This is followed by a discussion on how the research methodology delineates sampling and participant selection. The instrumentation of the research, its data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures is described. The chapter concludes with a summary of the connection to the next chapters.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

##### **Research Questions**

In this study, the primary research questions inquired:

- How do supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors?
- How do supervisors train the development of competence in trainee school counselors?

The secondary research questions inquired:

- How do supervisors describe the development of self-efficacy in trainee school counselors?
- How do supervisors describe the development of professional identity in trainee school counselors?

### **Central Concepts**

Professional competence is the primary phenomenon of interest and key concept. It has been defined as a merger of attributes, behaviors, competencies, and microskills (Ridley et al., 2011; Tan & Chou, 2018). While competence is intrinsic to lifelong professionalism and professional functioning, its definitions were described as fuzzy, loose, or minimally useful (American Psychological Association, 2006; Elman & Forrest, 2007; Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014; van der Klink & Boon, 2003).

Thus, the key concept of professional competence is supported by the conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy and professional identity and can be observed in action in supervision. Indeed, both components of professional competence resurfaced during the research interviews. Larson and Daniels' (1998) notion of CSE describes the generative capability to integrate behavioral, cognitive, and social skills to meet the expectations of a counselor (Bandura, 1982; Larson & Daniels, 1998). It was evolved from Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory and has been linked to regulating the commitment and motivation of school counselor trainees (Parikh-Foxx et al., 2020). Professional identity is distinct from competence and was developed by several like-minded writers (e.g., Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Friedman & Kaslow, 1986) to describe the integration of personal

identity, self-confidence, and self-worth to meet the attitude and responsibility for a professional therapeutic role. It has further been observed that the school counseling profession itself lacks a clear and unambiguous definition of its professional identity and that its school counselors, in general, also lack a role definition (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019; 2020). As a final component of competence formation, supervision is the real-life practice at the heart of the training and development of competence of school counselors (Gonsalvez & Milne, 2010; Stoltenberg, 2005). It has been described as a rite of passage for novice trainees and is embedded in their training programs (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2009; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006). While the availability and quality of supervisor practice and training has been criticized, supervision also remains integral to developing professional identity (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Schultz et al., 2021).

### **Approach**

Interpretive description is a suitable research design to address complex and real-world research questions in the field of mental healthcare. It originated as an applied qualitative research design in health research to understand complex clinical experiences, like patient care (Thorne, 2016). It also addressed certain weaknesses of other qualitative methodologies for this field. For instance, this method can counteract: (a) ethnography's perceived Western cultural relativism, (b) grounded theory's perceived potential for biases and subjectivity, and (c) perceived challenges of generalizing using a phenomenological approach (Thorne, 2016). As justification, interpretive description research is aimed at understanding individual experiences within clinical settings and the

systems within which the clinicians are operating (Norlyk & Harder, 2010; Thorne, 2016). It stood out as the most suitable choice for this research study because the participants in this study also worked within these systems as supervisors to train students for their clinical settings in schools.

A reality-testing viewpoint was a suitable additional lens for operationalizing the interpretive description framework into clinical research practice. Reality-testing viewpoints investigate the lived reality and observed experiences in a logical and systematic manner (Schwandt, 1994; Schwandt, 2001; Thorne, 2016). According to Epstein (2012), this logical empiricist viewpoint allows the objects of study (e.g., competence, self-efficacy, professional identity, and supervision) to be recorded. It was the most suitable accompanying choice for meeting the goals of my research study because I could thereby explore how supervisors experience their work of training school counseling trainees even if they themselves were not aware of the challenges with the concept of professional competence identified in the literature review.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I was also a school counselor trainee when the research study was launched, and therefore an insider on the research topic with a close relationship to the subject matter. I myself had undergone supervised practicums and traineeships with an academic institution, at external counseling agencies, and in schools' districts. Schwandt (1994) described the researcher role as being an active actor and entrant into the world of the participants. While being an experienced observer, I had not participated in similar research studies in the past. The research study was therefore closely aligned to an

insider's acceptance of the distinct and personal lived experiences of respondents (see Geertz, 1980; Jackson, 1989; Schwandt, 1994). In support of such an alignment, Schwandt (1994) found this approach to be compatible with a conventional logical empiricist approach to constructivist, positivistic, and scientific research inquiry.

To address trustworthiness, I followed Shenton's (2004) four main criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Several techniques were incorporated for ensuring the congruence of findings with the reality of the research (Merriam, 1998). These included a focus on the adherence to correct operational procedures (like the use of purposive and snowball sampling), the generation of thick descriptions, and the use of reflective journals. The research was enriched with my own close experience and proximity to the field. This was capitalized by seeking honesty from my study participants and interviewing techniques like iterative questioning and debriefing.

Transferability was derived from the applicability of the study to the context of its factors, environment, and information. In other words, the applied nature of the research study was rooted within the operations of the healthcare system and the profession of school counseling by the participation of qualified supervisory professionals (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Thorne, 2016). This contextual framework supported the emic standpoint of a researcher who is closely connected to this field of applied healthcare.

The credibility of the study also contributed to its dependability. The latter was heightened by the description of the research's design and implementation; both in terms of its operational details and its reflective appraisal. Confirmability safeguarded the

objectivity of my predispositions (i.e., having myself experienced a school counseling traineeship). This involved adopting data tools like audit trails and reflective journals, as well as concentrating on the central experiences of the supervisors being researched. The research study's inclusion of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and generalizability are detailed later in this chapter.

At the time of the launch of the study, I was related to the school counseling profession as a prelicenced counseling therapist intern in the State of California and through academic and professional contacts with schools, counseling institutions and supervisors. Measures were taken to avoid bias and the exercising of any power relationships by me (as a trainee intern). First, any persons who had supervised me were not considered as study volunteers or accepted as study participants. Second, study volunteers to interview as supervisors of school counseling trainees at academic institutions, counseling agencies and school district were only contacted where I had not worked or studied in the past. At the time of the study, I was not a supervisor and had not supervised any school counseling trainees. My experiences and feelings were recorded in a reflective journal, which was kept throughout the data collection and analysis process. Reflective journals are recognized as an effective strategy to encourage the researcher to be transparent and visible in the data analysis, generation, and interpretation process (see Harrison et al., 2001; Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008).



## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

#### ***Population and Sampling Strategy***

The target population for this research study was actively practicing supervisors of school counseling trainees (including counseling and psychology students) in the U.S. with at least two years of experience (inclusion criteria). Study participants were recruited through direct invitations and snowball sampling (see Patton, 2015). Supervisors who supervised me as a counseling trainee in the past and former colleagues were excluded as study participants.

Typically, most school counseling supervisors are located at either of three types of institutions:

1. Third party agencies (agency site supervisors): charities, children's services, community centers, counseling centers, county or district behavioral health and recovery services providers, family services providers treatment centers, and youth services; where supervisors are providing supervision for their counseling and psychology trainees, who have been contracted to provide school counseling for the agencies as part of their practicum for their educational studies or pre-licensing for their professional licensing;
2. Academic and education sites (university supervisors); where supervisors are supervising their own counseling and psychology students, who are completing their educational training as practicum trainees at schools;

3. Schools or school districts (school site supervisors); where supervisors have been contracted to supervise counseling and psychology trainees (usually from one or more of the first two types of institutions).

Consistent with the interpretive description approach and to accommodate these diverse settings, tenures, and supervision structures, I applied a maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling method. The population of supervisors is characterized by a breadth and diversity of settings and locations of origin. In line with Patton's (2015) description of this method, I aimed to capture the inherent diversity of this population while also enabling common patterns to the dimensions of interest to be represented. The study participants would naturally conform and meet this maximum variation of sampling. The study participants were known to meet the criterion by being asked.

My research study was initiated with a target number of 10 to 20 study participants (Patton, 2015). In interpretive description research a specific sample size is not stipulated. The range of sample size for such designs is usually relatively small and falls between five and 30 research participants (see Patton & Cochran, 2002; Thorne, 2016). In this case according to Cleary et al. (2014) and Thorne (2016), smaller numbers of participants are justified by the conceptual framework, the consistency with the rationale of the research question, and the focus on representing the most appropriate clinical way to gain knowledge.

**Recruiting.** Potential research study participants were initially identified as study volunteers via their public contact details (e.g., on public websites, professional associations, or professional and social media sites) and then recruited. My digital

invitation to study volunteers invited them to contact the researcher by e-mail for recruitment via informed consent or to forward the invitation to a person who met the inclusion criteria (i.e., via snowball sampling).

The digital invitations were sent to publicly listed e-mail addresses of school counseling providers to reach supervisors of school counseling trainees and to recruit up to 20 potential volunteers as study participants. The digital invitation letters specified that interested individuals contact the researcher by e-mail. Then the informed consent form was e-mailed to study volunteers who contacted me by e-mail and were asked to reply with the words, “I consent” if they met the requirements and wished to move forward as study participants. Upon this: (a) consenting study volunteers became study participants, and (b) one-on-one interviews were scheduled with these study participants. The e-mails of the consent(s) were stored on password protected devices or a locked password protected file case. These were included into the research records.

Supervisors who have supervised me as a counseling trainee in the past and my former colleagues were excluded as study participants. At the time of the study, I had not worked as a supervisor myself. The names and contact information of the study participants were recorded as data in the research records. Transcripts of e-mails or other printed transcripts were deidentified down to the demographic descriptors and stored on password protected devices or a locked password protected file case. These were included into the research records.

**Saturation.** I was alerted to indications of information redundancy or theoretical data saturation. These indications signaled that the capturing of conceptual dimensions

and properties had come to a comprehensive end (see Sandelowski, 2008; Thorne, 2016). While some studies have suggested that certain prescribed numbers of interviews can achieve saturation, other factors were also considered. For instance, while Guest et al. (2006) suggested the undertaking of six to twelve interviews, they still recommended that actual saturation depends on levels of heterogeneity, quality of data and clarity of domain of inquiry. Therefore, I did not stipulate a maximum sample size but monitored for signs that a comprehensive level of redundancy had been achieved.

### **Instrumentation**

I was the sole instrument of research collection collected research data with an initial interview group of between 10 to 20 study participants using ten (10) open-ended questions. The full interview took approximately 30 to 90 minutes in total via phone or online platform like Zoom (and according to the study participant's preference). The interview was audio recorded as research data. E-mail correspondence was used for general correspondence and follow-ups like member checking.

The interview guide questions were developed from the primary and secondary research questions. These were centered on definitions of professional competence (e.g., Ridley et al., 2011; van der Klink & Boon, 2003), narrower views of professional competence on attitudes, knowledge, and skills of the counseling profession (e.g., Lamb et al., 1987; Lamb & Swerdlik, 2004), wider values for professional development (e.g., Falender & Shafranske, 2010, 2012), roles of supporting constructs of self-efficacy and professional identity development (Daniels & Larson, 2001; Sutton & Fall, 1995), and perspectives of supervisors (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006).

This interview protocol was derived from the structures for interviewing questions laid out by Merriam (2009), Patton (2015), Rubin and Rubin (2012), and Thorne (2016). Questions 1-3 were introductory questions about the preparation of supervisors and their practice of supervision. Under questions 4-6, the topic of professional competence was introduced and the associations with skills and values were explored. Question 7 was summative and focused on the attainment of professional competence, or its failure to be attained, and the consequences for the development of trainees as professionals. Questions 8-10 concluded the interviews with open-ended questions on the assessment and influence of supervision on professional competence. They also offered me an opportunity to round out the interview experience and revisit areas for greater fullness.

My interviewing style juxtaposed a formally guided structure with a flexible viewpoint which was not restricted to a customary perception of supervisors (see Fontana & Frey, 1994; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Thorne, 2016). I included prompts to open the interview up for examples and experiences.

The interviews were conducted using audio recorded phone and online videoconferencing (see Fontana & Frey, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Each full interview was scheduled to take between 30 and 90 minutes and allowed for one to two interview sessions with each participant (see Maliski et al., 2008). The latter gave me the scope to schedule or reschedule further interview sessions if an initial interview was interrupted or postponed before being fully completed. Online videoconferencing was considered an alternative, effective, and viable alternative to an in-person qualitative research interview (see Gray et al., 2020; Irani, 2019).

### *Interview Questions*

The following guiding interview questions for the data collection were asked:

1. Tell me how you became a supervisor?
  - a. What motivated you to be a supervisor of school counselor trainees?
  - b. How did you qualify for the role?
  - c. How long have you been a supervisor?
2. And tell me about the trainees you supervise
  - a. What are the typical activities and duties of school counseling trainees?
  - b. What is the most common issue raised by your trainees in a typical supervision session?
    - i. Can you give me a recent example?
    - ii. How does that issue get handled in your session?
    - iii. Is there another common issue that you experienced?
  - c. Is there another issue that frequently comes up? (i.e., repeated probes)
3. How do you conduct a typical supervision session?
  - a. How many trainees are / were you typically supervising?
  - b. How frequently?
  - c. Can you give me a sense of how you structure each session?
  - d. What facilitation style works / worked well for your supervision sessions?
    - i. Give us a sense of the atmosphere (i.e., continuation probes)
    - ii. Give us a sense of your authority and influence (i.e., elaboration probes)

4. What do you think is the most valuable part of the supervision experience for trainees?
  - a. How would you describe the process of becoming competent in school counseling?
    - i. Can you give me an example? (i.e., evidence probes)
    - ii. Can you give me another example from one of your trainees? (i.e., repeated evidence probes)
    - iii. What else is important (i.e., elaboration probes)?
  - b. Fully mindful of your duty to confidentiality and that I am currently a mandated reporter in the state of California, what are the main reasons of trainees not becoming professionally competent?
    - i. Tell me more? (i.e., evidence probes)
    - ii. Can you give me an example from one of your trainees? (i.e., repeated evidence probes)
5. Based on your experiences, what skills do trainees need?
  - a. Which is the most important skill a school counselor needs to develop?
    - i. How are they developed? (i.e., continuation probes)
    - ii. How do you “grow” them? (i.e., repeated continuation probes asking for examples)
  - b. What other skill that comes to mind? (i.e., elaboration and repeated probes)
6. Based on your experiences, what professional values do trainees need to develop?

- a. Which are the most important ones for you?
    - i. How are they developed? (i.e., continuation probes)
    - ii. How do you “grow” them? (i.e., repeated continuation probes asking for examples)
  - b. Which is the most important professional value a school counselor needs to develop?
    - i. How are they developed? (i.e., continuation probes)
    - ii. How do you “grow” them? (i.e., repeated continuation probes asking for examples)
  - c. What is another professional value that comes to mind? (i.e., elaboration and repeat probes)
7. So how do you know if a trainee is ready for their profession?
- a. Can you give me examples of trainees who were really well-prepared?
    - i. How did their experience represent competence to you?
    - ii. What happened to them after practicum training?
  - b. What about examples of trainees who were not well-prepared?
    - i. How did their experience represent lack of competence to you?
    - ii. What happened to them after practicum training?
8. How do you monitor improvement/change?
9. What about the supervision experience contributes to the development of competence in your trainees?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share?



## **Procedures**

### ***Recruitment***

The recruiting strategy was implemented after the Walden University Institutional Review Board gave its approval for the research study.

The recruiting strategy applied purposive sampling and snowball sampling to contact school counselor trainee supervisors. Three strategies of recruiting study participants were planned for:

1. To contact supervisors directly at third party agencies, trainee education sites and schools or school districts via their known or published e-mail and contact information. These potential study participants were to be contacted via their names and contact details.

These names and contact details would generally be publicly available on school district websites, college and university websites, school counseling and counseling related associations, alumni websites, or professional websites (e.g., LinkedIn).

These names and contact details would also generally be available through their listings on the websites of professional associations. Examples of such associations are The Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling, American School Counselor Association, American Psychological Association and California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) or professional networks like Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare, Inc. (CAQH).

2. To contact supervisors indirectly as potential study participants, by requesting study volunteers who received the digital invitation, to forward it to a person who could meet the inclusion criteria.

Once study volunteers responded by e-mail to the digital invitation with their interest to become study participants, they received an e-mail of the informed consent document. Their suitability and match were verified by their acknowledgement of the inclusion criteria and e-mail consent provided to the researcher by e-mail.

### ***Participation***

Study volunteers became study participants via their consent in the informed consent form. On receipt of their consent: (a) consenting study volunteers became study participants, and (b) one-on-one interviews were scheduled per e-mail with the study participants. The interviews were framed with an opening introduction to provide general contextual information. In terms of duration, each interview ran for between 30-90 minutes and included additional summative demographic questions. These covered their existing level of school counseling trainee supervisor experience, supervisory settings, ranks or professional titles, and levels of educational attainment. This information was solicited in an initial conversation and then followed up in a structured manner with Questions 1-3 of the formal interviews.

Study participants were encouraged to conduct the research interviews in a private, quiet, uninterrupted room, where the risks of being intruded upon, observed, or overheard by other people apart from the study participant were minimized. They were provided with a cautionary verbal reminder to the study participant. This stated that it

was not the intention or purpose of the interview to require or solicit responses which would be prejudicial to the economic or professional standing of the study participant, if there was an accidental, or unintended, breach of their confidentiality. The study participants were notified that, if they disclosed misconduct or disagreements with the academic or school institutions where they are employed, this could damage their employability, position, promotion, or professional reputation, if there were to be a confidentiality breach. As stated in the informed consent form, study participants were reminded of my status as a mandated reporter for as long as that status was maintained.

### ***Data Collection***

The data collection process was handled with an ethical, flexible, and methodical approach (see Patton, 2015; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). The interviews were carried out online via the Zoom video conferencing and audio recording software application. In addition, all research interviews were also audio recorded via the Apple iPhone Voice mobile phone Audio visual methods of data collection using semistructured research questions in face-to-face, e-mail and audiotaped telephone settings are accepted by the research literature (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Zoom video conferencing technology has become established and supported for qualitative interviewing usage (Gray et al., 2020). Meeting planning and follow-ups like member checking, sending of gift cards and a one to two-page summary of the full dissertation (dissertation summary) were delivered via e-mail. The interviews were transcribed with the Otter.ai Live Notes for Zoom software application, which is connected to the Zoom video conferencing application.

The recorded media were transcribed for analysis and storage. The names of study participants were coded. For security, the audio recordings were stored electronically securely using password protected storage drives. Recordings took place in a private place or setting (see Holt, 2010; Redlich-Amirav & Higginbottom, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Stephens, 2007). Research records data are stored for five years on password protected devices. After the fifth anniversary of their storage, the research records data are completely deleted and erased from their storage devices.

### ***Biases and Conflicts***

I have worked at two counseling agencies and three school districts in California as either a counseling trainee or a school counseling trainee. I also completed a master's degree in counseling at a university in California. At the time of the research study, I had not worked as a supervisor of counseling trainees.

To avoid biases and conflicts the following measures were taken. Persons who had supervised me as a counseling trainee were not considered as study volunteers or accepted as study participants. I only contacted study volunteers to interview as supervisors of school counseling trainees at academic institutions, counseling agencies, and school districts where I had not worked or studied in the past.

No incentives were awarded for participation in the research. But all participants were offered a gift card once they completed the interview and checked or corrected a short summary of the main points from the interview. They were also offered the option to make a full, or partial, donation in lieu of the full gift card amount.

**Debriefing.** For the validation of the respondent responses for accuracy and without prejudice, debriefings took place during the interview itself (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Debriefing during the interview occurred directly (e.g., with direct questions or with confirmation probes). The debriefing of research participants was handled with confidentiality, ethics, privacy, and safety (Hewson, 2003).

I contacted the interviewees by e-mail for the member checking step after transcription and initial coding of the collected data. In the e-mail, I shared a short summary; so that the participant could check or correct whether my interpretations were accurate. These short summaries were sent by e-mail for their e-mail responses. These were e-mailed back to me.

**Transcription.** For transcription, the audio recorded interview data were transferred using transcription software (i.e., Otter.ai Live Notes for Zoom). The transcripts were recorded in Microsoft using both their Excel and Word data processing formats. For confidentiality and privacy of data and identity protection, personal identifying data were protected as follows. The research study and results summarized the history and length of supervision activity, qualification as a supervisor, and type of supervision institutions where supervision was practiced (demographic descriptors). No identifying information was included in the demographic descriptors. The identities, locations and names of agencies, schools or other institutions of study participants were not directly, or indirectly, disclosed. The names of study participants and the locations and names of their places of education, qualifications and work were not disclosed. The

names of study participants were coded. Specific experiences that could have identified or led to the deduction of the identity of study participants were also deidentified and excluded from the research study analyses and results.

### ***Data Analysis Plan***

The data analysis and data collection were guided by Saldaña's (2015) qualitative design, methods, and steps as well as adapted with Thorne's (2016) interpretive description research design. Thorne's (2016) method is oriented towards inductive reasoning and follows a process of building a conceptual whole by linking the basic elements of the data together. The process is aimed at illuminating important insights in applied healthcare practice. Saldaña's (2015) coding steps were sequenced accordingly.

**Step 1: Reading Transcripts and Sorting Text.** During the reading of the recordings and transcripts, I made notations and fieldnotes (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldaña, 2015). Particular attention was paid to the memorable and prominent text pieces which emerged from the materials (see Malterud, 2012; Thorne, 2016).

**Step 2: Organizing and Sorting Units of Meaningful Data.** In order to develop ideas into increasingly important sets of findings, I identified codes and categories from meaningful data (see Saldaña, 2015, Thorne, 2016). Following Thorne's (2016) interpretive research design, I also extracted further meanings by developing feelings, relationships, and sense from the text data. The data was prepared by me for analysis and hand-coding using the Microsoft Excel and Word software programs.

**Step 3: Transforming the Data by Condensing Themes From Categories, Codes, and Meanings.** I organized text data pieces into groupings of meaning units from

which relationships were condensed into an understandable whole (see Malterud, 2012; Thorne, 2016). Text meanings were induced into codes, then categories, and finally, themes. Technically, the research process followed Malterud's (2012) and Saldaña's (2015) two-step coding processes. These are composed of a first step of initial coding into codes and categories (First Cycle Coding, or In Vivo Coding) and then a second analytical step into larger meanings (Second Cycle Coding, or Pattern Coding).

Coding began by extracting meaning units. These are the smallest interpretable units relevant to the research study which were able to stimulate further deliberation on the topic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The initial data was transferred by me for analysis and hand-coding using the Microsoft Excel and Word software programs. At this stage, I decided that the data volumes were manageable and did not require assistance from either professional third-party service providers or qualitative research analysis software.

***First Cycle Coding (In Vivo).*** During the In Vivo coding phase, I reviewed and marked up transcripts. These mark ups included bolding, highlights, italics, underlining or vocal emphasis for instance noting action-denoting verbs, strong nouns, and other evocative or noteworthy uses of metaphors, phrases, or similes (see Saldaña, 2015). Reality-testing viewpoints were integrated by focusing on the interviewee's own words and concentration on what was existing and living (see Strauss, 1987). This allowed me to evoke what really existed in the language whether the interviewer was consciously aware of them or not (see Epstein, 2012). I was also alerted to limitations of the supervisors based on my own experiences and knowledge in the field.

This assessment also allowed for the emergence of challenges, disconfirmations, and variations in how the phenomenon was understood (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). By allowing for discrepant data, the study allowed for other concepts to emerge or become more prominent. The investigation of disconfirmations from discrepant data also developed the credibility of the research study. This was particularly relevant for seeking to clarify the definitions and conceptual framework that emerged from Chapter 2.

*Second Cycle Coding (Pattern Coding).* The First Cycle In Vivo codes were distilled into broader clusters of larger meanings (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I applied Pattern Coding to develop emergent configurations, explanations, or themes (see Miles et al., 2014). For instance, I used formatting tools for highlighting "because", "if" and "then" phrases and words in bold during the coding of the data (Miles et al., 2014). This step was well-suited to shaping smaller units of analysis into major themes, theoretical constructs, or definitions from large amounts of data (see Miles et al., 2014).

**Step 4: Synthesizing Into Descriptions and Concepts; Developing Further Themes.** In the post-coding and pre-writing phase, a core of synthesized themes was identified and sorted into assertions. I adopted the interpretive description research approach to form a conceptual description or a thematic summary. This meant advancing, classifying, naming, and synthesizing the patterns which emerged from the codes and categories into themes. As an emic researcher, I was also an immersed and integral tool



of research to develop a meaningful alternative interpretive explanation towards a phenomenon (see Thorne, 2016).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

In this research project, credibility and related issues of authority, authenticity and congruence were covered with a combination of approaches. These were: (a) following the methods laid out under an interpretive description approach to healthcare sector research, and (b) adding a logical empiricist's reality-testing viewpoint to uncovering a definitional reality (see Lincoln et al., 2011; Thorne, 1997; Whitemore et al., 2001). The integrity of the research epistemology and methodology was based on making consistent decisions and logical research assumptions (see Koch, 1995; Simmons, 1995; Thorne, 2016).

Authority and authenticity are also connected to the credibility of my study. These were represented by my own experience in the same field, which was personified in my emic research perspective. They were also promoted with an inductive research approach which built a conceptualization from the research interview data. The integrity and variations within the study were supported by the acceptance and investigation of discrepant cases or data which emerged from a prolonged period of investigation (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Such discrepant data was even welcomed as it allowed for alternative conceptual structures to emerge (see Thorne, 2016).

Member checks were utilized to confirm the accuracy of what was really stated by the study participants. They verified the internal validity of the analytical process. Two

main methods of member checks were utilized: (a) debriefing and verifying with checks, comments, probes, and questions during the interview, and (b) confirming and correcting the representation of the interviews, which was facilitated by sending the study participants a summary afterwards for their review. Sufficient time was also allowed for this during the actual and after the interviews. This facilitated the solicitation of persistent observations of what typical factors described the experiences of the supervisors.

I adopted an iterative interviewing style to capture, corroborate, or confirm statements made by the study participants in the interview itself. The caution voiced by interpretive description researchers on member checking was also heeded. They cautioned against confirmations which lead to false confidence in findings or constrain a researcher from making further analytical interpretations (see Thorne, 2016). In response, I also returned to the data systematically and synthesized my initial interpretations and observations into the research (see Thorne, 2016).

### **Transferability**

In terms of addressing transferability and trustworthiness in the study, I adopted an adaptable, holistic, immediate, and responsive personality. This was also manifested by applying interviewing techniques of clarifying, sensitizing, and summarizing (see Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability within the contexts of the applied healthcare system and profession of school counseling was also addressed through my emic standpoint (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Thorne, 2016).

The instrument of unlocking thick descriptions from study participants was applied to strengthen both transferability and trustworthiness. This was implemented by

my consistent use of prompts and encouragements for the study participants to provide narrative examples in their responses. These were facilitated by my active and confronting interviewing style which targeted an authentic and pure perception and sensation of the real world (see Arendt, 1958; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). The caution voiced by interpretive description researchers on data generation was also heeded. They warned against the mere generation of large amounts of empty, thin, or piled up data (Silverman, 1993; Thorne, 2016; Wolcott, 1994).

### **Dependability**

Several instruments, including creating audit trails and reflective journals (also referred to under “Confirmability”) were utilized to achieve dependability. I composed an audit trail to track the analytic logic and inductive reasoning of this research project. The audit trail was implemented by recording the actual research steps of the study. This is in line with the interpretivist description approach of considering multiple realities for complex issues within their context.

I also applied data source triangulation to enhance the credibility, dependability, and saturation of the research. This was performed by triangulating the sources of data (see Carter et al., 2014; Farmer et al., 2006). This method explored the complementarity, convergence, and dissonance of the research between different respondent groups (see Erzberger & Prein, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As an example, the responses of supervisors at academic institutions were compared with supervisors at professional agencies and school districts.

**Confirmability**

For confirmability, a reflective journal was composed to illuminate the feelings and thoughts of the researcher transparently and visibly in the data analysis, generation, and interpretation process (see Ortlipp, 2008). This self-critical account included actions, assumptions, choices, experiences, feelings, goals, opinions, presuppositions, and thoughts relevant to the study. In doing so, I developed my instrumental role as a co-author and narrator of the process (see Etherington, 2004; Harrison et al., 2001; Hatch, 1996; Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008; Russell & Kelley, 2002; Thorne, 2016).

The caution voiced by interpretive description researchers on these analytical research processes was also heeded. They warned against leaping to conclusions too quickly or being reluctant to assert linkages to possible connections without holding the full data (Ortlipp, 2008; Thorne, 2016). I also used this journaling technique to slow down and record points of research decisions, and to experiment with alternative conceptualizations (see Ortlipp, 2008; Thorne, 2016). I remained flexible and mindful to a viewpoint voiced in interpretive description writings of research as an inductive, nonlinear, or untidy process. To strengthen confirmability, I also consulted with my research chair for mentorship on issues of reflexivity (see Creswell & Brown, 1992).

**Ethical Procedures**

After approval for the research from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (under Walden University's approval number 05-19-22-0992475), the ethical protocols were observed for the research study. In terms of protocols, this was guided by the ACA Code of Ethics (American Counseling Association, 2014) and APA Ethical

Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2017). I followed the duties and obligations on avoiding deception, fabrication, and plagiarism. I also maintained confidentiality, debriefing, informed consent, and avoided injury to study participants in following ethical research obligations (American Counseling Association, 2014; American Psychological Association, 2017).

As detailed in the earlier section on research procedures, I also followed ethical standards in obtaining consent, maintaining confidentiality, and respecting privacy. In terms of informed consent, the study participants were informed in writing of the nature of the research and their rights and voluntary obligations to the study in the informed consent form. To protect confidentiality and privacy, (a) the identities of the study participants were kept confidential under the data collection procedures and their names in the research study were given a code, (b) the privacy of the study participants was protected and their identity was kept confidential, within the limits of the law, and (c) the data was kept secure by being stored on a password protected phone or personal computer and filed on a secure online directory or in locked password protected file cases. I undertook to maintain all research data and research records in locked, password-protected, and secure containers and locations for five years after the end of the research project and then have them destroyed.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided an outline of the purpose of the research study and its research questions based on the research design of interpretive description in combination with the reality-testing principles of logical empiricism (Epstein, 2012; Patton, 2015;

Thorne, 2016). I laid out the detailed methodology for research procedures, data analysis, and the ensuring of trustworthiness, with adherence and attention to the guiding principles of Thorne's (2016) interpretive description research analysis. My inductive process of coding of the research data followed Saldaña's (2015) principles of In Vivo coding and Pattern Coding. The Microsoft Excel and Word software programs were used as data processing programs. Methods and tools to ensure trustworthiness for confirmability, credibility, dependability ethics and transferability were applied. The results of the data collection activities will be provided in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand how supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors. The primary phenomenon of interest was competence, as described by school counselor supervisors. The intent was to explore the meaning of competence and describe how supervisors train competence. The roles of the development of self-efficacy and professional identity were also explored. They have been identified as essential in other helping professions, yet their roles are not well-studied in the literature on school counseling.

The two primary research questions were:

- How do supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors? (Primary RQ 1)
- How do supervisors train the development of competence in trainee school counselors? (Primary RQ 2)

Two secondary research questions were:

- How do supervisors describe the development of self-efficacy in trainee school counselors? (Secondary RQ A)
- How do supervisors describe the development of professional identity in trainee school counselors? (Secondary RQ B)

I combined reality-testing inquiry with an interpretive description design for this basic qualitative study, including data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 contains a description of the research settings and basic demographic characteristics of the study

participants. This is followed by a description of the data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the results.

### **Settings**

The recruitment of study participants and the collection of data proceeded as planned. Participants were recruited with digital invitations which were sent to their e-mails. After my receipt of their informed consent, the date and time for each one-on-one interview on the Zoom online platform were arranged. No issues arose due to personal conflicts based on the exclusion criteria. There was no significant deviation from the originally planned procedures.

### **Demographics**

The 16 study participants were recruited via a digital invitation which was sent to their contact details on public websites. An invitation to forward it to a person who met the inclusion criteria (i.e., via snowball sampling) was also included. The participants were found at three types of institutions: (a) third party agencies (agencies), (b) academic and educational university sites (academic), or (c) schools or school districts (school). The participants were invited to provide general contextual information on their years as a supervisor and the type of institution at which they were active. All study participants met the inclusion criteria. General contextual information on the participants is set out in Table 1.



**Table 1***General Contextual Information*

Participant	Years as supervisor	Type of institution
P1	6	Agency
P2	15	School
P3	4	Agency
P4	More than 20	Agency
P5	4	School
P6	5	School
P7	18	Academic
P8	5	Agency
P9	7	Agency
P10	15	School
P11	More than 20	Agency
P12	More than 20	Academic
P13	5	Academic
P14	More than 20	Academic
P15	3	Agency
P16	12	School (and Academic)

*Note.* Agency site supervisors are denoted by “Agency.” University supervisors are denoted by “Academic.” School site supervisors are denoted by “School.”

### **Data Collection**

The research data was collected from 16 study participants. All three of the types of institutions listed as locations for supervisors of trainees in Chapter 3 were represented by the participants. Five participants were school site supervisors based at schools or school districts, five were university supervisors at academic and education sites (university supervisors), and seven were agency site supervisors at third party agencies. One participant was both a university site supervisor and a school site supervisor. Two participants supervised trainees located at a single school. The other 14 participants supervised trainees from across a range of grade levels and schools. Some participants worked for the same agency, school, or academic institution. Except for an agency supervisor and a university supervisor, all the participants also held advanced educational or licensed qualifications. The educational qualifications of participants included master's and doctoral degrees. The licensed qualifications included counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers. All the supervisors were active in supervision. The length of their supervisory experiences ranged from three to over 20 years.

The study participants were recruited via a digital invitation sent to their contact details on public websites which also contained an invitation to forward it to a person who met the inclusion criteria (i.e., via snowball sampling). Each participant was interviewed once. The recruitment process for the study occurred as described in Chapter 3. After the receipt of IRB approval on May 19, 2022, data collection began on June 2, 2022, and occurred over a 4-week period. All the study participants were recruited directly at their schools, school districts, universities, and agencies through their known

or published e-mail and contact information. Snowball referral sampling was incorporated by requesting potential study volunteers to forward their digital invitation to other potentially suitable study volunteers. The recruitment process ended on June 28, 2022.

The full interviews took approximately 30 to 69 minutes in total. The interviews were conducted using audio recorded phone and online platform settings (see Fontana & Frey, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). All interviews took place using video conferencing. The audio recorded online platform interviews were made with the Zoom video conferencing and recording software applications. Transcriptions were made with the Otter.ai transcription software which is connected to the Zoom video conferencing software application. The Apple iPhone Voice mobile phone voice memo application was used as a back-up for audio recordings. The recorded and transcribed media were analyzed and properly stored by me. I edited the transcripts for accuracy by reviewing and listening to the recordings using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word. Further software and service providers were not required. Afterwards, each study participant received a short summary of their interview by e-mail for member checking. Cases of uncertainty or lack of clarity, inconsistencies or misinterpretations were resolved by member checking. Participants were also invited to share any additional data or information during member checking. Thereafter, no additional follow-up interviews were necessary. No variations in data collection methods from the process described in Chapter 3 were encountered. No unusual circumstances were experienced during data collection.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis and data collection followed Saldaña's (2015) qualitative design methods and Thorne's (2016) interpretive description research design. In accordance with Saldaña's (2015) and Thorne's (2016) interpretive methods, I progressed inductively with my data analysis from In Vivo coded units and categories to pattern codes, themes, and assertions. The process followed four steps: (a) reading the transcripts and sorting the text with highlights and notations to gain familiarity with them, (b) analyzing and sorting the text into codes and initial categories to generate meaningful data, (c) distilling the data into codes and categories in a first cycle of In Vivo coding and a second cycle of Pattern Coding, and (d) identifying assertions by synthesizing the themes which were generated.

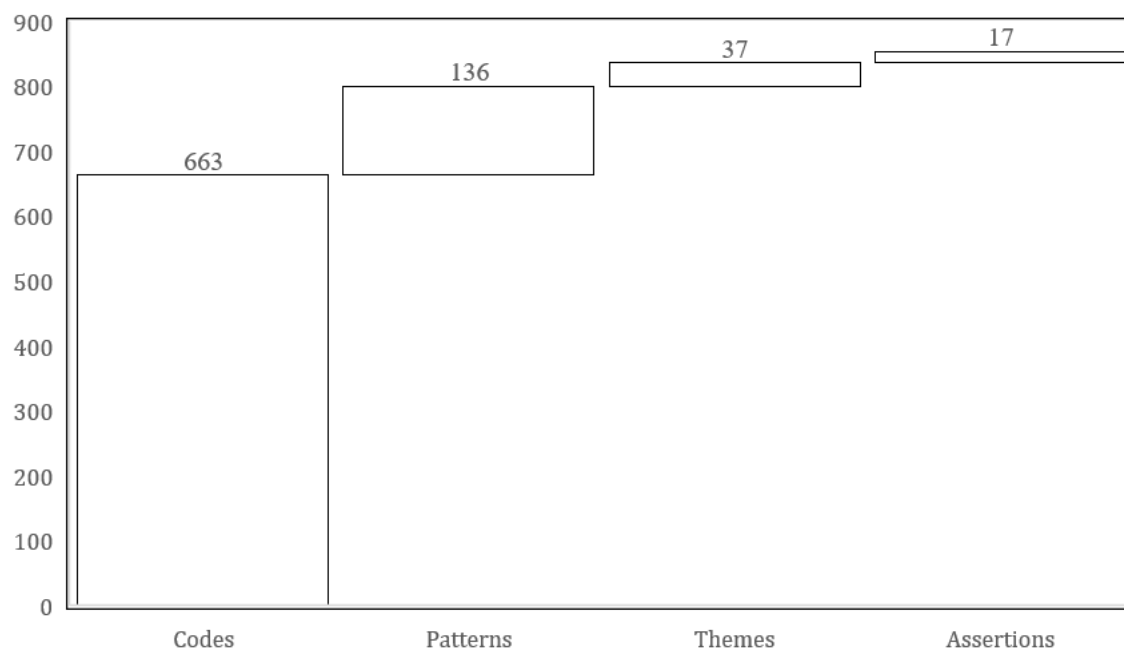
In the first phase, I familiarized myself with the data by attentively and repeatedly listening to the audio recordings, as well as carefully reviewing and revising the verbatim transcripts. I hand coded the transcripts with the Microsoft Excel and Word software programs. This followed being attentive to exclamations, emotions, pauses, and repetitions within the recordings. For instance, moments of laughter or significant pauses were also noted. In this evocative way, I immersed myself into each interview in terms of accuracy and atmosphere as an active actor in the worlds of the participants. If necessary, the text was corrected and amended based on the member checking. In this phase, I also highlighted memorable and noteworthy sentences, phrases, and words. Finally, I took note of potential codes, categories, and patterns.

In the second phase, I developed the codes and categories into patterns, themes, and assertions. For this, I applied a combination of Thorne's (2016) interpretive

description method and a reality-testing framework. The former was applied to relate the experiences of the participants to their professional setting of school counseling. The latter was applied to objectively record the lived reality and the observed experiences of the supervisors (see Epstein, 2012; Schwandt, 2001). This was reinforced by studying the transcripts both individually and collectively, as well as by reviewing important overall findings. I took ownership of the research data by personally preparing the data for coding by hand (see Saldaña, 2015). The progression of the distillation process is set out in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Summary of Distillation of Codes Into Assertions*



**First Cycle Coding (In Vivo)**

The transcripts were marked up with an initial set of bolding, colors, and highlights for action-denoting verbs, strong nouns, and evocative or noteworthy

metaphors, phrases, or similes (see Saldaña, 2015). I focused on the verbatim words of the participants to evoke the conscious and unconscious content of their language (Epstein, 2012). In terms of discrepant data, I looked for disconfirmations and variations in how the phenomenon is understood (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). This created an initial set of codes derived from each participant. These codes flowed chronologically from the interview questions. The 10 interview questions were composed of 19 main and sub-questions. I also reorganized my participant-derived data for further coding by ordering the data from each interview vertically into topic-derived groups which were equivalent to the main questions and sub-questions. This also created identical topic-derived groups of sentences and phrases which were arranged horizontally across all the interviews. This enabled me to analyze, compare, and triangulate the data across each of the main and sub-questions and extract further words, phrases, and sentences for an additional set of codes. At this stage, I was also able to identify and mark-up potentially discrepant comments which could challenge or disconfirm the emerging themes (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a result, 20 codes were identified and marked up for further appraisal as potentially discrepant. In total, 663 In Vivo Codes were identified.

### **Second Cycle Coding (Pattern Coding)**

Once the data was re-coded after comparing vertically ordered participant-driven meanings with horizontally-ordered topic-driven meanings, the codes and categories were expanded into larger meanings (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The cross-checked transcripts were marked up with a second set of bolding, colors, and

highlights. These formatting schemes enabled me to compare and review the flow of codes and categories across participants and topics. I was thereby able to sift large amounts of small units into the major themes, theoretical constructs, and definitions (see Miles et al., 2014). Although hand coding was time-consuming, the greater degree of ownership and familiarity with the data gained thereby enabled a straightforward transition into the second cycle (see Saldaña, 2015). The distillation process was circular. It involved several cycles of classification, prioritization, and integration until there was a coherent, logical, and meaningful order and naming of codes, categories, and patterns (see Saldaña, 2015). At this stage, I was able to reappraise the potentially discrepant cases: 17 out of the 20 potential quotes were found not to be discrepant. They were classified as isolated or unique comments or perspectives, which did not disconfirm the themes. There remained three quotes (by P7, P3, P1) which could be technically interpreted to be discrepant when taken out of context, at face value, or in isolation. But when I reviewed them within the context of their full interview statements, member checks and self-corrections, they were found not to pose a strong challenge to the themes. Therefore, they were registered as discrepant for the record only but they did not carry great weight in the analysis of findings. In total, the In Vivo codes were categorized into 136 pattern codes.

In the fourth step, after completing the transcription and coding, I generated the themes and assertions. This process of iteration also involved further phases of reflection, synthesis, and abstraction. This led me to refine and relabel some of the themes. In total, the 136 pattern codes were distilled into 37 themes. After, I summarized the first and

second cycle findings into themes, I sorted the themes into clusters of meaning and significance, or assertions. The purification process led to the identification of 17 assertions on my understanding of how supervisors describe the development of competence in their trainees. Then I differentiated between the assertions. I considered that general assertions were broader and more confirmatory in nature while specific assertions were narrower and more declaratory in nature. In sum, I defined 11 general assertions (GA) and six specific assertions (SA). Finally, I came full circle by assigning the assertions to align with the research questions.

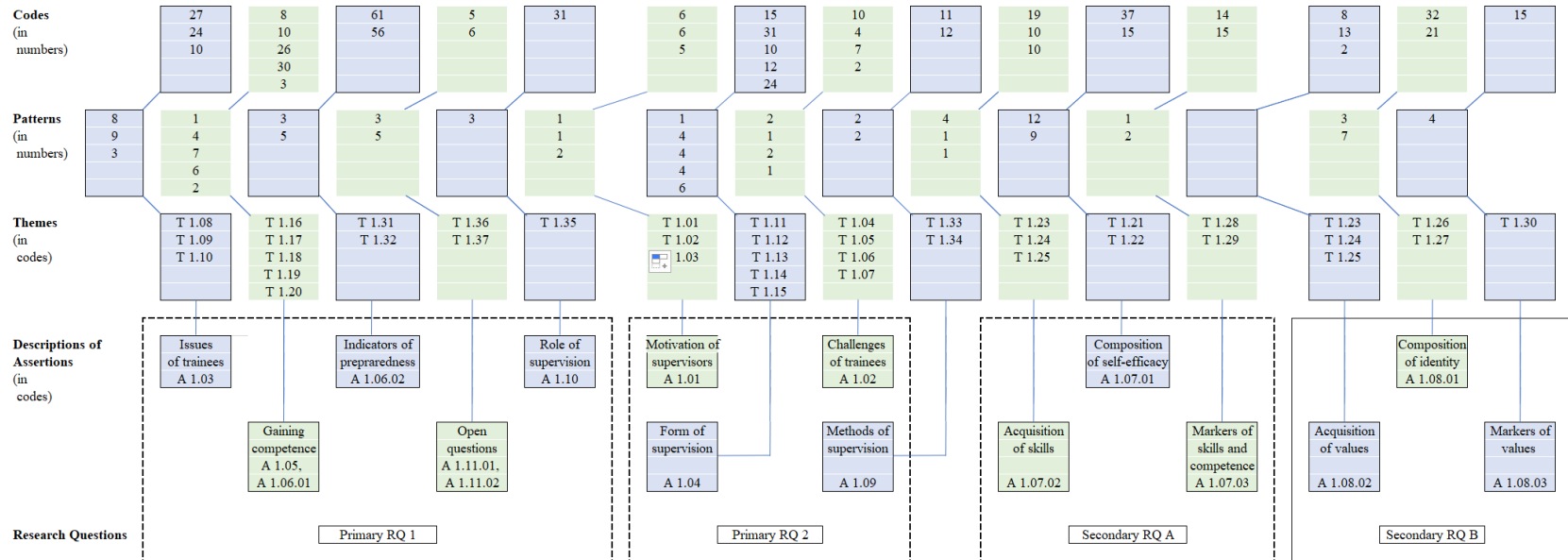
As an example of the distillation process, 44 codes were identified which described the development of competence. These were distilled into 12 patterns, three themes, and two assertions. Initially, participants (e.g., P14) generated a code: “There is a process to becoming competent. I think that ... there are markers of competence.” Further review revealed categories of pattern codes. In this case, eight codes shared one pattern on the importance of self-confidence (i.e., “P 4.13 Competence: Self-confidence (through experience) (II)”). For instance, P6 described a state of, “just having more confidence and feeling more natural.” Ten codes shared two patterns on the importance of self-initiative (i.e., “P 4.08 Competence: Upholding knowledge / skills (independently)” and “P 4.17 Competence: Self-initiation”). For instance, P1 stated that, “having that self-initiation is important.” A large set of twenty-six codes shared nine patterns on the continual process of development (e.g., “P 4.07 Competence: Awareness (through time and experience)” etc.). For instance, P16 stated that, “it’s just successive experiences and exposure to the different domains of school counseling.” Further analysis, reflection, and review resulted



in these 12 patterns being crystallized into three themes: “T 1.16 Development of competence: Self-confidence”, “T 1.17 Development of competence: Self-initiative”, and “T 1.18 Development of competence: Continuum.” Then, these themes were purified into two specific assertions: “A 1.05: Gaining competence is a continuum of growing skills and developing values (SA)” and “A 1.06.01: Self-confidence and self-initiative begin the continuum of gaining competence (SA).” In terms of the circularity of the distillation process, the initial code, which referred to the markers of confidence, also illuminated my path to understanding and labeling the initial set of 44 codes. This path led me to purposefully assign the codes into patterns and themes. The resulting three themes also had a signaling effect since they became a guidepost for structuring adjacent codes on similar topics which contributed to the overall understanding of the research topic. The entire process for all the research data is set out in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Summary of Codes, Patterns, Themes, and Assertions for Research Questions*



*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B and only new and original patterns and themes are listed.

## **Issues of Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

The credibility of the study was founded on pursuing the research in the healthcare sector under the guidance of an interpretive description approach and a logical empirical reality-testing viewpoint (see Lincoln et al., 2011; Thorne, 1997; Whittemore et al., 2001). This integrity was upheld by my own experience in the field of school counseling. This emic research perspective allowed me to establish an effective period of prolonged engagement with the participants. This is one of the critical strategies for establishing trustworthiness (see Shenton & Hayter, 2004). I also interviewed participants from the different levels and types of supervisors of trainees. This allowed me to establish similarities and differences in terms of experiences, perspectives, and settings. Further credibility was established by accepting, investigating, and welcoming discrepant comments, data, and quotes. This permitted the emergence of any alternative concepts (Thorne, 2016).

I also adopted two other strategies to enhance credibility during the process of interviewing. These were: (a) debriefing the participants with elaboration and repeat probes during the interview, and (b) member checking after each interview with a summary sent to the participants for their review. Iterative questioning also involved pursuing noteworthy comments, experiences, and quotes with the participants until their true meaning had been extracted and understood. Sufficient time was provided to the participants for testing the reality of what the participants stated. This involved leaving time for pauses, silences, and open questions during the interview. This was later

supported by member checking. The combination of an iterative interviewing style and member checking allowed me to accurately capture, corroborate, and confirm both the content and the meaning of what was said. Lastly, I also reviewed the data systematically and repeatedly to synthesize my interpretations and observations into the research (especially when coding).

### **Transferability**

The transferability and trustworthiness of the study was founded on my maintenance of an authentic and responsive researcher personality. This was based on my emic standpoint from within the healthcare sector and school counseling (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Thorne, 2016). It enabled me to clarify and summarize the interviews for transcription and analysis in an authentic and sensitive manner (see Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Consequently, I was able to apply the interviewing techniques of elaborations, encouragements, probes, and prompts to release thick descriptions from the participants. For example, I made use of them to elicit rich descriptions with narrative examples, detailed explanations, and summative statements by the participants. In doing so, I focused on the development thick and categorizable data (see Thorne, 2016; Wolcott, 1994).

### **Dependability**

The dependability of the study was safeguarded by a two-step coding process which was recorded in my audit trail and self-reflective journal. In addition, a higher diversity of participants was secured by applying maximum variation (heterogeneity)

sampling. I also used the same semi-structured interview guide for each interview, which included precise instructions for recording and saving the transcripts, for every interview. In addition to my audit trails, I made verbatim transcriptions and saved a copy of every significant new version of my working drafts so that I could track my progress precisely. I also made self-reflective comments and notations in my working drafts.

There were also clusters of participants from similar sites or fulfilling similar roles (e.g., university supervisors). Therefore, I was able to apply data source triangulation to compare their interviews for signs of complementarity, convergence, and dissonance between and within clusters, as well as across respondent groups. As an example, this allowed me to reconsider P1's statement that: "I have never come across a trainee, who has worked in the school-based setting, who has not continued their clinical career." It was strongly discrepant when taken at face value or it could be relativized in the light of other comments made by other participants. Not only did this process enhance the dependability of the research but also its credibility and saturation. A summary of my audit trail is set out in Table 2.

**Table 2***Summary of Audit Trail Process*

Analysis	1. Familiarization with Data	2. 1st Cycle Coding (In Vivo)	3. 2nd Cycle Coding (Patterns)	4. Generation of Themes	5. Definition of Assertions
Process	Reading and reviewing of interviews. Making of notations and field notes. Member checking of uncertainties and unclarities with. Highlighting of memorable and prominent text pieces. Notation of exclamations, emotions, pauses, and repetitions. Immersion into atmosphere of interview. Sorting into main questions and sub-questions.	Extraction of units of meanings with colors, bolding, and highlights. Isolation of action-denoting verbs, strong nouns, and other evocative or noteworthy phrases. Screening for discrepant disconfirmations and variations. Focus on the conscious and unconscious reality of the language. Condensation of codes from the data.	Distillation of broad clusters of meanings. Reordering of transcripts into topics and sub-topics. Review and addition of new codes based on fresh topics. Prioritizing, linking, and integrating of patterns. Analyses of patterns within each participant's interview. Analyses of patterns within each topic. Review of potential discrepant findings.	Generating themes from patterns. Reordering codes and categories into coherent patterns and themes. Changing and renaming codes, categories, and patterns. Matching the primary and secondary research questions with themes. Finalization of discrepant findings.	Reviewing the flow from coding to themes. Refining and relabeling of themes. Sorting and changing the names and labels of themes into final assertions (or theories). Differentiating between general and specific assertions
Examples	Reviewing 16 interviews with one specific question on competence and skills development.	Naming of 39 codes on developing competence and skills.	Distilling four potential themes from six patterns on competence and skills development.	Revision into three themes competence and skills development,	Identification of one assertion that skills are mostly acquired with learning and experience
Findings	19 sets of answers from the interview's main and sub-questions	663 In Vivo codes (with 20 potentially discrepant codes)	136 pattern codes (with three technically discrepant codes)	37 themes	17 assertions (11 were general and six were specific)

## **Confirmability**

For confirmability, I composed a reflective journal to illuminate my feelings and thoughts transparently and visibly in the data analysis, generation, and interpretation process (see Ortlipp, 2008). This self-reflective account included actions, assumptions, choices, experiences, feelings, goals, opinions, presuppositions, and thoughts relevant to the study. In doing so, I developed my instrumental role as co-author and narrator to the process (see Etherington, 2004; Harrison et al., 2001; Hatch, 1996; Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008; Russell & Kelley, 2002; Thorne, 2016).

I also heeded the caution voiced by writers on interpretive description research, who warned away from leaping to conclusions too quickly or from asserting linkages to possible connections without holding the full data (see Ortlipp, 2008; Thorne, 2016). I used this journaling technique to slow down and record points of research decisions, and to experiment with alternative conceptualizations (see Ortlipp, 2008; Thorne, 2016). I also remained flexible and mindful to a viewpoint voiced in interpretive description writings of research as an inductive, nonlinear, or untidy process. To strengthen confirmability, I also consulted with my research chair for mentorship on issues of reflexivity (Creswell & Brown, 1992).

## **Results**

The study explored: How do supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors? The inquiry of the study was led by two primary research questions and followed by two secondary research questions. 16 study participants answered 19 main and sub-questions from which 37 themes emerged, which resulted in

17 assertions. Eleven assertions were considered as general in nature and seven were so concentrated as to be specific in nature. The evolution of assertions from the original codes are set out in Figure 2 and Table 2.

### **Primary RQ 1**

The first of this research study's two primary research questions inquired: "How do supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors?" (Primary RQ 1). The analysis process resulted in the following three specific and four general assertions: (a) trainees face internal and external issues (GA), (b) gaining competence is a continuum of growing skills and developing values (SA), (c) self-confidence and self-initiative begin the continuum of gaining competence (SA), (d) transformation through self-confidence is the indicator of preparedness (SA), (e) supervision is the beginning step towards competence and preparedness (GA), (f) the influence of training settings on developing trainee competence as an open topic (GA), and (g) the influence of preparedness of supervisors on developing trainee competence as an open topic (GA). The latter two items emerged as assertions for potential future research.

These assertions emerged from 13 themes and are set out in the following Table 3. (Throughout this section, reference is made to codes, patterns, themes, and assertions in either their full or abbreviated form. They are fully listed in Appendix B).



**Table 3***Summary of Codes, Patterns, Themes, and Assertions for Primary RQ 1*

Codes and Patterns	Themes	General Assertions (GA) and Specific Assertions (SA)
61 codes and 20 patterns	T 1.08 Issues of trainees: Lacking and gaining inner confidence / experience T 1.09 Issues of trainees: Facing outer challenges / opposition T 1.10 Issues of trainees: Facing inner challenges	A 1.03: Trainees face internal and external issues (GA)
77 codes and 20 patterns	T 1.16 Development of competence: Self-confidence T 1.17 Development of competence: Self-initiative T 1.18 Development of competence: Continuum T 1.19 Nondevelopment of competence: Lack of understanding (skills) T 1.20 Nondevelopment of competence: Lack of qualities (values)	A 1.05: Gaining competence is a continuum of growing skills and developing values (SA) A 1.06.01: Self-confidence and self-initiative begin the continuum of gaining competence (SA)
117 codes and 8 patterns	T 1.31 Prepared trainees: Undergoing a transformation process T 1.32 Nonprepared trainees: floundering	A 1.06.02: Transformation through self-confidence is the indicator of preparedness (SA)
31 codes and 3 patterns	T 1.35 Value of Supervision: A Contained Space (The Beginning) III	A 1.10: Supervision is the beginning step towards competence and preparedness (GA)
5 codes and 3 patterns	T 1.36 Further Research: Agencies	A 1.11.01: Area of further research: The influence of training settings on developing trainee competence (GA)
6 codes and 5 patterns	T 1.37 Further Research - Supervisors	A 1.11.02: Area of further research: The influence of preparedness of supervisors on developing trainee competence (GA)

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

***Assertion: Trainees face internal and external issues (A 1.03)***

This general assertion evolved from the exploration of the “issues of trainees.” It was concretized from three themes based on issues of trainees: (a) lacking and gaining

inner confidence / experience, (b) facing outer challenges / opposition, and (c) facing inner challenges. It was based on 20 new patterns which grew out of 61 codes.

There were eight patterns which developed the first theme of trainees lacking and gaining inner confidence / experience. The patterns emerged when the study participants were asked: “What is the most common issue raised by your trainees in a typical supervision session?” Prominent patterns referred to: (a) navigating systems (2.07) and adapting to the new work and settings (2.18). The pattern of “building confidence” (2.08) was also noteworthy. These were the first of several references to patterns related to navigation (2.07, 4.02, 4.22, 5.06) and confidence (2.08, 4.13, 5.19).

For example, P14, a university supervisor, described trainees as being confronted with the internal issues of a new system and stakeholders, “so they are learning a lot about the system, the school system, and every school system is different but every school system has the various stakeholders” (2.07). Similarly, P10, a school site supervisor, described them as, “feeling like they're not sure what to do next in certain situations” (2.07). P14 added that they also dealt with internal issues confidence building as they, “struggle with ... feeling confident, or competent” (2.08). P13, also a university supervisor, offered a similar view on burnout and stress as they struggle with, “their own feelings of inadequacy, the stress and overwhelm [*sic*] that they feel about like how am I going to provide these services” (2.10). With a developmental viewpoint, P13 explained, “that's probably where they're supposed to be ... feeling overwhelmed on the one hand but then also feeling those feelings of pride, you know, and a sense of accomplishment” (2.11). These were also the first of two references to patterns related to this topic (2.11,

3.09). P1, an agency site supervisor, agreed and reiterated the novelty of their trainee's work setting: "This is new work. Everything is new" (2. 18). P11, also an agency site supervisor, agreed and developed this pattern by explaining that: "It's about their confidence in their ability to do the work because they're new" (2. 18).

Nine patterns led to the second theme of trainees also facing outer challenges and opposition. Study participants agreed that the main outer challenges were related to the actions or misunderstandings of the administration, school, or teachers. Prominent patterns were managing expectations of administration (2.15), navigating systems (2.07), and the guidance of an intern or trainee not being heeded (2.09). Examples are provided in the next paragraph.

First, from a school administration level, P12 (a university supervisor) noted that issues arise when, "the principal has different visions for the counselors and end up [with] our student didn't know [*sic*] what to do" (2.15). P1 (an agency site supervisor) added that: "The administrators were not really taking heed to the guidance of 'the trainee'" (2. 09). P6 (a school site supervisor) observed the same pattern and agreed that trainees can become, "uncomfortable with the idea that teachers were calling her 'the intern'" (2.09). An escalation of this condition was noted by P16 when: "The admin [*sic*] doesn't like them or doesn't value them" (2.09).

Second, on a practical level, such misunderstandings with the school administration were observed to lead to practical challenges for the trainees. Study participants added a miscellany of both clinically related and non-clinically related patterns. These ranged from staff opposition (2.14), managing expectations of

administration (2.16), to disciplining students (2.16). P4, an agency site supervisor, noted that trainees struggle with scheduling appointments with clients because: "They have zero influence on this. They are at the mercy of the schedule of the school" (2.07). P13 agreed and noted how trainees face opposition from the staff and, "struggle and trying to get class time to have a student to come to counseling" (2.14). P14 added in agreement a resonant observation on "ego-based politics where people have expectations of an interns place in the system, or people feeling that an intern should or shouldn't be doing certain things" (2.14, 4.03, 10.01). P9, an agency site supervisor, observed how challenges also arise when "Sometimes schools don't really understand what confidentiality is" (2.09). Similarly on an organizational level, P9 noted that issues arise out of caseloads, "... like the admin [*sic*] will want a clinician to open more and more and more kids" (2.15). P12 supported this pattern and added how: "Administrators may give a lot of discipline issues to the counselors and interrupt this counselors schedule or their agenda if they want to address some of the group issues, or school wide issues" (2.16).

Three patterns evolved a third theme of the issues of trainees concerning facing inner challenges. Prominent patterns were burnout (2.10), frustration (2.25), and economic worries (10.07). These were exemplified as follows.

P14, who had already reported on the issue of ego-based politics mentioned earlier, added that trainees can feel that: "It's more demanding than I thought. I don't know how people do it. I'm worried about how I'm going to, you know, not burn out" (2.10). P5, a school site supervisor, agreed and added: "You don't necessarily know what you're getting into and if it's a good fit" (2.10). P3, an agency site supervisor, observed

the frustration that “I don't think the schools really helped them so much as they should be [helped]” (2.25).

***Assertion: Gaining Competence is a Continuum of Growing Skills and Developing Values (A 1.05)***

***Assertion: Self-Confidence and Self-Initiative Begin the Continuum of Gaining Competence (A 1.06.01)***

These assertions evolved from the exploration of “gaining competence.” The exploration of the development and the nondevelopment of competence was rich enough to concretize into two specific assertions. These assertions emerged from five themes: (a) self-confidence, (b) self-initiative, (c) continuum, (d) lack of understanding (skills), and (e) lack of qualities (values). These themes were based on 20 new and original patterns which emerged from 77 codes. These patterns emerged when study participants were asked: “How would you describe the process of becoming competent in school counseling?”

The first theme of “self-confidence” was promoted by a single pattern of self-confidence which was raised by several study participants (i.e., P8, P6, P4, P3, and P2). P6 described this progression of competence as “just having more confidence and feeling more natural” (4.13). P6 also added that this was: “A sense of: ‘Oh, I can do this’” (4.12). From a supervision standpoint, P3 described it as “they're taking on that supervisory role” (4.B. Competence: Trainees take ownership,). P2, a school site supervisor, summarized this observation of trainees as: “They feel self-confident” (4.13).

Four patterns led to the second theme of “self-initiative.” These were either focused on the demonstration of self-confidence (4.08) and self-initiation (4.17), or they covered flexibility (4.14) and creativity (4.18). Several participants developed this theme (i.e., P16, P15, P4, P2, and P1). P16 incorporated the idea of a progression of trainees who, “go from learning about it, to observing it, to you know, having support and trying it out and then to becoming fully independent” (4.08). P1 also concluded that, “having that self-initiation is important” (4. 17). Several study participants articulated this by designating certain markers. P4 described the abilities to be flexible and, “think outside the box”, and “color outside the lines” (4.14). P1 gave the supervision example of creativity when providing, “feedback in the group setting to other clinicians” (4.18). P1 then summarized this progression as, “the creativity of therapeutic interventions” (4.18).

Seven patterns evolved into the third theme of developing competence as a “continuum.” Prominent patterns were based on competence as a continuum of process, fluency, and routine (4.10), as well as variations on competence based on awareness (4.07) and assessment skills (4.09). The latter was the first instance of a code which crystallized a trainee’s command over assessment and clinical skills into a pattern.

P14 (a university supervisor) introduced the notion of, “there is a process to becoming competent. I think that there, there are markers of competence” (4.10). These markers were described by P10 (a school site supervisor) as: “It's being aware” (4. 07). P8 (an agency site supervisor) agreed and further described it as, “becoming aware” (4.09). P13 (a university site supervisor) developed this into an idea of a, “lifelong learning process” (4.10). P11 (an agency site supervisor) described trainees as they, "stay

in a state of learning" (4.10). P11 continued that: "We're not going to reach a point where we're saying we're 100% there, but we want to keep growing" (4.10). P2 (a school site supervisor) agreed and described this process as "in general, it's more of a process" (4.10). P7 (a university site supervisor) defined this as, "it's a continuum through the curriculum that they demonstrate their knowledge and their disposition" (4.10).

When study participants were asked: "What are the main reasons of trainees not becoming professionally competent?", six patterns emerged and defined specific skills. They led to a fourth theme of "lack of understanding" (of skills). This theme of noncompetence was derived from patterns which ranged from not implementing feedback (4.19) and not navigating relationships (4.22)" to negative responses (like being over sure) (4.26) to being isolated (4.24).

Study participants provided these examples of lacking certain skills as well as exhibiting certain negative or isolating behaviors. P6, a school site supervisor, described being, "not open to learning: when something goes wrong, they just look down and feel bad about themselves and they don't ask questions" (4.24). P13 and P6 both described a state of being stuck with P6 defining this as, "just not asking for help, closing off doors, saying or not bringing up during our weekly check ins" (4.24). P2 and P1 pointed to the ignoring of feedback with, "definitely being ... closed off to feedback" (4.19) and "Okay, I'll hear you but I'm not going to implement the feedback" (4.19) respectively. P16 described this resistance to instruction as, "they're not picking up on cues" and, "they're not taking the direction. ... that I give them." P16 expanded this description into, "a disconnect like they aren't fully understanding the role of a school counselor, or they

don't have the understanding of how to ask questions or talk to students or people in general" (4.22). To contrast with the earlier section on self-confidence, As opposed to over-confidence, P10, also a school site supervisor, pointed out the negative effect of, "being too sure" (4.26). Alternatively, P1 summarized this as displaying, "negative responses" (4.24).

Another two patterns described more abstract values of not enjoying themselves (4.25) and issues leading to burnout (4.23). These few but powerful patterns pertained to the fifth theme of "lack of qualities" (of values). When asked the same question as in the prior section, three study participants drew on values as signs of noncompetence. P14 raised the pattern of burnout: "I think when burnout creeps in. Typically, that's when boundaries get eroded and that's when people ... not just make mistakes." P4, an agency site supervisor, simply stated that: "They are miserable" (4.25). Memorably for a later reference, P12 described such a situation as, "sometimes it's a mismatch ... they just don't fit the situation" and gave an example of a trainee who had, "no passion to work with those students") (4.25).

***Assertion: Transformation Through Self-Confidence is the Indicator of Preparedness (A 1.06.02)***

This specific assertion evolved from the exploration of the "indicators of preparedness." It was concretized from the exploration of the factors related to the preparedness of trainees. The exploration led to the emergence of two themes: (a) prepared trainees undergoing a transformation process and (b) nonprepared trainees: floundering. They were based on 117 codes which generated 27 patterns of which eight



were new and original patterns. These emerged when study participants were asked: “So how do you know if a trainee is ready for their profession?” Aforementioned themes and assertions also contributed data that led to the concretization of this specific assertion.

First, 17 patterns (of which three were new) evolved the theme of undergoing a transformation process. Noteworthy patterns were confidence (4.08), curiosity (4.15), pulling resources together (5.07), professionalism (4.12), clinical understanding (4.13), growth and a willingness to learn (5.17), self-initiation (4.17), planning a career (7.03), and becoming hired ((7. 01). There were numerous codes on this topic. They could be clustered around the notion of a transformation of trainees based on their continuing learning growth. This growth was marked by the gaining of competence through self-confidence and independence. Examples are provided in the following two paragraphs.

P4 circumscribed the overall process as "there is a very fascinating transformation: there's so much anxiety at first when they walk in the door" (4.08). Some participants also focused on the aspect of continued learning. P16 described such a trainee as, “looking to grow as a professional” (4.12) and that, “when they're curious ... they're ready. They're ready to grow and learn” (4.15). P16 delineated this as: “Someone who has found a foothold [and] a confidence within the school counseling realm” (5.07). P16 also concluded that: “It's kind of like a competence level” (5.07).

Another group of participants focused on confidence and clinical skills as indicators of competence. P4 defined this as: “It's confidence in their skill levels” (4.08). P3 agreed and identified a “confidence that they exude when they're ready” (4.13). P6 supported this with: “It really comes down to confidence for me and just their openness

and willingness to learn” (4.13, 5.17). P13 delineated this stage as when, “they start to be able to initiate ... more action on their own ... they're not necessarily looking for as much directive or guidance from a supervisor or a trainer” (4.17). A common conclusion by study participants was that the prepared trainees culminated in receiving offers of employment and continuing in the field. For instance, P12 echoed this with: “They get hired by the site or they get the recommendations” (7. 01).

This theme also included a first discrepant comment. P1 remarked on the future of trainees with: "They have continued. I have never come across a trainee, who has worked in the school-based setting who has not continued their clinical career" (7. 03). But this was later qualified (see the next section on the theme of “floundering”) by other study participants. The latter described instances and situations when trainees did not continue in the field.

Second, there were ten relevant patterns (of which five were new and original) which led the theme of “floundering” to emerge. They stemmed from the study participants when they were asked: “What about examples of trainees who were not well-prepared?” These patterns included the lack of the following: self-confidence (7.05), clinical ideas (4.21), or enjoyment (4.25). Other noteworthy patterns were anxiety (4.24), providing negative responses (4.23), confusion (7.05), not being offered employment (7.04), and floundering after training (7.07).

For example, study participants responded with two aspects of non-preparedness: traits of behaviors or competences, and signs of confusion and lack of self-confidence. P16 described these traits as, “lacking ... in skills” (4.21). P2 added that: “They're

nervous to talk to people.” and that they, “are hesitant [with] their own ... anxiety and or fears” (4.24). In terms of confusion and confidence, P13 observed that: “They don't necessarily have that confidence that some of their peers may have and they may not have the competence if they've been not doing everything at 100%” (7.05). P14 agreed and added that: “They're just kind of they're falling apart in one or more areas of their life” (4.23). P6 concurred with: “They're still in a frenzy. They're still ... confused or discombobulated” (7.05). P8 felt that they, “haven't moved past the initial stages” (4.21). P12 concluded that, “they are afraid to ... perform their responsibility because they're just not competent.” (7.05). A common culmination for nonprepared trainees was not to receive employment. P15 stated that: “We wouldn't offer them employment” (7.04). P16, P13, and P5 all specifically described the state of non-preparedness as floundering. P13 observed that: “They ended up just kind of taking whatever job that they can get and figure out what they can do next” (7.07). As in the prior section, there was a second discrepant comment. P7 stated that: “I've never had a student for whom I would not write a letter of recommendation” (7.01). However, this potentially discrepant pattern was immediately corrected by P7 with, “no, that's not true: one ... I have ... two ... this semester.”

***Assertion: Supervision is the Beginning Step Towards Competence and Preparedness***  
***(A 1.10)***

This assertion evolved from the exploration of the “role of supervision.” This general assertion was concretized from a theme based on the value of supervision of a contained space (and as a beginning). The theme was based on 31 codes which generated

eight patterns of which three were new and original patterns. The patterns emerged at a later stage of the interviews when study participants were asked: “What about the supervision experience contributes to the development of competence in your trainees?” Aforementioned themes and assertions also contributed to the concretization of this assertion.

Eight relevant patterns led to this theme. Although these patterns were diverse, the responses of the study participants centered on three aspects: the nature of development, the value of feedback, and the idea of supervision as a contained space. P9 described the process of supervision as evolving from outset where, “in the beginning it is more directive which is a living certain like basic skills” (2.11). P14 added the value of having, “somebody there to walk with them” (4.05). P11 also described a process to, “develop a love for the work that leads to personal as well as professional growth” (5.17). P1 concluded that supervision provides, “that kernel ... that spark ... that beginning thing” (9.03). P16, P14, P12, P5, P3, and P2 variously emphasized the value of feedback. P14 expressed this as, “I just know [it] is incredible because of the feedback they get every day” (9.01). P14, P9, P8, and P5 focused on the nature of supervision as a space. P14 described supervision as: “A focused relationship that is about skill building and about having a space for reflective practice” (4.05). P5 agreed and concluded that its value was, “being able to create a space where it's safe to not know where it's safe to make mistakes so that they're being authentic” (4.05).

*Assertion: The Influence of Training Settings on Developing Trainee Competence (A 1.11.01)*

This general assertion evolved from the exploration of “open questions.” The questioning of study participants on open and broader topics which they wanted to raise led to the emergence of the theme of the role and status of external agencies. It is based on four patterns (of which three were new and original patterns) which grew out of five distinct codes. These patterns emerged when study participants were asked: “Is there anything else you’d like to share?”

The four relevant patterns which led to the theme of agencies covered were: the role and status of external agencies (10.01), business concerns of agencies” (10.08), and the aforementioned “ego-based politics” (2.14, 4.03, 10.01). The driver for the continued interest for this theme is represented by a pattern representing its importance as a research topic (10.06).

In response to an earlier question on: “Can you give me a sense of how you structure each session?”, P4, an agency site supervisor, stated that: “The schools are our clients too” (3.08). Earlier in that interview when responding to: “What is the most common issue raised by your trainees in a typical supervision session?”, P4 had also described the status of external agencies as:

We are guests at that school. Yes, we are providing a service but we have to remember we are guests. I don't particularly believe that myself. I think we are providing them with a free service and they need to treat us respectfully (2.13).

P2, a school site supervisor, reflected on this topic that:

It can be an advantage because you have an outside approach and something that it's not being used also, often, but it can be a disadvantage, because you're, you're not in all of the meetings that they're because you're not part of their organization. And you may not have the strongest relationship in that regard (10.01).

***Assertion: The Influence of Preparedness of Supervisors on Developing Trainee Competence (A 1.11.02)***

This general assertion also evolved from the exploration of “open questions.” The questioning of study participants on open and broader topics which they wanted to raise also led to the emergence of a further theme of the role and status of supervisors. It was based on five new patterns which grew out of six distinct codes.

These patterns covered a broad range of issues facing supervisors. These included the responsibility of supervisors (10.2), accreditation (10.03), burn-out (10.04), learning and professional development (10.05), and the financial worries of trainees (10.07).

In response to an earlier question on the common issues faced by trainees, P13, a university site supervisor, had observed trainees saying: "I'm in school now and I'm trying to do it, but I also see my site supervisors struggling" (2.10). P14, a university site supervisor, added that some supervisors do not see supervision as a valuable service and that this, “can be really harmful to trainees” (10.04). P15 made a comment which addressed both assertions which raised areas for potential research. When opining on the value of standardized qualifications for both supervisors and supervisory institutions. P15, an agency site supervisor, argued that: “We're providing the best evidence-based

practices and recognized nationally by following these specific standards and I think that sets us apart from everybody else” (10.03).

### **Primary RQ 2**

The second of this research study’s two primary research questions inquired: “How do supervisors train the development of competence in trainee school counselors?” (Primary RQ 2).

The data from the inquiry resulted in one specific assertion and three general assertions: (a) supervisors are motivated by leadership, service, and inspiration (GA), (b) trainees face standard and advanced challenges (GA), (c) trainees receive supervision in a container (safe, nonauthoritarian) (GA), and (d) supervision is based on formal methods and the supervisor's own skills, values, and beliefs (SA). These assertions emerged from 14 themes and are set out in Table 4.

**Table 4***Summary of Codes, Patterns, Themes, and Assertions for Primary RQ 2*

Codes and Patterns	Themes	General Assertions (GA) and Specific Assertions (SA)
17 codes and 4 patterns	T 1.01 Motivation of supervisors: Leadership T 1.02 Motivation of supervisors: Service T 1.03 Motivation of supervisors: Inspiration	A 1.01: Supervisors are motivated by leadership, service, and inspiration (GA)
23 codes and 6 patterns	T 1.04 Activities of trainees: Regular counseling and shadowing T 1.05 Activities of trainees: Advanced counseling T 1.06 Activities of trainees: Classroom and teacher support T 1.07 Activities of trainees: Passion	A 1.02: Trainees face standard and advanced challenges (GA)
92 codes and 19 patterns	T 1.11 Supervision methods: Regular meetings (mostly weekly) T 1.12 Supervision methods: A Contained Space (I) T 1.13 Supervision methods: Maturation in phases T 1.14 Supervision methods: Being nonauthoritarian (unless a risk situation) T 1.15 Value of supervision: A Contained Space (II)	A 1.04: Trainees mature with supervision in a container (safe, nonauthoritarian) (GA)
23 codes and 4 patterns	T 1.33 Supervision methods: An Evaluation (formal) T 1.34 Supervision methods: A Mental Map (informal)	A 1.09: Supervision is based on formal methods and the supervisor's own skills, values, and beliefs (SA)

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

***Assertion: Supervisors are Motivated by Leadership, Service, and Inspiration (A 1.01)***

This general assertion evolved from the exploration of the “motivation of supervisors.” Three themes emerged based on leadership, service, and inspiration. They were based on four new patterns which grew out of 17 codes. These patterns were related to: leadership (taking managerial responsibility) (1.01), service (1.02), general inspiration



(1.03), and inspiration from clinical supervision they received themselves (1.04). They emerged when study participants were asked: “Tell me how you became a supervisor?”

The first theme of leadership was summarized by P12 as: “So it's a part of the responsibility of my position” (1. 01). P11 expanded this pattern by again referring to passion:

Just being in the field and wanting to be a leader, I studied leadership and I wanted to be able to pass good leadership's on, so we could train like the next level of leaders within our agency and onboard people with the right passion for the work. (1. 01)

The pattern which evolved the second theme of service, which was closely related to the previous theme of leadership, was “1.02 Motivation: Service.” P9 explained as follows:

I wanted to make sure that the people in leadership had the experience of someone who had been in was providing direct services to kids on school campuses, to have their have that voice represented so that's one of my main driving forces in being in a position of leadership and being in as a clinical supervisor for school-based clinicians. (1. 02),

P15 summarized this pattern with, “there was a need. And I ... firmly believe in giving back” (1.02).

The two patterns which led to the third theme of inspiration described general inspiration (1.03) and inspiration from clinical supervision they received themselves (1.04). Study participants also referred to their own professional growth and training

experiences as inspiration. P14 expressed the former as: “I believe that supervision is a really essential part of the professional development of a graduate student as they enter their profession” (1.03). P1 expressed the latter with: “I wanted to become a clinical supervisor because I received excellent clinical ... supervision as [when] I was an associate.” (1.04).

***Assertion: Trainees Face Standard and Advanced Challenges (A 1.02)***

This general assertion evolved from the exploration of the “challenges of trainees.” This assertion was concretized from four themes regarding the activities of trainees: (a) regular counseling and shadowing, (b) advanced counseling, (c) classroom and teacher support, and (d) passion projects. They were based on 6 new patterns which grew out of 23 codes. These patterns emerged when study participants were asked: “What are the typical activities and duties of school counseling trainees?”

Two patterns evolved the first theme of regular counseling (2.01) and shadowing (2.04). Study participants provided many responses which revolved around the same standard activities. P11 described them as, “therapeutic interventions ... in the clinical scope of practice for students and their families” (2.01). They also described the activities of learning by shadowing. P16 described this as: “I have them observe different roles within the school” (2.04). P14 described this as: “They're required to shadow and observe” (2.04).

The pattern leading to the second theme of advanced counseling was “2.02 Main Activity: Advanced therapy (e.g., collateral services / case management).” Study participants provided examples of a range of activities which represented advanced

counseling activities akin to those undertaken by full professionals (i.e., P16, P15, P9, and P8). P15 summarized this as: “They do collateral work, psychotherapy, intensive home-based services.” and “They also run or facilitate support groups” (2.02).

Two patterns developed the third theme of classroom and teacher support. They referred to teaching (2.03) and discipling (2.06) students. Study participants provided examples of trainees being pulled into teacher responsibilities like exercising discipline. P1 described this as: “It ends up feeling for students like more of a disciplinary conversation than something to build community. So that's one other activity that clinicians or trainees are brought into that is inappropriate for their role” (2.06). These were the first of two references to patterns related to this topic (2.06, 2.16).

One pattern (2.05) led to the fourth theme of “passion.” This pattern distinctly circumscribed passion-related activities and was articulated by P16 and P14. P16 described this as developing a foundation for their later professional lives when they are more time-restricted. While this was a small constituency of codes for a pattern, it gains weight by being linked one of three patterns on passion (2.05, 4.25, 5.12). These are also referred to collectively again at the end of this chapter (under “Assertion: Identity emerges through a spectrum of values and beliefs (and not skills) (A 1.08.01)”).

***Assertion: Trainees Mature With Supervision in a Container (Safe, Nonauthoritarian)***  
***(A 1.04)***

This general assertion evolved from the exploration of the “forms of supervision.” The exploration of supervision methods and the value of supervision led to the emergence of five themes: (a) regular meetings (mostly weekly), (b) maturation in

phases, (c) being nonauthoritative (unless a risk situation), (d) a contained space (related to supervision methods), and (e) a contained space (related to the value of supervision). They were based on 19 new patterns which grew out of 92 codes. The first four themes emerged when study participants were asked: “How do you conduct a typical supervision session?” The fifth theme emerged when the study participants were then asked: “What do you think is the most valuable part of the supervision experience for trainees?”

First, numerous codes supported one pattern (3.01) which evolved the theme of trainees receiving regular (mostly weekly) meetings. All the study participants confirmed that trainees received various forms of regular meetings. For school-based sites and agencies these were prescribed at least on a weekly basis on an individual and group basis. P16 summarized this as, “the supervision ... technically we're supposed to have an hour meeting weekly. But we're in constant contact throughout the week.” (3.01).

Second, four relevant patterns led to the theme of maturation in phases. These patterns covered university supervision (3.03), learning from others (3.05), trainees bringing their own agenda (3.06), and transforming developmentally and in phases (3.09). Topics related to learning from others were referenced in three patterns (3.05, 5.10, 9.02).

P15 described developmental transformation as, “ typically by that six-month timeline, ... I expect them to be pretty comfortable with it, and ... weaning off and not so much hand holding and then toward the academic year [they] should be released as a therapist” (3.09). P9 agreed and expounded on the evolution of supervision:

... early on in their development, help clinicians feel grounded in their work so that they have an understanding of what the work is. That's what I see kind of the first year as and then moving into the second year is more around grounding in their own clinical voice” (3.09).

This pattern was also interlinked with a further pattern of transforming developmentally (2.11) which evolved into the assertion of trainees facing internal and external issues (AT 1.03).

Third, four patterns developed the theme of the tone of supervision being nonauthoritative (except in a risk situation). Noteworthy patterns covered the nonauthoritative tone (3.04), atmosphere (3.08), learning setting (3.11), and the respect for the supervisor (3.12). While study participants continued to emphasize the nonauthoritative nature of supervisions, they also stressed the importance of being available for crises. P6 described this as: “I'm their first point of contact should any additional support or questions come up” (3.12). P14 agreed and described their hierarchical positioning as holding a “one down power stance” (3.04). P2 described their source of authority being experience or strength-based. P2 explained that: “The authority part is just based on my experience” (3.04). P2 described their authority as stemming from being, “open and warm ... I'm definitely strength-based” (3.08). P5 described supervision as, “my whole goal is to help them to feel comfortable, to help them feel empowered and to gain confidence. So mine is a very supportive environment” (3.04). P15 summarized a common approach to supervision as: “I treat it as if it was like a therapy session” (3.04).

Fourth, four pertinent patterns leading to the initial reference to the theme of a contained space (related to supervision methods) (3.02, 3.07, 3.10, 3.13). “3.10 Session: Container to share in authentic space {I}” was the first of three references to the theme of a contained space which emerged from different questions answered by the participants about supervision (T 1.12, T 1.15, T 1.35). Study participants were consistent in describing the structure of a supervision session. P15 described the process of feedback, “usually check in, ask them how they're feeling. We cover any crisis first” (3.02). This was the first reference to five patterns related to feedback (3.02, 4.19, 7.08, 8.04, 9.01). Study participants were also consistent in describing the nature of the support provided in a supervision session. P9 added the trusting nature of supervision: “I trust them because ... they need to be able to make mistakes” (3.07).

Fifth, the prior theme was echoed when study participants were asked: “What do you think is the most valuable part of the supervision experience for trainees?” at the end of their interviews. Six patterns also developed a further reference to theme of a contained space (i.e., “T 1.15 Value of supervision: A Contained Space (II)”). Six patterns entrenched the theme of a contained space. They referred to the value of applying skills (4.01), navigating skills (4.02), managing workplace politics (4.03), safety (4.04), authenticity (4.05), and collaboration (4.06). Examples are provided as follows.

P14 and P13 reiterated how supervision and its intensity was unique in the careers of trainees. P14 stated that: “It is the most support they're going to get in their career” (4.01). P13 agreed and stated that: “It's the time in their professional development, when they have the most support” (4.01). P14 summarized this second mention of a contained

space with: “It’s a contained [*sic*] space where they can bring their clinical concerns ... their ethical concerns or questions, their spaces of [‘] I just don’t know [‘]” (4.05).

***Assertion: Supervision is Based on Formal Methods and the Supervisor’s own Skills, Values, and Beliefs (A 1.09)***

This specific assertion evolved from the exploration of the “methods of supervision.” The exploration of supervision methods led to the emergence of two themes: (a) an evaluation (formal) and (b) a mental map (informal). They were based on four new patterns which grew out of 23 codes. These patterns emerged when study participants were asked: “How do you monitor improvement/change?” Two emerging themes bifurcated as supervisors propagated either formal or informal methods of supervision. Within both themes there were instances of supervisors either observing on a continuous basis compared to comparing changes in trainees between the beginning and the end of their traineeship.

The two patterns which evolved the first theme of a formal evaluation consisted of auditing progress (8.02) and receiving feedback from the trainee’s school clients (8.04). Within the range of formal methods there was also a divergence between methods of continuous monitoring (as demonstrated by P3 and P12) and methods of comparison of changes in trainees at the end of their traineeship compared to their starting point (as exemplified by P10).

P3 took a continuous monitoring approach and stated that, “paperwork is audited. Both administratively and clinically” (8.02). P15 agreed and stated that: “We do an assessment ... of their skills. And then throughout the year, ... I’m ... benchmarking where

they're at and rating them" (8.02). As a university supervisor, P12 concurred on their course evaluation as: "It's a credit and no credit" (8.02). On the other hand, P10 took a more aperiodic approach: "We monitor that regularly. Not necessarily on every supervision, but we keep track of what their goals are their learning goals" (8.02). P8 was similar to P10 in approach: "Yeah. I see their progression. And you track those quite rigorously" (8.02).

The two relevant patterns which led the second theme of a informal mental map referred to informal monitoring methods (8.01) and observation (8.03). Even for informal evaluations there was also a divergence between a continuous flow of monitoring (as implemented by P5) and a comparison between the start and the end of traineeship (as exhibited by P16). P5 took a continuous approach by tracking: "A map in my head of ... where I want them to move." (8.01). P16 exhibited the comparison approach: "I don't necessarily track it ... it's more about reflecting on where they were when they came in and then where they are when I'm doing the evaluation at the end of their ... term with me" (8.01).

### **Secondary Research Question A**

The first of this research study's two secondary research questions inquired: "How do supervisors describe the development of self-efficacy in trainee school counselors?" (Secondary RQ A). To root out these specific responses, study participants were asked three questions: "Based on your experiences, what skills do trainees need?" They were then asked: "How are they developed and grown?" As an elaboration and a



summary, they were then asked to specify their contentions by naming a single competence and skill as a marker.

The data from these phases of inquiry resulted in two general assertions and one specific assertion: (a) self-efficacy is developed with a narrow range of skills and some values (SA), (b) skills are mostly acquired with learning and experience (GA), and (c) markers of competence and skills are closely linked and specific (GA).

These assertions emerged from seven themes and are set out in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Summary of Codes, Patterns, Themes, and Assertions for Secondary RQ A*

Codes and Patterns	Themes	General Assertions (GA) and Specific Assertions (SA)
52 codes and 21 patterns	T 1.21 Emergence of self-efficacy: Skills T 1.22 Emergence of self-efficacy: Values	A 1.07.01: Self-efficacy emerges through a narrow range of skills and some values (SA)
39 codes and 6 patterns	T 1.23 Skills: Acquired T 1.24 Skills: Innate T 1.25 Skills: Acquired and innate qualities (combination)	A 1.07.02: Skills are mostly acquired with learning and experience (GA)
29 codes and 3 patterns	T 1.28 Markers of Competence: Mainly field-specific skills and flexibility T 1.29 Markers of Skill: Mainly general skills like communication and empathy	A 1.07.03: Markers of competence and skills are closely linked and specific (GA)

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

***Assertion: Self-Efficacy Emerges Through a Narrow Range of Skills and Some Values***

***(A 1.07.01)***

This specific assertion evolved from the exploration of the “composition of self-efficacy.” The exploration of self-efficacy led to the emergence of two themes, which concretized this specific assertion: (a) “emergence of self-efficacy through skills” and (b) “emergence of self-efficacy through values.” It was based on 21 new patterns which grew

out of 52 codes. These patterns emerged when study participants were asked: “Based on your experiences, what skills do trainees need?”

Study participants mostly described or listed specific skills. 37 codes were generated, which produced 12 patterns and developed the first theme of “development of self-efficacy: skills.” These patterns are set out in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Patterns of the Theme for “Emergence of Self-Efficacy: Skills” by Participant With Examples of Codes*

Pattern	Participants (e.g., examples)
5.01 Skills: Flexibility (II)	P16, P9, P8, P6, P4, P2 (“executive function flexibility”)
5.02 Skills: Competence (Cultural)	P16, P7 (“a cultural competence”)
5.04 Skills: Building rapport	P16 (“They need some basic empathy”), P8 (“teamwork”), P5 (“rapport”)
5.05 Skills: Assessment skills (treatment planning) (II)	P15, P14 (“building rapport”), P11 (“documentation skills”), P9 (“team”), P5, P1
5.06 Skills: Navigating relationships (IV)	P15 (“accurately diagnose sometimes is a difficult skill”), P14, P10 (“crisis”)
5.07 Skills: Integrated and pulling in resources (I)	P15 (“Family work is always a challenge”), P14
5.10 Skills: Learning from supervision facilitation and sharing (II)	P13
5.15 Skills: Organization	P7, P6
5.16 Skills: Self-care	P7
5.17 Skills: Growth (and willingness to learn)	P6
5.18 Skills: Independently upholding legal and ethical guidelines	P5, P4, P3
5.21 Skills: Becoming grounded	P13

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

In response to the same question, study participants also included references to values in their descriptions. 15 codes were generated, which produced nine patterns and developed the second theme of “development of self-efficacy: values.” The nine patterns are displayed in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Patterns for the Theme of “Emergence of Self-Efficacy: Values” by Participant With Examples of Codes*

Pattern	Participants (e.g., examples)
5.03 Skills: Compassion, empathy	P16 (“They need some basic empathy.”), P13, P11 (“The passion to work with the population that we're serving.”), P6, P3
5.08 Skills: Curiosity (II)	P13 (“They can't be afraid to ask questions.”)
5.09 Skills: Openness (e.g., to taking risks)	P13 (“They need to be willing to ... make a mistake to take a risk.”), P4
5.11 Skills: Communication (social skills)	P12, P11 (“active listening”), P3
5.12 Skills: Passion (II)	P12 (“The first step is a passion to help students. But that's not a skill. That's more of an attitude of values.”)
5.13 Skills: Problem solving	P12
5.14 Skills: Strong values	P8 (“I think having a strong value system is something that's really important.”)
5.19 Skills: Self-confidence (not intimidated) (III)	P4 (“Their own self confidence limits them.”), P2
5.20 Skills: Trust	P3 (“Trust generates a safe emotional connection with the client but sometimes the interns struggle with developing the trust with their client”).

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

Some descriptions of openness to taking risks (P13, P4), passion (P11, P12), and a strong value system (P8) were sufficiently distinct to be classified into a separate pattern of “values.” This inquiry also unearthed a third discrepant answer. P3 responded that trainees need to be “able to not be opinionated.” This impact of this comment was contradicted and relativized by the listing of other skills and values which proposed that trainees need to opionate further to develop competence.

***Assertion: Skills are Mostly Acquired With Learning and Experience (A 1.07.02)***

This assertion evolved from the exploration of the “acquisitions of skills.” It was concretized from three themes regarding the development of skills: “acquired”, “innate”, and “acquired and innate qualities (combination).” It was based on six new patterns which grew out of 39 codes. These patterns emerged when study participants were asked: “How are they developed and grow?” (After they were asked “Based on your experiences, what skills do trainees need?”).

Most codes (19 in total) supported the idea that skills are mostly acquired. The number of codes supporting the innate nature of skills was still numerous (10 codes). There were equally numerous codes which supported that codes were borne from a combination of sources (also 10 in total).

The four patterns which evolved the theme of acquired skills included: learning through supervision (5.10), becoming grounded (5.21), growing with practice (5.23) and supervision (5.25).

P16 circumscribed, “things that are more tangible like organization ... you can teach them organization you can give them tips” (5.23). P14 agreed: "I don't believe that

that's something that you either have or you don't. I think that's something that you can cultivate with ... training." (5.23). P7 also agreed and specified that: "I believe everything I've labeled [communication, organization, cultural understanding, and self-care] can be taught can be learned. Some might have to practice it a little more than others" (5.23). P14 promoted the effectiveness of supervision to develop skills: "Our students can read about things and then try them out but if they try them out in in safe spaces, like ... supervisory spaces or in classes" (5.23). P6 also supported the role of supervisors: "I definitely think that having a role model or someone guiding and supervising and supporting and mentoring you in those roles are always very helpful" (5.23). P16 was less unequivocal and surmised that: "It kind of depends on the skill" (5.23). P13 agreed and specified that "It comes from somewhere and it's not just random ... and I think that ... ultimately, it's important for trainees to have patience. It takes time to develop these skills." (5.25). P5 agreed and observed that growth takes time with: "When you do something the first time it's not going to be perfect." P5 also observed that, "time is the best intervention and having experience as well" (5.23).

The pattern leading to the theme of innate skills was" 5.22 Skills origin: Innate." P6 linked the innateness of skills to the profession: "I feel like many of those skills come natural for someone who chooses to be in this kind of profession" (5.22). P3 was more equivocal and stated that: "It's a dual answer" (5. 22).

The patterns which developed the theme of a combination of acquired and innate qualities was 5.24 Skills origin: Combination (both grown and innate). P13 opined: "I

absolutely think that that is a combination” (5.24). P9 differentiated between skills and qualities by explaining that:

I think you can develop the skills I think it's more of the qualities sometimes that are more ... difficult to develop than the skills ... I think of skills as things you can teach and qualities are things that ... are kind of there (5.24).

***Assertion: Markers of Competence and Skills are Closely Linked and Specific (A 1.07.03)***

This assertion evolved from the exploration of the “markers of skill and competence.” This assertion evolved from two elaboration and repeated probes on key factors of competences and skills. Two themes emerged: (a) markers of competence: mainly field-specific skills and flexibility, service, and inspiration, and (b) markers of skill: mainly general skills like communication and empathy. These patterns emerged when study participants were asked to specify their initial contentions by naming a single competence and skill.

The themes were based on 29 codes which generated 24 patterns of which three were new and original patterns. The three new patterns were “R01 Social Competency” (P12), “R02 Ability” (P8), and “R05 Perseverance” (P4).

11 patterns (of which one was new and original) led to the theme of “markers of competence: mainly field-specific skills and flexibility.” 15 student participants provided one-word responses on their selection of the single key competence. The most frequent responses were “flexibility” (P9, P6, P4) and “clinical skills” (P15, P5, P1). P14 listed

“empathy.” P10 named “passion.” After already referencing passion under the theme of leadership (1.01) and as a skill (5.12), P12 added “social competency” as a marker.

12 patterns (of which two were new and original) evolved the theme of “markers of skill: mainly general skills like communication and empathy.” 15 student participants provided one-word responses on their selection of the single key skill. The most frequent responses were “empathy” (P14, P13, P3) and “communication” and “rapport” (P15, P12, P7, P5, P1). P9 listed “clinical skills” and P2 listed “flexibility.”

### **Secondary Research Question B**

The second of this research study’s two second research questions inquired: “How do supervisors describe the development of professional identity in trainee school counselors?” (Secondary RQ B). To root out these specific responses, study participants were asked three questions: “Based on your experiences, what professional values do trainees need to develop?” They were then asked: “How are they developed and grown?” As an elaboration and a summary, they were then asked to specify their contentions by naming a single value as a marker.

The data from these phases of inquiry resulted in one specific assertion and two general assertions: (a) identity is formed by a spectrum of values and beliefs (and not skills) (SA), (b) most values and beliefs can be grown and developed (GA), and (c) markers of values and beliefs are diverse and less specific (GA).

These assertions emerged from six themes and are set out in Table 8.



**Table 8***Summary of Codes, Patterns, Themes, and Assertions for Secondary RQ B*

Codes and Patterns	Themes	General Assertions (GA) and Specific Assertions (SA)
53 codes and 10 patterns	T 1.26 Emergence of Identity: Values T 1.27 Emergence of Identity: Beliefs	A 1.08.01: Identity emerges through a spectrum of values and beliefs (and not skills) (SA)
23 codes and 0 patterns	T 1.24 Values and Beliefs: Innate values T 1.23 Values and Beliefs: Acquired T 1.25 Values and Beliefs: Acquired and Innate (combination)	A 1.08.02: Most values and beliefs can be grown and developed (GA)
15 codes and 4 patterns	T 1.30 Markers of Values and Beliefs: Diverse and general	A 1.08.03: Markers of values and beliefs are diverse and less specific (GA)

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

***Assertion: Identity Emerges Through a Spectrum of Values and Beliefs (and not Skills) (A 1.08.01)***

This specific assertion evolved from the exploration of the “composition of identity.” The exploration of identity led to the emergence of two themes: (a) “development of identity through values” and (b) “development of identity through beliefs.” They were based on 25 patterns (of which 10 were new and original) which grew out of 53 codes. Both themes emerged from the lists or descriptions provided by study participants when asked: “Based on your experiences, what professional values do trainees need to develop?”

Out of the 25 patterns, 15 were existing patterns which developed the themes of “development of identity: values” and “development of identity: beliefs.” These existing patterns are set out in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*Existing Patterns of the Themes of “Values” and “Beliefs” by Participant With Examples of Codes*

Pattern	Participants
4.11 / 6. A. Values: Promotion of client welfare (code of ethics)	P14, P13 (“honesty and respect for their ... clients”), P12, P10, P9, P7, P3
5.11 / 6. A. Values: Active listening	P14
1.02 / 6. A. Values: Service	P14
5.03 / 6. A. Values: Empathy	P14 (“caring deeply about what's about the lives of others”), P4
2.05 / 6. A. Values: Passion	P12, P11 (“the passion to work with the population that we're serving”)
5.02 / 6. A. Values: Competence (Cultural)	P11
5.08 / 6. A. Values: Curiosity	P9, P8, P1
5. 14. Skills / 6 A. Strong value system	P8
2.27 / 6. A. Values: Joy	P8 (“just look for moments to celebrate things like bright spots in a client's day. It does not have to be big [] groundbreaking”)
5.17 / 6. 06. Values: Desire for Growth	P7
5.09 / 6. A. Values: Openness	P6 (“risk taking is really important”)
5.11 / 6. A. Values: Communication	P6 (“open-mindedness, collaboration and communication.”)
5.25 Skills / 6. A. Values: Accept feedback and learn from mistakes	P4
5.18 Skills / 6. A. Values: Confidentiality	P4, P2
5.07 / 6. A. Values: Collaboration	P2

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

Out of the 25 patterns, 10 were new and original patterns which developed the theme of “development of identity: values.” Three of these patterns (i.e., professionalism, genuineness, and dedication to hard work) were related to values. The remaining seven patterns were classified as beliefs. All the 10 new and original patterns are set out in Table 10.

**Table 10**

*New and Original Patterns of “Values” and “Beliefs” by Participant With Examples of Codes*

Pattern	Participants (e.g., examples)
6.01 Beliefs: Equality	P16
6.02 Beliefs: Equity	P16
6.03 Values: Professionalism	P15
6.04 Beliefs: Social Justice	P12 (“if we don't have a vision, we can't help people who really need help”), P5
6.05 Beliefs: Belief system	P11 (“having a belief that ... families belong together”), P9, P8
6.06 Values: Genuineness	P6 (“a genuineness to your personality”)
6.07 Beliefs: Moral and ethical compass	P5
6.08 Beliefs: Non-judgmental (or non-discriminatory)	P5 (“not holding the discriminatory lens”), P4
6.09 Values: Dedication to hard work	P4
6.10 Beliefs: Acceptance (that not everything can be fixed)	P4 (accepting that they are not going to fix everything)

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

Overall, including the existing patterns from other themes and the new and original patterns, “4.11 Competence: Promoting of client welfare” was the most frequently stated value. It was included by seven study participants (P14, P13, P12, P10, P9, P7, P3). P10 agreed and added: “everybody is your client.” The example from P12 was more abstract and named a, “love for human beings” (4.11).

P12’s statement was qualified with: “So that’s a basic test, we implement in our admission to see if they have a passion toward a people [*sic*], if they have a passion to help, [and] if they had experience or interest to work with other people.” The reference to passion interlinks with P11’s and P12’s identification of passion as a value (5.03, 5.12) and P10’s naming of passion (2.05) as a marker of competence. P12 cited a lack of passion (4.25) under the theme of noncompetence (“T 1.20 Nondevelopment of competence: Lack of qualities (values)”). Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that the theme of passion was initially triggered by the reference to the passion projects developed by trainees in their supervision (2.05).

Three new and original patterns developed the theme of “development of identity: values” covered: professionalism (6.03), genuineness (6.06), and dedication to hard work (6.09). P12 stated, “they have vision to do professional, professional counseling” (6.03). P6 raised the value of, “a genuineness to your personality” (6.06). P4 included: “They need to be dedicated to hard work” (6.09).

Some qualities of equality and equity (P16), moral and ethical compass (P5), and belief systems (P11, P9, P8) were sufficiently distinct to be classified into a separate pattern of “beliefs.” Thus, seven new and original patterns led the theme of “development

of identity: beliefs” covered a broad range: equality (6.01), equity (6.02), social justice (6.04), belief system (6.05), moral and ethical compass (6.07), non-judgmental (or non-discriminatory) (6.08), and acceptance (that not everything can be fixed) (6.10).

Examples of beliefs were given by P16 and P5. They ranged from specific beliefs like “equality” (6.01), “equity within the system” (6.02), “on a basic level a good moral and ethical compass” (6.07), and “values related to social justice” (6.04). The example from P9 was more abstract and named a belief, “that change is possible” (6.05).

***Assertion: Most Values and Beliefs can be Grown and Developed (A 1.08.02)***

This general assertion evolved from the exploration of the “acquisition of values.” It was concretized from three themes: “acquired”, “innate”, and “acquired and innate qualities (combination).” These were not new and original themes (as they had already been utilized under the previous assertion relating to the “acquisitions of skills” (A 1.08.01) under Secondary RQ A). The three themes were based on three patterns which grew out of 23 codes. These patterns were also not new and original patterns. They were also utilized under Secondary RQ A. These patterns emerged when study participants were asked: “How are they developed and grow?” after they were asked: “Based on your experiences, what professional values do trainees need to develop?”

Most codes (13 in total) supported the idea that values are mostly acquired. The number of codes supporting the innate nature of values was also numerous (8 codes). There was only a smaller set of codes which supported that values were borne from a combination of sources (two in total).

The pattern which evolved the theme of innate values was “5.22: Values origins: Innate (I).” Opinions were on a spectrum which ranged from steadfast to changing natures of values. P16 explained the changing nature of developing values and provided an example with: “I feel like values are more innate. However, they can change over time” (5.22). P14 agreed and gave an example with: “ They may come in with the quality of compassion, but they don't totally understand what ‘empathy’ means” (5.22). P5 and P7 took a more steadfast view. P5 stated: “I would say the values tend to be more ... more inherent” (5.22). P7 stated that: “I don't know that these are the kind [of values] that can be grown in a classroom” (5.22).

The pattern leading to the theme of acquired values was “5.23 / 6. Values origins: Growing (with supervision).” P5 opined that, “I would say that could be grown, absolutely” (5.22 / 6). Both P5 and P9 agreed. They stated: “You know, they can be shaped” (5.23 / 6) and “I think it's hard. I think you can develop values” (5.22 / 6) respectively.

The pattern which developed the theme of a combination of acquired and innate qualities was “5.24 / 6. Values origins: Combination (both grown and innate).” P14 and P13 formed the set of study participants who view this growth as a combination of factors: P14 reflected that: “I've worked with students who have struggled with some of those values. I think they [are] cultivated more as a skill if it wasn't already something in them” (5.24 / 6) and “probably a combination of things” (5.24 / 6).

***Assertion: Markers of Values and Beliefs are Diverse and Less Specific (A 1.08.03)***

This assertion evolved from the exploration of the “markers of values.” It evolved from the elaboration and repeated probe on key factors of competences, skills, and values. The theme that emerged was: “markers of values and beliefs: diverse and general.” It was based on 15 codes which generated 12 patterns of which four were new and original patterns. The four new patterns were “R03 Family” (P7), “R04 Positivity” (P6), “R06 Honesty” (P4), and R07 Respect (P2). These patterns are set out in Table 11.

**Table 11**

*Existing and New Patterns of the Theme of “Markers of Values and Beliefs: Diverse and General” by Participant With Examples of Codes*

Pattern	Participants (e.g., examples)
5.02 Skills: Competence (Cultural)	P15, P11
5.03 Skills: Compassion, empathy	P14
4.11 Competence: Promoting of client welfare	P13
6.05 Beliefs: Belief system	P12 (“belief that all students can be successful”), P9 (“hope and belief in the ability to change”), P8
5.17 Skills: Growth (and willingness to learn)	P10
R 03 Family (New)	P7
R 04 Positivity (New)	P6
6.02 Beliefs: Equity	P5
R 06 Honesty (New)	P4
6.08 Beliefs: Non-judgmental (or non-discriminatory)	P3
R 07 Respect (New)	P2
5.07 Skills: Integrated and pulling in resources (I)	P1

*Note.* Patterns, themes, and assertions are listed in Appendix B.

The most frequent responses were “belief” and “hope” (P12, P9, P8), “cultural competence” (P15, P11), “empathy” (mentioned three times by P14), and “growth” (P10). Some values were already mentioned under the other rubrics of competences and skills. Another study participant had mentioned “cultural competence” (P13) and “growth” (P8). Two other study participants had mentioned “empathy” (P13, P3).



Otherwise, the stated values and beliefs showed a high degree of diversity. For instance, P5 mentioned, “an equitable and social orientation” (6.02).

### **Summary**

The settings and demographics which led to the data collection were exhibited in Chapter 4. This was followed by a description of the data analysis which was conducted through two cycles of coding and explained measures of trustworthiness. The data analysis followed Saldaña’s (2015) qualitative design methods and was guided by Thorne’s (2016) interpretive description research design and a reality-testing framework (Epstein, 2012; Schwandt, 2001).

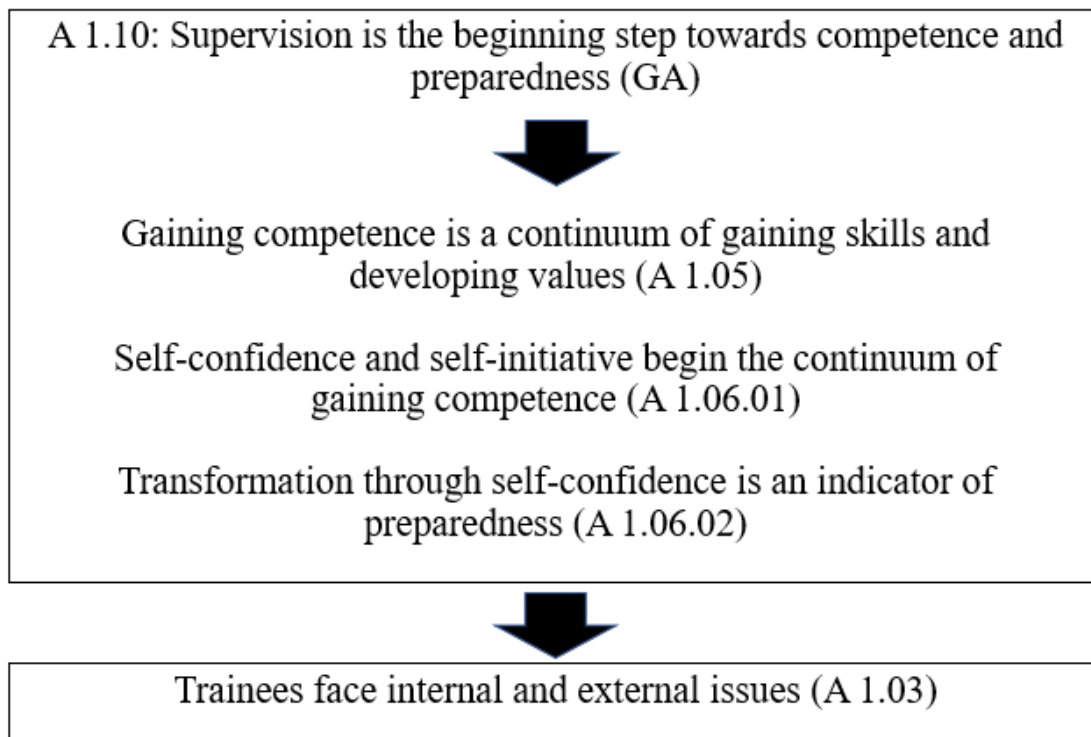
### **Primary RQ 1**

The first research question asked: “How do supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors?” In response, the research questions revealed seven assertions. There were four general assertions and three specific assertions. These were: (a) trainees face internal and external issues (GA), (b) gaining competence is a continuum of growing skills and developing values (SA), (c) self-confidence and self-initiative begin the continuum of gaining competence (SA), (d) transformation through self-confidence is the indicator of preparedness (SA), and (e) supervision is the beginning step towards competence and preparedness (GA). They also divulged two general assertions on the influence on developing trainee competence regarding: (a) the settings of trainees (GA), and (b) the preparedness of supervisors (GA). These two assertions can support future research on this topic. The potential interconnection of these five contentions as a flowing process is set out in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Responses to Primary RQ 1 of Competence Gained on a Continuum and Transformed by Self-Confidence in Trainees*

[Primary RQ 1] How do supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors?

**Primary RQ 2**

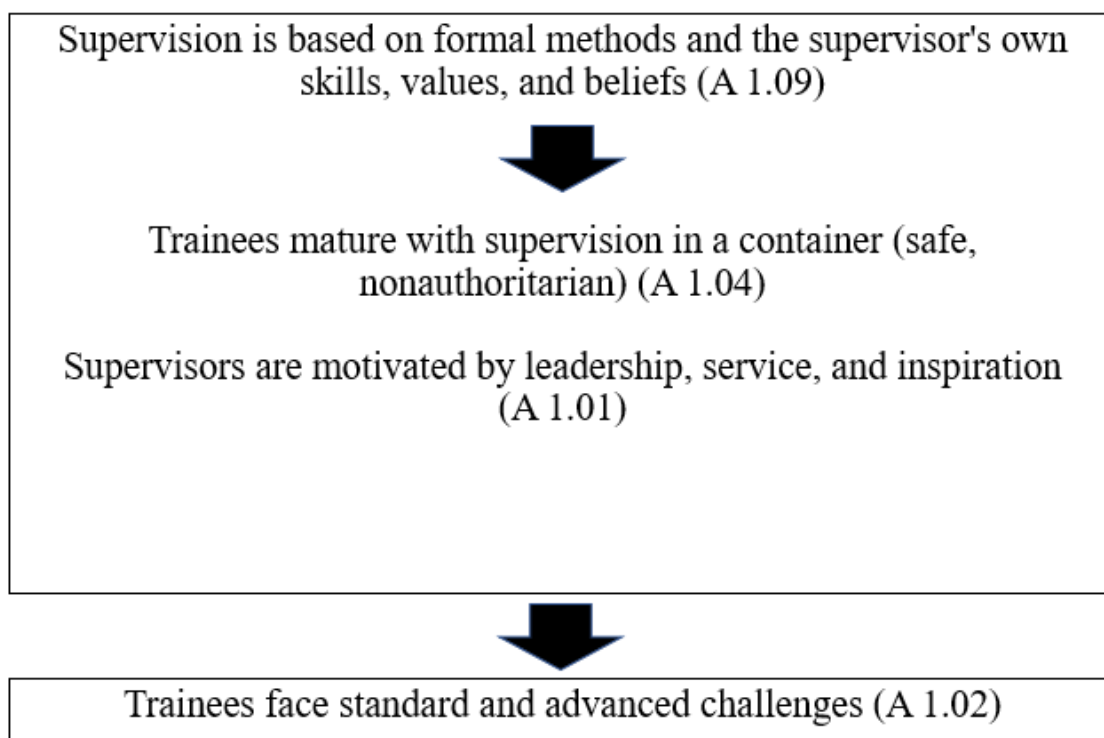
The second research question asked: “How do supervisors train the development of competence in trainee school counselors?” In response, the research questions generated three general assertions and one specific assertion: (a) supervisors are motivated by leadership, service, and inspiration (GA), (b) trainees face standard and advanced challenges (GA), (c) trainees receive supervision in a container (GA), and (d) supervision is based on formal methods and the supervisor's own skills, values, and

beliefs (SA). The potential interconnection of these four contentions as a flowing process is set out in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**

*Responses to Primary RQ 2 of Trainees Supervised in a Safe Container of Supervision by Supervisors With Their Own Motivations and Methods*

[Primary RQ 2] How do supervisors train the development of competence in trainee school counselors?



**Secondary Research Question A**

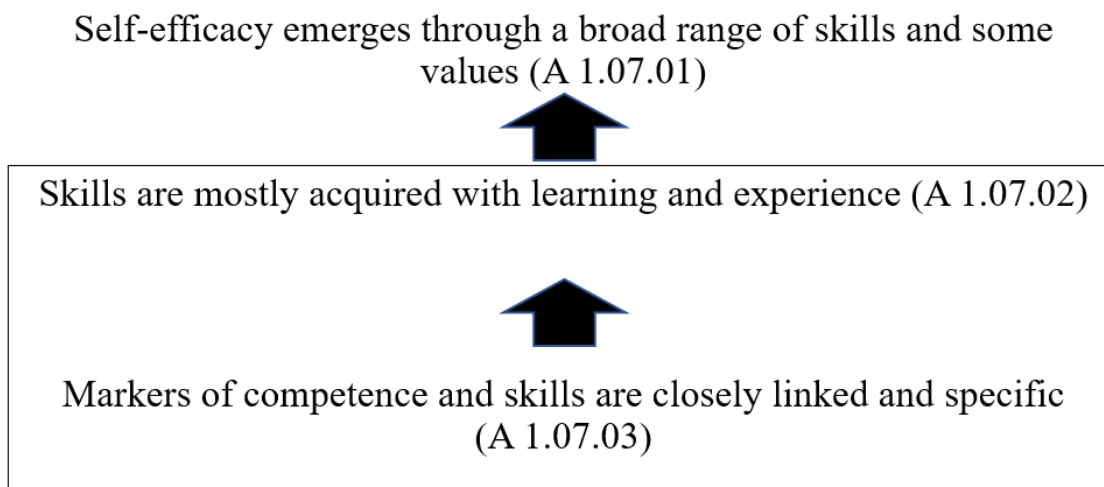
The initial secondary research question asked: “How do supervisors describe the development of self-efficacy in trainee school counselors?” In response, the research questions generated two general assertions and one specific assertion: (a) self-efficacy emerges through a narrow range of skills and some values (SA), (b) skills are mostly

acquired with learning and experience (GA), and (c) markers of competence and skills are closely linked and specific (GA). The potential interconnection of these three contentions as a flowing process is set out in Figure 5.

### Figure 5

*Responses to Secondary RQ A of Self-Efficacy Emerging Through Specific Skills Acquired With Learning and Experience*

[Secondary RQ A] How do supervisors describe the development of self-efficacy in trainee school counselors?



### Secondary Research Question B

The following secondary research question asked: “How do supervisors describe the development of professional identity in trainee school counselors?” In response, the research questions generated two general assertions and one specific assertion: (a) identity emerges through a spectrum of values and beliefs (and not skills) (SA), (b) most values and beliefs can be grown and developed (GA), and (c) markers of values and beliefs are diverse and less specific (GA). The potential interconnection of these three contentions as a flowing process is set out in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

*Responses to Secondary RQ B of Identity Emerging With Diverse Values and Beliefs*

[Secondary RQ B] How do supervisors describe the development of professional identity in trainee school counselors?

Identity emerges through a balance of values and beliefs (and not skills) (A 1.08.01)



Most values and beliefs can be grown and developed (A 1.08.02)



Markers of values and beliefs are diverse and less specific (A 1.08.03)

In Chapter 5 the results of the research study will be interpreted within the context of the literature and conceptual frameworks. Limitations will be explained, and Recommendations for future research will be presented. Implications for social change will be described. The chapter will close with conclusions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand how supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors. First, I explored the meaning of competence and how it is trained by supervisors of school counselor trainees. Second, I explored the development of the concepts of self-efficacy and professional identity by supervisors. Both concepts are accepted by scholars as components of counselor competence and as essential in helping professions. But they are not well-defined in the research on school counseling competence. I selected supervisors as my study participants because supervision is a further key element of competence formation.

The research method for this study was based on Saldaña's (2015) qualitative methods, and a combination of Thorne's (2016) interpretive description research design and a reality-testing viewpoint from logical empiricism (see Epstein, 2012; Patton, 2015). The former governed the sequencing of coding steps of shaping small units of analysis into major themes, theoretical constructs, and definitions (see Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2015). The latter enabled me, as the sole researcher, to interpret empirical evidence, lived reality, and observed experiences in a defensible, logical, and systematic manner (see Schwandt, 1994; Schwandt, 2001; Thorne, 2016).

In this chapter, I present a summary of the key results in my study. Then I link specific assertions revealed in the results of the analyses to the respective research questions. I provide: (a) an interpretation of how these results confirm, disconfirm, or extend the research knowledge and the conceptual frameworks, and (b) the limitations to

their trustworthiness. These topics are followed by my recommendations for future research, a summary of the implications for positive social change, and my conclusions.

For the first of the two primary research questions, I inquired: “How do supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors?” I filtered the responses of the study participants into 297 codes, which generated 59 patterns. I detected 13 themes which were distilled into seven assertions. Collectively, these seven assertions revealed that supervision is the beginning step towards trainees gaining competence and preparedness to face the internal and external issues in the field. The gaining of competence unfolds on a continuum for growing skills and developing values. This continuum begins with self-confidence and self-initiative and it is delineated by transformation (or floundering). Taken together, a trainee’s transformation through self-confidence and self-initiative is a key indicator of preparedness. For instance, P1 explained how supervision provides, “that kernel ... that spark ... that beginning thing.” P1 provided examples of challenging activities that were, “inappropriate for their role” as clinicians or trainees. P1 explained the unpreparedness in a trainee as: “They didn’t have the heart for it.” P13 was one of several participants who described unpreparedness as, “sometimes they’re still kind of floundering.”

For the second primary research question, I inquired: “How do supervisors train the development of competence in trainee school counselors?” I filtered the responses of the study participants into 155 codes, which generated 33 patterns. I detected 14 themes which were distilled into four assertions. Collectively, these four assertions revealed that supervision is provided to trainees to face standard and advanced work challenges. The

nature of supervisor's motivations and methods were described as both formal and informal, and as including their own skills, values, and beliefs. Supervisors were found to be motivated by a combination of leadership, service, and inspiration. They provide supervision in a safe and nonauthoritarian container for the maturation of trainees. For instance, P11 disclosed their motivation as a supervisor with: "I studied leadership and I wanted to be able to pass good leadership on." P1 revealed their motivation with: "I wanted to become a clinical supervisor because I received excellent clinical ... supervision as [when] I was an associate." P13 described the challenges of trainees with, "Teachers who don't really understand what they do or don't really understand the importance of ... counseling and school counseling." P7 illustrated how in traineeships, "the first month is greenness and [how] this nervous energy is very apparent." P5 summarized their monitoring method as: "A map in my head of ... where I want them to move."

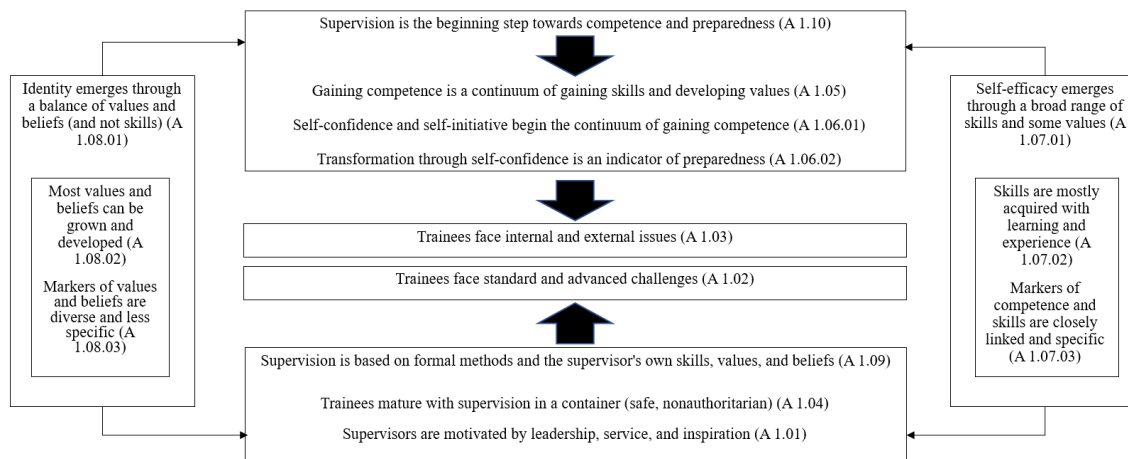
The primary research questions were followed up by two secondary research questions. For the first question, I inquired: "How do supervisors describe the development of self-efficacy in trainee school counselors?" Respondents revealed that a narrow spectrum of skills and some values lead to the emergence of self-efficacy. These skills are mostly acquired with learning and experience. Consequently, the narrower aspects of competence are more closely linked with skills and some values. Participants included specific skills and values like willingness to make mistakes, to take risks, and to trust. P13 explained how: "It takes time to develop these skills [patience and grace]." When it came to their list of single markers of qualities, there were numerous overlaps



between certain competences and skills. For instance, “clinical skills” (P15, P9, P5, P1), “flexibility” (P9, P6, P4, P2), and “empathy” (P14, P13, P3) were predominant and used interchangeably under both categories of competence and skills as markers.

For the second question I inquired: “How do supervisors describe the development of professional identity in trainee school counselors?” Respondents revealed that professional identity is mainly formed from values and beliefs, and not from skills. These values and beliefs are acquired through growth and learning. Consequently, the wider aspects of competence are more closely linked with a broad spectrum of values and beliefs. Participants included “equality” and “equity within the system” (P16), “a good moral and ethical compass” (P5), and belief systems (P11, P9, P8) as examples of beliefs. Most study participants determined that values were not innate but could be acquired. For instance, P14 observed that values, like skills, could be cultivated. When it came to their list of single markers of qualities, there were few overlaps between values and competences and skills. For instance, P12 and P9 referred to distinct (and intangible) qualities, like “belief” and “hope and belief”, as their markers.

A depiction of how the interconnection of the results of the entire study unfolded as a circumfluent process is set out in Figure 7.

**Figure 7***Summary of Results***Interpretation of the Findings****Meaning of Findings Relative to Published Literature**

The importance of delivering school counseling under ideal circumstances was reviewed extensively in Chapter 2. But the effectiveness of its provision has been eroded by incomplete support from professional bodies, school administrators, teachers, and parents. Shortfalls in the uniformity and adoption of institutional and individual credentialing standards have been recognized (Milsom & Akos, 2007; Trolley, 2011). Ambiguity and misunderstandings over the appropriate tasks and roles of school counselors have also been identified (ASCA, 2019; Bledsoe et al., 2021; Beijaard et al., 2000; Heled & Davidovitch, 2022; Kolodinsky, et al., 2009; Trolley, 2011; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

The results of this study confirmed that professional identity development, self-efficacy, and supervision are primary developmental components of competence

formation. Hitherto, self-efficacy was associated with managing the task uncertainties of trainees. The study findings specified that it mainly acts via the development of skills, and only some values. Hitherto, identity development was associated with managing the role uncertainties of trainees. The study uncovered that it develops from values and beliefs, but not skills. The results added a needed clarifying conceptualization of how the development of professional competence engages the cultivation of both professional identity development and self-efficacy (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Beijaard et al., 2000; Heled & Davidovitch, 2019, 2022). The results implied that an effective and comprehensive culture of supervision should include the training of the skills, values, and beliefs of trainees. Thus, despite the limited availability of research on the role of practicum supervisors in the development of the competence, this study revealed that supervisors already provide conceptualizations of competence formation based on how they practice it with their trainees. As a result, supervisors should feel encouraged to follow their intuition in addressing the challenges of trainees.

The current study specified three different sources of motivation to become a supervisor: leadership, service, and inspiration. The study also identified four themes for structuring supervision to meet the challenges of trainees: regular counseling and shadowing, advanced counseling, classroom, and teacher support, and notably, passion. The results also revealed that supervisors appear to follow, relate, and respond to their trainees rather than follow models. These findings were consistent with prior research that supervision is critically connected to professional identity development and self-

efficacy (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Collins, 2014; McMahon et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014).

Only a limited number of studies have delved into the relationship between trainee school counselors and their supervisors (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020). This study found five supervision themes (e.g., the term for supervision of a *contained space*). For instance, P16 stated, “I work with them in terms of their confidence level and just their professional skills ... like networking with teachers and ... admin [*sic*] and ... how to defuse it angry parents or students.” P8 described supervision as a container, “... a safe space for you to bring up anything” (P8). P15 described supervision as: “I treat it as if it was like a therapy session.” The culture of supervision appears to extend beyond training. Supervisors care for, protect, and treat their trainees.

In Chapter 2 it was pointed out that there were deficiencies in the uniform adoption of institutional and individual credentialing standards (Milsom & Akos, 2007; Trolley, 2011) and in the adequacy of supervisor evaluations (Falender & Shafranske, 2008; Lamb & Swerdlik, 2004). The findings of the study may be fueling that criticism by revealing that supervisors do not rigidly follow specific developmental models. Many supervisors are not formulaic in their approach; they also integrate their own skills and wider competences into their supervision practice. The study identified two themes for supervision structures: (a) a formal evaluation (like an audit), or (b) an informal evaluation (like a mental map). Their methods were either structured by the stipulations of their institutions or unstructured according to their own skills, values, and beliefs. Further, supervisors in this research felt able to deal adequately and practically with the

challenges of their trainees while not necessarily being aware of the definitional and credentialing issues. Therefore, effective and comprehensive supervision may not be wholly dependent on normative methods and external support: supervisors are diverse and self-efficacious. Even without following the complex models prescribed by the literature, supervisors can be comprehensive in forming competence. This implies that the scholarship which endorses the role of supervisors in the development of trainees (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982; Solway, 1985) would be enriched by the knowledge on the different lived realities of supervisors in this study.

### **Meaning of Findings Relative to Conceptual Frameworks**

#### ***Self-Efficacy***

The results of my study clarified how supervision forms trainee competence by interlinking self-efficacy and professional identity development, which were the two conceptual frameworks of the study. Regarding self-efficacy, supervisors described the need to treat the internal and external needs of their trainees. The study found that the negative consequences on trainees of their challenges give rise to inner issues (like frustration) and outer issues (like staff opposition). In Chapter 2, the positive effects of self-efficacy were also divided into managing internal challenges, like anxiety (Heppner & Roehlke, 1984; Kozina et al., 2010; Thériault & Gazzola, 2005), and external challenges, like noncounseling activities (Ernst et al., 2017). For instance, P13 described the outer challenges of trainees as, “their own feelings of inadequacy, the stress and overwhelm [*sic*] that they feel about like how am I going to provide these services.” P5 described challenges as, “the balance between the training and the mental health field and

then ... [the] actual reality of working in a school.” This implies that learning coping skills through self-efficacy training should be foundational in supervision.

### ***Professional Identity***

As described in Chapter 2, professional identity formation is perceived as a moment of maturation (e.g., Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Friedman & Kaslow, 1986; Gibson et al., 2012; Lamb et al., 1982) while the timing of self-efficacy formation is a matter of longstanding debate. The results of this study provide keen insights to the maturation process by considering both concepts. The supervisors provided a different definition of competence formation by: (a) defining a *continuum of competence formation* along which the progress of a trainee is marked, and (b) labeling the other key terms of *self-confidence* and *self-initiative* as triggering events and indicators along that continuum. They also defined the state of not becoming competent as: (a) lack of understanding (characterized by *skills*), and (b) lack of qualities (characterized by *values*).

### ***Supervision***

This study revealed how trainees present when becoming prepared (i.e., in a state of *transformation*) and how trainees present when not becoming prepared (i.e., in a state of *floundering*). Within this context, the value of supervision was described as a *contained space*; especially by providing continuous and direct feedback, learning from others in a group, and providing affirmation (P14: “they have a beginning competence when they graduate and ... they grow in competence over time in their job” ; P11: [they can] “develop a love for the work that leads to personal as well as professional growth.”

If competence is formed in supervision with building skills and values, then it is grown after supervision with experience and identity development.

***Basic Competence (Traditional Framework)***

Chapter 2 pointed out the challenges of incomplete definitions of competence. Yet, on a practical, skill-building, and growth promoting way, the supervisors shared distinct understandings of how self-efficacy and professional identity development contribute to competence formation. The results described how supervisors may only be addressing the development of skills but not the wider competences of their trainees if they solely train self-efficacy. The results from exploring the “composition of self-efficacy” generated two themes: (a) the “emergence of self-efficacy through skills” and (b) the “emergence of self-efficacy through some values.” This is consistent with the originating work on self-efficacy and skills-based viewpoints on competence (Bandura, 1977). Numerous study participants highlighted *flexibility* as a key skill. P16 defined it as, “executive function flexibility.” Only some values were named under self-efficacy. For instance, P13 contributed: “I also hope that [trainees] have some ... gentleness, compassion, and empathy for their clients.” Researchers, like Borden and McIlvried (2020), represent the established school of researchers who continue to state the need to develop valid measures of competence and propose models with hierarchical tiers of competencies as solutions. If so, the essential skills formed with self-efficacy appear to form only a basic tier of core competency.

In most cases, self-efficacy seems to be formed during practicum with supervisors, which adds to the debate of whether the formation of self-efficacy takes

place in prepracticum, early practicum, or late practicum (i.e., Mullen et al., 2019; Kozina et al., 2010, Tang et al., 2004). Further, these study participants used a different categorization of skills formation with: (a) *acquired*, (b) *innate*, or (c) both. The acquisition of skills through learning and experience (i.e., during traineeship and supervision) was the most common response. However, the number of voices with opposing or mixed views was noteworthy.

### ***Advanced Competence (Reality-Testing Framework)***

My study results differed from the traditional methods of naming and ordering of competencies. The three main routes for defining professional competence revealed in Chapter 2 are: (a) cataloguing multiple roles and skills, for instance, in Kaslow's (2004) opinion articles, (b) describing attitudes and values aligned with effective practice, for instance, in Epstein and Hundert's (2002) summary review, or Gonsalvez and Calvert's (2014) opinion article, and (c) identifying clusters of competencies, for instance, in Gonsalvez et al.'s (2020) quantitative study. My research approach differed from previous methods with its reflexive approach which was based on the research design and reality-testing framework. For instance, most research studies focus on either *competence* or *incompetence* as the distinct concepts. My research questions also expanded to notions of *nonpreparedness* and *noncompetence* to enrich descriptions. While the markers which were named by my study participants were not original or new in themselves, they were more clearly aligned under the concepts of self-efficacy or professional identity. If so, supervisors should be supported in sharing their experiences of how they respond conceptually and intuitively to their trainees.



Self-efficacy and professional identity both form competence but may require separate training by supervisors. The results from exploring the “composition of professional identity” generated two themes: (a) “development of identity through values” and (b) “development of identity through beliefs.” The results also linked professional identity development with wider competences of values and beliefs (but not skills). For instance, P12 gave an example of values as: “The first step is a passion to help students. But that’s not a skill. That’s more of an attitude of values [*sic*].” P7 described a quality as a belief with, “to look at young people. As a source of joy for themselves.” Once formed, competence appears to grow with the cultivation of identity development, which seems to be nurtured by both concrete (e.g., career) and abstract goals.

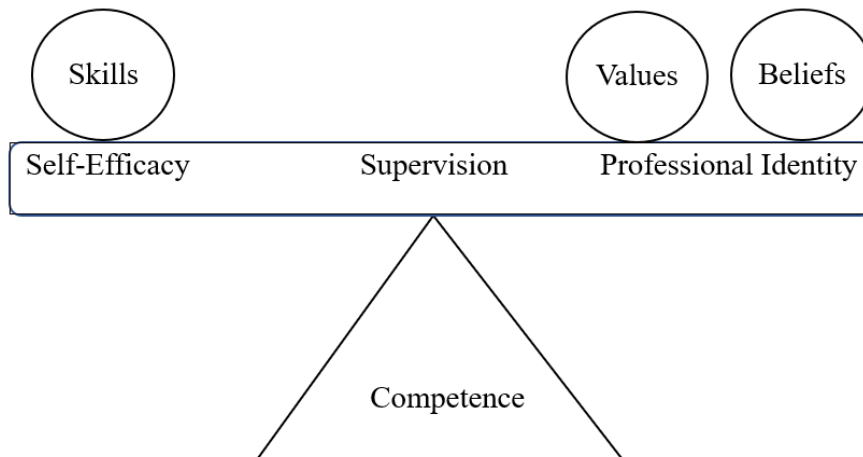
The timing of professional identity formation is also commonly viewed as a phasal process which culminates with a moment of professional maturation (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Friedman & Kaslow, 1986; Gibson et al., 2012). These study participants used different categorizations of identity, mostly supporting the idea that values can be grown (i.e., during traineeship and supervision) instead of only being innate. Taken together with the broader findings of the study on a continuum of competence formation, identity formation also appears to be an evolving a professional and personal process.

A commonly accepted observation on competence formation through professional identity development describes a maturation process of self-conceptualization. This process is often accompanied by career-related advocacy and leadership roles (Brott & Myers, 1999; Cheatham et al., 2021; McMahon et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014). The reality-testing approach shines a “light” on what supervisors in fact do to support identity

formation and self-efficacy through skills and values development, similar to other self-development models like positive psychology and self-concordance model theory (Lee Duckworth et al., 2005; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). The results from this study extended their application to the field of school counselor training. This implies that supervisors should attend to the professional and personal identity growth by engaging with the external and internal targets of their trainees.

### **How the Present Study Extends the Research Knowledge**

The main contribution of my study is to clarify the roles and relationships between supervision, self-efficacy, and professional growth as components of competence formation. The prevailing treatment of this topic is through opinion articles from the viewpoints of educators, trainees, or professional bodies. My findings were based on how supervisors describe the development of competence in trainee school counselors. It applied a qualitative research method of interpretive description and reality-testing. This is conceptualized in Figure 8.

**Figure 8***Components of Competence*

First, the results of my study clarified how supervision, self-efficacy and professional identity development interlink to form competence. My results confirmed the positive influence of supervision on the management of the internal and external issues faced by trainees. They revealed and specified that supervision begins competence formation with self-confidence and self-initiative as key indicators (or triggering events). The study results described competence formation as a lifelong process of professional development. It is characterized by: (a) the continued importance of personal development (e.g., beliefs), (b) a continuum of growing skills, values, and beliefs, and (c) *transformation* and *floundering* as contending states of being along its continuance.

Second, the results of my study extended the research knowledge on how competence formation is facilitated by supervisors. They explained the motivations of supervisors as *leadership*, *service*, and *inspiration*. Also, they confirmed the positive influence of supervision based on facing the regular and advanced challenges by trainees.

In addition, they added abstract notions, like *passion*. The supervision setting was identified as a *contained space* for guiding and protecting trainees along the continuum of competence formation. They also added explanations of how supervisor's methods and techniques were: (a) both formal and informal, (b) included their own skills, values, and beliefs, and (c) not rigidly bound to any specific developmental model.

Third, the results of my study detailed the respective contributions of self-efficacy and professional identity development to competence formation. On the one hand, my study identified and categorized precise markers of skills and wider competences. These markers were ordered in a narrow spectrum of qualities (i.e., attitudes, knowledge, and skills) for competence formation. My results identified three channels of their formation being acquired, innate, or combined. They suggested that skills are acquired through learning and experience, which included during traineeship and supervision. My study also identified and categorized precise markers of values and beliefs. These markers are ordered in a wide spectrum of qualities for competence formation. My results identified the channel of growth and development as the main source of their formation. Based on these details, my results showed that the concept of self-efficacy is predominantly composed of skills and includes some values, while the concept of professional identity is predominantly composed of values and beliefs, and not skills. Thus, the concepts self-efficacy and professional identity are distinct and only indirectly linked through their roles as components of competence. It was also observed that: (a) the terms *competence* and *skills* are understood to be interchangeable, and (b) the examples of *values* and *beliefs* are wide-ranging and intangible. In sum, the results confirmed, clarified, disputed,

and defined the connections between self-efficacy, professional identity development, supervision as components of competence formation.

### **Limitations of the Study**

#### **Transferability**

Transferability addresses generalizability and the replicability of the fieldwork by researchers in other similar settings (see Shenton, 2004). First, I adopted an authentic, immediate, and responsive personality. This enabled me to clarify and summarize sensitively during my interviews and afterwards with member checking to create thick descriptions (see Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thorne, 2016; Wolcott, 1994). Second, I applied maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling to generate a diversity of participant's experiences (see Patton, 2015). As a result, 16 participants were recruited who represented all three of the types of institutions which were listed as locations for supervisors of trainees in Chapter 3. Third, I supported transferability with confirmability; to root the findings in the study's data and not in the researcher's predispositions (see Shenton, 2004).

First, the transferability of my research study is limited to findings: (a) taken from only school counseling trainee supervisors, and no other populations (like administrators or colleagues), and (b) made by a single researcher. A larger team of researchers can perform more triangulation methods (see Farmer et al., 2006) and test for inter-coder reliability. Second, in terms of sampling, the participants in my study were heterogenous but non-homogenous in terms of work settings (i.e., three different environments) and expertise levels (i.e., ranging from three years to more than 20 years). Transferability

depends on the application of the specific context of this study (see Jacobsen et al., 2021). Thus, the replicability of the context of my study depends on the ability and willingness of future researchers to reconstitute a similar range of participant experiences. Other researchers could decide on a tiering of findings according to the seniority of its expert participants instead (see Pérez et al., 2013). Other researchers can also investigate a different sample type (e.g., of a related population, like supervisors from other mental healthcare settings) or analyze document records. Third, in terms of the standpoint of the researcher, my research study was entrenched in the practices of the healthcare system and the profession of school counseling by the statements made by qualified supervisors (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Thorne, 2016). I took an emic standpoint and applied an inductive analysis of the research data. My viewpoint was supported by the honesty and transparency with which I interacted with the participants (see Nolen & Talbert, 2011). My study results were protected from my predispositions with audit trails and self-reflective journals. Consequently, assertions were extracted based on my experience in the field, emic standpoint, and theoretical knowledge research (see Nolen & Talbert, 2011). Researchers with other connections to these topics (e.g., from different fields of training) could adopt a deductive or a non-emic standpoint.

### **Dependability**

Dependability addresses repeatability of the fieldwork by other researchers (Shenton, 2004). First, I documented my consistent application of Saldaña's (2015) two-step coding process (described in Chapter 3) in the audit trail and self-reflective journal (see Malterud, 2012; Saldaña, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Second, I made verbatim

transcriptions, saved a copy of every significant new version of my working drafts, and accurately and precisely hand coded the data. This created a documentation for researchers to have sufficient dependable information to determine the meaning of the results in their own context (see Shenton, 2004). Consequently, my research process led to the revelation of asserted outcomes (i.e., assertions) rather than prescriptive findings (see Nolen & Talbert, 2011).

### **Supervisor Variance**

In Chapter 2, variances in the adequacy and training of supervisors were uncovered (Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2012). It was recognized that the participating supervisors might vary in their knowledge or experience to provide in-depth responses. Consequently, I utilized a reality-testing framework which focused on recording experiences rather than on forming conclusions (see Nolen & Talbert, 2011). My study represents the lived experiences and knowledge of the participants, regardless of whether they themselves had cognitive or conscious awareness of their existence (see Epstein, 2012; Patton, 2015). As a result, I integrated potential variances among supervisors into the study's findings. My research approach adopted the different training backgrounds and actual ambiguities of knowledge among the supervisors (see Hilts et al., 2022).

### **Recommendations**

Two recommendations arise from my research study: (a) to invite a Delphi study for the advancement of the findings, and (b) to engage agents of change with participatory action research to implement the findings. A Delphi study will advance the knowledge with enhanced questions to resolve longstanding debates on definitions

(Thorne, 2013). Participatory action research will initiate decisional strategies to resolve pressing needs and challenges (Simmons, 1995; Thorne, 2016).

### **Delphi Studies**

It is recommended that domain experts provide their opinions on the new dimensions of the phenomenon raised by my study to develop consensus on key aspects of professional competence (see Hsu & Sandford, 2007). Interest to perform such a study should be high. This field is already rich in expert scholarly interest. Prominent researchers and scholars still predominate in this field with their literature reviews, summary reviews, opinion articles, and some quantitative research. Their opinion articles populate the incomplete knowledge on definitions of key terms (e.g., Elman & Forrest, 2007; Falender & Shafranske, 2012). But the overall state of the literature on professional competence in this field is also still highly fragmented, largely outdated and mostly unresolved in key areas. Delphi studies are fitting methods to engage these experts: (a) they are appropriate for concept and framework development, and (b) they apply an iterative and expert-driven method (see Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004).

In terms of implementation, I recommend the creation of panels of (e.g., 20 to 30) experts drawn from researchers and stakeholders from the fields of academia, organizations and associations, supervisors, and supervisees to engage in consensus building around the three components of competence (i.e., Figure 8). They will be contacted with questionnaires. In the first round, they will investigate the effects of skills, values, and beliefs. In the second round, they will narrow down to propositions for self-efficacy and professional identity. In the third round, they will conceptualize competence



for supervision. Their views will be collected, filtered, iterated, and ranked for building consensus, policies, testing, or theories from my study (see Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004).

### **Participatory Action Research**

It is recommended that stakeholders are invited for participatory action research initiatives to develop and implement systemic change in school counseling based on the findings from my study (Dahir & Stone, 2009). The interest among advocates, participants, and stakeholders in this field should be high given the frontline importance of their school counseling services. Action research is already effectively utilized in school counseling advocacy (e.g., Dahir & Stone, 2009; Griffin & Stern, 2011; Whiston, 2002). It is a fitting approach for engaging specialists on these practice-based matters.

The following topics require action. First, the study participants raised issues about the role ambiguities of external agency providers compared to school-based providers of supervisors of trainees. Their role confusion and status with the school systems can impact the provision of vital mental health services to students. Participatory action research can collect best practices and set standards for equal treatment of providers, supervisors, trainees, and students. Second, issues were raised in Chapter 2, regarding the low quantity and adequacy of supervisors themselves. But the lived experiences of the study participants revealed that a high diversity of motivations can still lead to effective approaches. Action research participants can specifically address the optimization of the recruitment and preparation of school counselor trainee supervisors.

I recommend to the recruitment of participating specialists drawn from (e.g., 20 to 50) administrators, lobbyists, supervisors, and supervisees (Ng et al., 2018). They will

execute their hypothesis generation, data gathering, and results application based on findings from my study (see Dahir & Stone, 2009; Sagor, 2005). They will build panels to formulate action strategies for systems changes to increase supervisor parity and numbers (see Griffin & Stern, 2011).

### **Implications**

The social justice consequences of my study address increasing and improving the number and quality school counseling trainees serving local school districts. New counselors can be supervised with better professional development, direction, guidance, preparation, and resources to serve and lead their student clients (Kearney et al., 2021; Savitz-Romer et al., 2021). With the support of better supervision, the doors will open for more school counselors to positively affect their responsibilities towards social justice (Alexander et al., 2022; Gibson et al., 2022; Peters & Luke, 2021a; Savitz-Romer et al., 2021; Shell, 2021).

On a personal level, my societal goal for this research study was to promote a better understanding of competence formation of trainees. Then supervisors can increase the levels of retention, quality, and satisfaction of new school counselors for their profession. On a research level, the social and welfare significance of improving the research knowledge on this topic is well documented. However, definitions of the key concepts are incomplete. Since the literature review also revealed a noteworthy absence of qualitative studies. My response was to illuminate this ill-defined and opaquely defined topic with rich descriptions from the less common perspective of the lived reality of supervisors. On an organizational level, it is expected that supervisors can better

prepare their trainees for their professional challenges if they have a better understanding of the components of competence formation (McMahon et al., 2009). Professional bodies can use my findings as guidelines (i.e., Figure 8) to improve the system's conceptual frameworks for accreditation, education, and training (Dollarhide, 2003; Heled & Davidovitch, 2022, Milsom & Akos, 2007; Morgan et al., 2014; Trolley, 2011). This improves the social effectiveness of the profession.

On a societal level, my study belongs to a longstanding vision in this field of school counselors as agents, who cascade positive social change into their work settings. On a family and individual level, these agents advocate for their school student clients, advance administrative leadership and policy, and create equality and justice in education. They can thereby make a culminative impact on equity in the education and social justice systems (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). This study and its recommendations belong to a tradition of improving professional practices in school communities with systematic scientific research (Dahir & Stone, 2009). On a practice level, there is an accepted role in this field for research as a driver of social justice. Further expert-driven Delphi inquiries can improve the standards and understanding of competence among school counselors. Ensuing advocacy-driven participatory action research can drive systemic change (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Whiston, 2002).

In sum, three societal needs are addressed. First, the need to increase the number of school counselors, particularly in economically disadvantaged and multiracial school districts (DeAngelis et al., 2022; Savitz-Romer et al., 2021). Second, the need to resolve the challenging professional transitions of the roles and responsibilities faced by future

new school counselors. This opens the way for new school counseling leaders to drive advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change (LeBlanc & Borders, 2021). Third, the need for equipping new counselors with better development orientation, direction, guidance, preparation, and resources to serve and lead their student clients (Kearney et al., 2021; Savitz-Romer et al., 2021). With this support, school counselors can be better equipped to undertake their social justice responsibilities (Alexander et al., 2022; Gibson et al., 2022; Peters & Luke, 2021a; Savitz-Romer et al., 2021; Shell, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

School counselors fulfill an important role in providing frontline counseling services to children and adolescents in local school districts. There is a considerable body of research and professional opinions on the critical importance of school counseling in supporting the academic success and mental health of students (e.g., Brott et al., 2021; Feiss et al., 2019; Harrison et al., 2022; Hines & Lemons, 2011; Saunders et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2012, 2021). The critical need for school counselors is also recognized by the research and global health communities (Hines & Lemons, 2011; Novakovic et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2012, 2021).

The necessity for counseling trainees to feel competent and prepared to meet the challenges of their profession is acknowledged by the profession and the research community (Morgan et al., 2014; Parikh-Foxx et al., 2020). But they have also revealed that school counselors are neither comprehensively supported by their professional bodies (Fye et al., 2018) nor fully effective in meeting their challenges (Novakovic et al., 2021; Parikh-Foxx et al., 2020). The understanding of the competence required to meet these

challenges was also found to be deficient. The research knowledge on the meaning of professional competence was fragmented, outdated, and unintegrated.

After identifying the concepts of self-efficacy and professional identity, and supervision as the key components of professional competence, my study addressed how supervisors support their trainees in managing their responsibilities while being challenged by role ambiguity in their settings (Heled & Davidovitch, 2022; Hilts et al., 2022; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Luke & Peters, 2020; Whiston, 2002). The results of my study revealed that competence is formed along a lifelong *continuum* of growing skills for self-efficacy and developing values for professional identity. This process is triggered during supervision by the self-confidence and self-initiative of trainees. The states of being along the continuum are described as *transformation* or *floundering*. Further, my study results specified how self-efficacy is connected to a narrow spectrum of skills, as distinct from professional identity, which is connected to a wide spectrum of values and beliefs. These new dimensions raised the need for further expert study and advocacy through Delphi studies and participatory action research.

Greater understanding of how supervisors develop competence for their trainees will increase the quantity and quality of school counselors. This will lead to improved levels of social emotional development in their students. By equipping them to be greater agents of social change through supervision, the benefits will also flow through their local schools, to the families of their students, and into society.

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## Appendix A: Examples of Potential Pathways Towards Competence Formation

In Chapter 2, the contribution of self-efficacy, professional identity development, and supervision as the components to defining professional competence formation was uncovered. The incompleteness of the research in this field means that the knowledge on pathways for competence formation through supervision based on these components is also fragmentary or notional. Prominent presumptive pathways based on these components that emerged from Chapter 2 are summarized as follows.

### **Competence Formation Through Supervision: A Development-Oriented Pathway**

Both professional boards and research writings have supported the addition of a development-oriented approach to the concept of professional competence (American Psychological Association [APA] Board of Educational Affairs, 2005; Hatcher & Lassiter, 2007; Kaslow, 2004). Fouad et al. (2009) described this approach as a combination of acquiring foundational competence domains and functional competence domains. They also charted a progression through three phases of readiness for practicum, for internship, and for entering practice. This development of practicum training has also been described as the next stage of a step-wise and non-linear progression towards attainment for trainees after the completion of their academic coursework (Gonsalvez et al., 2015; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999). Such field placements (i.e., internships) have been shown to be central, common, and essential in the field of health science psychology; combining the application of theoretical knowledge with the acquisition of skills of a competent practitioner (Deane et al., 2018; Gonsalvez et al., 2015; Lichtenberg et al., 2007). These placement settings facilitated the promotion of

competence with feedback, self-awareness, and self-reflection (Boud et al., 2013; Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014; Knight, et al., 2010; Stoltenberg et al., 2014).

However, while a development-oriented approach adds conceptual support to the practice of training and supervision towards professional competence, it is also subject to two critiques: inadequacy of assessment criteria and lack of a clear definition. On the first point of critique, there was a low level of consensus on the criteria for assessing their development (Borders & Benshoff, 1992; Hensley et al., 2003; VanZandt, 1990). This is based on the following conundrum. Trainees only develop greater skills at self-assessing the degree of their own competence throughout the pathway of their development as they gain greater metacognitive capabilities to understand their needs and skills. They are hereby also assisted by competence-building associations, peer supervision, and clinical practice experience (Fouad & Grus, 2014; Gonsalvez & Crowe, 2014; Hatcher & Lassiter, 2007; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Johnson et al., 2012). In other words, lack of clinical experience of counseling trainees would inevitably lead to the inaccuracy of the self-assessment of their own competence (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Haggerty & Hilsenroth, 2011). Clinicians are therefore not viewed as being the best assessors and reporters of their own competence (Waltman et al., 2016). There is also the potential for role conflicts due to the role duality of a supervisor assessing the competence of their own supervisee, who they are fostering and training (Lichtenberg et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2005). A further criticism is the inharmony between the accuracy of self-assessment of trainees and their supervisors on their levels of competence (Creed et al., 2016; Neimeyer et al., 2014; Walfish et al., 2012; Waltman et al., 2016). But the number of

research studies in this area is too limited to allow for a generalization on the reasons for this disparity of self-assessment and whether it leads to either over-estimation or underestimation on one's level of competence (Creed et al., 2016; Hitzeman, et al., 2020; Loades & Myles, 2016). As a solution, it was proposed that trainees needed to apply a metacompetence to self-assess what they know and what they do not know (Falender & Shafranske, 2007). This could be facilitated by the inclusion of metacompetencies in Gonsalvez et al.'s (2021) study as one of their four main components of the anatomy of competence.

As for the second point of critique, Elman et al. (2005) made the challenge that the description of *professional development* is a vaguely defined concept, with no clear meaning and no single definition. These authors focused their definition of professional development on the gaining of interpersonal functional skills and a critical and professional frame of mind (Elman et al., 2005). They also alluded to other components self-assessment, self-care, and self-knowledge, which are fundamental to its definition. Developing, refining, and specializing competencies, knowledge, proficiencies, and skills were also included as components of professional development (Elman et al., 2005, Kaslow et al., 2007). The developmental aspect to competence assessment was also documented as a primary internal and institutional goal across the professional psychological lifespan by Kaslow et al. (2007). In the adjacent field of psychotherapy, *traineeship* was also described as a developmental path with a trajectory for the acquisition of skills which is developed by their supervisors (Newman, 2010). Similarly, in the field of school counseling, trainees were understood to be undergoing substantial

developmental transitions during their internship and requiring specific assistance (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982; Solway, 1985). These critiques of opacity of meanings echo the overall lack of clarity on key terms in this field outlined in Chapter 2.

Despite its age, Lamb et al.'s (1982) description of trainee development still provides one of the clearest indications on the timing of competence formation. They outlined the five developmental stages of trainee progression as preparation, acclimatization, identity definition and differentiation, emergence of a professional with the increase of competence, and independence and resolution. They identified the emergence of professional competence when trainees gain confidence, equality and independence and take a leading role delivering programs and services as well as beginning to disagree with their supervisors (Lamb et al., 1982). The timing of gaining professional competence was defined as a point in time of immersion in their professional roles and awareness of the realities of their profession (which can even lead to disillusionment). But despite the early progress made on defining terms, further recent research in the field of development-oriented approaches on these pioneering works is lacking. Apart from Langher et al.'s (2014) study which criticized the shortfalls in relevance of counseling training for internship and later work, later research in this field is limited. Based on the outdated nature of this knowledge, a need for further research is identifiable.

### **Competence Formation Through the Pathway of Self-Efficacy**

The contribution made by self-efficacy to skills-based development is accepted by the research and its pathway is laid out in Chapter 2. In short, CSE has long been found to



have a positive influence on the experience and training levels, self-concept, and professional development. It was also found to moderate clinical outcome expectations based on perceived levels of expertise and reduced levels of anxiety of trainee counselors (Larson et al., 1992; Leach et al., 1997; Sipps et al., 1988). CSE helps trainees to understand the school counseling world. This also supports the formation of their professional identity (Cinotti & Springer, 2016; Sutton & Fall, 1995). Therefore, undergraduate counseling training programs have focused on both the professional identity development and self-efficacy of trainees (Aladag, 2013). In addition, self-efficacy was proposed as supporting the development of professional identity through its positive effect on effort, functioning, and persistence of counselors; as well as reducing school counselor burnout (Daniels & Larson, 2001; Gunduz, 2012; Sutton & Fall, 1995). Despite the consensus (even in recent large-scale surveys across broad categories of school counselor roles), it was also determined that the relationship between school counselor professional identity development and professional practices remains largely under-defined and under-explored (Fan et al., 2019; Klein & Beeson, 2022).

### **Competence Formation Through the Pathway of Professional Identity Development**

The concept of development-oriented supervision also adds clarity to understanding how professional competence prepares trainees with wider attitudes and values for their professional pathway. Supervision also facilitates the role of professional identity development in competence formation and its pathway is laid out in Chapter 2. It has been stated, that a complete view of competence and identity formation requires considering the effect of supervisory behaviors on the characteristics of trainees and their

overall environment (Hogan, 1964; Loganbill et al., 1982; Reising & Daniels, 1983). Clinical supervision has also been found to develop professional development through newly acquired skills and resolution of workplace issues (Brott & Myers, 1999; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Commensurate to Lamb et al.'s (1982) foundational approach to the phases of professional development, Friedman and Kaslow's (1986) fundamental research on this topic was also structured in phases and attributed a key role to supervision. Their view of identity formation described six phases of learning of: early anticipatory excitement; dependence and identification; activity and dependence, exuberance and charge taking; independence and identity, and; calmness and collegiality. As for formation and timing, they understood professional identity to emerge in the later phases of learning when a trainee acquires independence and identity as well as calmness and collegiality. Again, with strong echoes from the findings of Lamb et al. (1982) on professional development, Friedman and Kaslow (1986) also understood trainees to enter a phase of adolescence and autonomy by entering into disputes and power struggles with their teachers in the learning phase of identity and independence. In short, their findings on professional identity formation and timing not only echo the writings on professional competence and professional development but also those on self-efficacy (Kozina et al, 2010; Mullen et al., 2015; Tang et al., 2004).

But while the writings on professional identity development add complementary conceptual support to the practice of training and supervision towards professional competence, at least two issues remain open. First, there is the dilemma for supervisors that they exert weaker influence on supervisees as they grow in their independence.

Second, there is a need for supervisors to maintain relevant knowledge levels. The latter point echoes the findings in this study on the challenges faced by supervisors which are covered in Chapter 2. Both issues endure as topics of research exploration. For instance, Friedman and Kaslow (1986) initially noted that the phase of identity formation also involved a period of adaptation and discomfort for supervisors as they lose acceptance and control over their trainees. More recent research developments of these issues include Watkins et al.'s (2018) study. They described similar phases with the formation of a "practice self." They also proposed adding new perspectives like transformational learning to break traditional cycles of supervisee control with an appreciation of growth and learning as a never-ending process. Bledsoe et al.'s (2021) phenomenological study specifically reiterated an absence of, and need for, qualified supervisors in its conclusions. Dollarhide and Miller (2006) cautioned that supervisors can have a negative effect on trainee professional identity development and induction. This occurs when supervisors become the sole voice of the profession after the educational phase of trainees and do not appreciate or understand new school counselor paradigms. However, the number of recent research studies on how supervisors address these specific shortcomings is limited.

### **Competence Formation Through Self-Efficacy and Professional Identity: A Self-Conceptualization-Oriented Pathway**

Only a limited amount of research has been performed in broadening the scope of CSE to encompass more developmental aspects of counselor growth. This description of such a pathway is a composite of similarly aligned research writings on this topic.

Two inroads into growth- and value-oriented pathways have been made through the connections of professional identity development with self-belief and self-perception. Self-belief and self-perception have been related to an individual viewpoint of professional identity development, which itself has also been described as *self-conceptualization*. Bandura (1977) explained how a person with low self-efficacy will struggle to achieve a desired outcome when confronted with challenges, while a high self-efficacy individual will hold a self-belief that the desired outcome can be achieved. For school counselors, Heled and Davidovitch (2019) linked self-efficacy to a professional's self-belief in their ability to influence their professional life. Within the context of professional identity in school counseling, these authors argued that self-efficacy describes the self-perception of a school counselor to carry out their role ably and appropriately (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019). This view supported Barnes (2004), who attributed the role of school counseling self-efficacy to a consolidation of professional identity by enabling trainees to constitute their experiences into becoming competent counselors. On a related path of study, this was broadened into an ecological viewpoint by the comparison of a positive professional identity to the healthy personality of an individual with a unity of personality and self-perception relative to the world (Erikson, 1950; Jahoda, 1950; Kaufman & Schwartz, 2003). Solari (2017) argued that an ecological and sociocultural approach to the formation of the professional identity of counseling psychologist novices added contextualization with dialogic, discursive, dynamic, relational, and sociohistorical dimensions. The timing of formation of a professional identity under this viewpoint emerges from a de-idealization of profession (Solari, 2017).

Solari and Martín Ortega (2020) continued to explore the weak coherence between theories on professional identity development and its applied methodological options. But the locus of their more recent research on the discursive meaning making of professionals has been moved away to the teaching profession. Consequently, the availability of research on the pathway of developing self-efficacy through self-belief and self-perception remains limited.

In summary, this appendix summarized four prominent presumptive pathways to competence formation identified in the review of the literature. An examination of the knowledge on the first pathway was based on development-oriented supervision, which revealed significant support. Two specific weaknesses which have not been extensively studied in the literature were highlighted. The second pathway was based on the established support for self-efficacy and skills development. The third pathway was based on professional identity development. It supported the concept of development-oriented supervision for understanding wider values of professional competence. The fourth pathway combined the concepts of self-efficacy and professional identity development. This composite approach to competence development flows through self-conceptualization (especially via self-belief and self-perception). However, the availability of research studies on this pathway are also limited.

## Appendix B: List of Patterns, Themes, and Assertions (Code List)

**Patterns**

- P 1.01 Motivation: Leadership (taking managerial responsibility)
- P 1.02 Motivation: Service
- P 1.03 Motivation: Inspiration
- P 1.04 Motivation: Inspiration (from clinical supervision received)
- P 2.01 Main Activity: Standard Therapy (e.g., individual and family counseling)
- P 2.02 Main Activity: Advanced therapy (e.g., collateral services / case management)
- P 2.03 Main Activity: Teaching (students)
- P 2.04 Main Activity: Learning by shadowing
- P 2.05 Main Activity: Passion (for work) (I)
- P 2.06 Main Activity: Disciplining (students) (I)
- P 2.07 Common Issue: Navigating systems (or between training and practice) (I)
- P 2.08 Common Issue: Building confidence (I)
- P 2.09 Common Issue: Lack of respect (for intern)
- P 2.10 Common Issue: Burnout
- P 2.11 Common Issue: Transforming developmentally (I)
- P 2.12 Common Issue: Meeting formal requirements
- P 2.13 Common Issue: Staff resistance (e.g., on scheduling)
- P 2.14 Common Issue: Staff opposition
- P 2.15 Common Issue: Managing expectations of administration
- P 2.16 Common Issue: Disciplining (students) (II)

- P 2.17 Common Issue: Clinical issues
- P 2.18 Common Issue: Dealing with new work and setting
- P 2.19 Common Issue: Ethical issues (e.g., confidentiality)
- P 2.20 Common Issue: Boundary setting
- P 2.21 Common Issue: Client opposition
- P 2.22 Common Issue: Building and growth
- P 2.23 Common Issue: Advocating for trainee
- P 2.24 Common Issue: Managing a business
- P 2.25 Common Issue: Frustration
- P 2.26 Common Issue: Stress (e.g., running out of money)
- P 3.01 Session: Standard site supervision (i.e., Individual / group)
- P 3.02 Session: Supervision with feedback (I)
- P 3.03 Session: Standard university supervision (i.e., group, non-weekly)
- P 3.04 Session: Supervisor with nonauthoritarian tone
- P 3.05 Session: Group supervision with learning from others (I)
- P 3.06 Session: Trainees come to supervision with an agenda
- P 3.07 Session: Supervision with facilitation and sharing (I)
- P 3.08 Session: Supervision atmosphere (i.e., open, warm, positive)
- P 3.09 Session: Transforming developmentally and in phases (II)
- P 3.10 Session: Container to share in authentic space {I}
- P 3.11 Session: Supervision setting for learning how to apply skills (I)
- P 3.12 Session: Supervisor role with authority/ respect figure but open

- P 3.13 Session: Atmosphere for trainee to feel proud of work
- P 4.01 Value of supervision: Supervision setting for learning how to apply skills (II)
- P 4.02 Value of supervision: Navigating systems (II)
- P 4.03 Supervision / 2. B. Common Issues: "ego-based politics"
- P 4.04 Value of supervision: Environment of safety (I)
- P 4.05 Value of supervision: Container to share in authentic space (II)
- P 4.06 Value of supervision: Interdisciplinary collaboration
- P 4.07 Competence: Awareness (through time and experience)
- P 4.08 Competence: Upholding knowledge / skills (independently)
- P 4.09 Competence: Assessment skills (I)
- P 4.10 Competence: Continuum of process, fluency, and routine
- P 4.11 Competence: Promoting of client welfare
- P 4.12 Competence: Professionalism
- P 4.13 Competence: Self-confidence (through experience) (II)
- P 4.14 Competence: Learning flexibility (I)
- P 4.15 Competence: Curiosity (I)
- P 4.16 Competence: Overcoming barriers
- P 4.17 Competence: Self-initiation
- P 4.18 Competence: Creativity
- P 4.19 Noncompetence: Not implementing feedback (II)
- P 4.20 Noncompetence: (Lack of) Curiosity
- P 4.21 Noncompetence: (Lack of) Clinical understanding



- P 4.22 Noncompetence: (Not) navigating relationships (III)
- P 4.23 Noncompetence: Burnout
- P 4.24. Noncompetence: Isolated
- P 4.25 Noncompetence: No enjoyment (no passion) (II)
- P 4.26 Noncompetence: Negative responses (being over sure)
- P 5.01 Skills: Flexibility (II)
- P 5.02 Skills: Competence (cultural)
- P 5.03 Skills: Compassion, empathy
- P 5.04 Skills: Building rapport
- P 5.05 Skills: Assessment skills (treatment planning) (II)
- P 5.06 Skills: Navigating relationships (IV)
- P 5.07 Skills: Integrated and pulling in resources (I)
- P 5.08 Skills: Curiosity (II)
- P 5.09 Skills: Openness (e.g., to taking risks)
- P 5.10 Skills: Learning from supervision facilitation and sharing (II)
- P 5.11 Skills: Communication (social skills)
- P 5.12 Skills: Passion (III)
- P 5.13 Skills: Problem solving
- P 5.14 Skills: Strong values
- P 5.15 Skills: Organization
- P 5.16 Skills: Self-care
- P 5.17 Skills: Growth (and willingness to learn)

P 5.18 Skills: Independently upholding legal and ethical guidelines

P 5.19 Skills: Self-confidence (not intimidated) (III)

P 5.20 Skills: Trust

P 5.21 Skills: Becoming grounded

P 5.10 Skills: Learning from supervision facilitation and sharing (II)

P 5.21 Skills: Becoming grounded

P 5.22 Skills origin: Innate

P 5.23 Skills origins: Growing (with practice)

P 5.24 Skills origin: Combination (both grown and innate)

P 5.25 Skills origins: Growing (with supervision)

P 6.01 Beliefs: Equality

P 6.02 Beliefs: Equity

P 6.03 Values: Professionalism (e.g., upholding standards, time management)

P 6.04 Beliefs: Social justice

P 6.05 Beliefs: Belief system

P 6.06 Values: Genuineness

P 6.07 Beliefs: Moral and ethical compass

P 6.08 Beliefs: Non-judgmental (or non-discriminatory)

P 6.09 Values: Dedication to hard work

P 6.10 Beliefs: Acceptance (that not everything can be fixed)

P 5.22 / 6. Values origins: Innate (I)

P 5.23 / 6. Values origins: Growing (with supervision)

P 5.24 / 6. Values origins: Combination (both grown and innate)

P R.01 Social competency

P R.02 Ability

P R.03 Family

P R.04 Positivity

P R.05 Perseverance

P R.06 Honesty

P R.07 Respect

P 7.01 Prepared trainee: Become hired / receive recommendations

P 7.02 Prepared trainee: Show willingness to learn, excitement (find their niche)

P 7.03 Prepared trainee: Show confidence (planning career)

P 7.04 Unprepared trainee: Not hired / not offered employment

P 7.05 Unprepared trainee: No self-confidence (floundering)

P 7.06 Unprepared trainee: Do the minimum of work

P 7.07 Unprepared trainee: Flounder after training

P 7.08 Unprepared trainee: Feedback back to trainee's university (III)

P 8.01 Monitoring of progress: Informal measures

P 8.02 Monitoring of progress: Audit

P 8.03 Monitoring of progress: Observation of participation during supervision

P 8.04 Monitoring of progress: Feedback from the trainee's school clients (IV)

P 9.01 Contribution of supervision: Continuous / direct feedback (V)

P 9.02 Contribution of supervision: Group supervision with learning from others (role models) (III)

P 9.03 Contribution of supervision: Affirmation

P 10.01 Miscellaneous: Role and status of external agencies

P 10.02 Miscellaneous: Responsibility of supervisors

P 10.03 Miscellaneous: Accreditation of supervisors

P 10.04 Miscellaneous: Burn-out of supervisors

P 10.05 Miscellaneous: Learning and professional development of supervisors

P 10.06 Miscellaneous: Importance as a research topic

P 10.07 Miscellaneous: Financial worries of trainees

P 10.08 Miscellaneous: Business concerns of agencies

### **Themes**

T 1.01 Motivation of supervisors: Leadership

T 1.02 Motivation of supervisors: Service

T 1.03 Motivation of supervisors: Inspiration

T 1.04 Activities of trainees: Regular counseling and shadowing

T 1.05 Activities of trainees: Advanced counseling

T 1.06 Activities of trainees: Classroom and teacher support

T 1.07 Activities of trainees: Passion

T 1.08 Issues of trainees: Lacking and gaining inner confidence / experience

T 1.09 Issues of trainees: Facing outer challenges / opposition

T 1.10 Issues of trainees: Facing inner challenges

- T 1.11 Supervision methods: Regular meetings (mostly weekly)
- T 1.12 Supervision methods: A Contained Space (I)
- T 1.13 Supervision methods: Maturation in phases
- T 1.14 Supervision methods: Being nonauthoritarian (unless a risk situation)
- T 1.15 Value of supervision: A Contained Space (II)
- T 1.16 Development of competence: Self-confidence
- T 1.17 Development of competence: Self-initiative
- T 1.18 Development of competence: Continuum
- T 1.19 Nondevelopment of competence: Lack of understanding (skills)
- T 1.20 Nondevelopment of competence: Lack of qualities (values)
- T 1.21 Emergence of self-efficacy: Skills
- T 1.22 Emergence of self-efficacy: Values
- T 1.23 Skills: Acquired
- T 1.24 Skills: Innate
- T 1.25 Skills: Acquired and innate qualities (combination)
- T 1.26 Emergence of Identity: Values
- T 1.27 Emergence of Identity: Beliefs
  
- T 1.24 Values and Beliefs: Innate values
- T 1.23 Values and Beliefs: Acquired
- T 1.25 Values and Beliefs: Acquired and Innate (combination)

- T 1.28 Markers of Competence: Mainly field-specific skills and flexibility
- T 1.29 Markers of Skill: Mainly general skills like communication and empathy
- T 1.30 Markers of Values and Beliefs: Diverse and general
- T 1.31 Prepared trainees: Undergoing a transformation process
- T 1.32 Nonprepared trainees: floundering
- T 1.33 Supervision methods: An Evaluation (formal)
- T 1.34 Supervision methods: A Mental Map (informal)
- T 1.35 Value of Supervision: A Contained Space (The Beginning) III
- T 1.36 Further Research: Agencies
- T 1.37 Further Research: Supervisors

#### **Assertions**

- A 1.01: Supervisors are motivated by leadership, service, and inspiration (GA)
- A 1.02: Trainees face standard and advanced challenges (GA)
- A 1.03: Trainees face internal and external issues (GA)
- A 1.04: Trainees mature with supervision in a container (safe, nonauthoritarian) (GA)
- A 1.05: Gaining competence is a continuum of growing skills and developing values  
(SA)
- A 1.06.01: Self-confidence and self-initiative begin the continuum of gaining competence  
(SA)
- A 1.06.02: Transformation through self-confidence is the indicator of preparedness (SA)
- A 1.07.01: Self-efficacy emerges through a narrow range of skills and some values (SA)
- A 1.07.02: Skills are mostly acquired with learning and experience (GA)

A 1.07.03: Markers of competence and skills are closely linked and specific (GA)

A 1.08.01: Identity emerges through a spectrum of values and beliefs (and not skills)

(SA)

A 1.08.02: Most values and beliefs can be grown and developed (GA)

A 1.08.03: Markers of values and beliefs are diverse and less specific (GA)

A 1.09: Supervision is based on formal methods and the supervisor's own skills, values,  
and beliefs (SA)

A 1.10: Supervision is the beginning step towards competence and preparedness (GA)

A 1.11.01: Area of further research: The influence of training settings on developing  
trainee competence (GA)

A 1.11.02: Area of further research: The influence of preparedness of supervisors on  
developing trainee competence (GA)