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SAVING FACE: THE EXPERIENCE AND PROCESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT IN  
CLINICAL SUPERVISION

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# IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

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Counselor Education and Supervision

## Abstract

Chairperson: Kirsten W. Murray, Ph.D.

Clinical supervision plays an essential role in the training and monitoring of novice counselors. Supervisors are responsible for supporting counselor development as well as protecting the public from incompetent care. To fulfil their multiple roles, supervisors rely on supervisees to make relevant disclosures about their work with clients. This includes supervisees asking questions and disclosing mistakes and potential deficits. Supervisee impression management, defined as behavior intended to portray a desirable image of the self, therefore influences the supervision process. The following central question guided this grounded theory study: What is the experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision? Eight supervisees shared their experiences of impression management in supervision through two rounds of semi-structured interviews. They reported that desired images of self were formulated ongoingly by noticing how multiple sources, including the supervisor, the site, and the self, defined images of desirable behavior. Situational and hierarchical elements of supervision also influenced supervisee experiences of desired and dreaded images in supervision. In order to portray specific images of competence, under some conditions, participants chose to engage in non-disclosure, fabricated disclosure, and controlled disclosure of vulnerabilities in supervision. The primary process by which participants made impression management decisions was through weighing the potential risks of disclosure against the utility of exposure. Consequences of participants' impression management decisions reinforced their behavior, generating a cycle of impression management. Knowing more about how the process of impression management can unfold for supervisees offers useful information for supervisor training, counselor training, and supervisee role induction. This research informs how supervisors can create conditions that reduce detrimental impression management behavior in service of supporting novice counselors to provide competent client care.

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I am grateful to each participant of this study for the hours of time they spent with me and the risks they took to share their stories. I could not have completed this project without the deeply personal and rich disclosures that each participant shared. I will think of the voices of these participants as I continue to grow as a researcher, supervisors, and counselor.

Finally, I want to thank my friends, cohort members, and family for their steadfast support. This project drove me to the edge of what I thought was possible in a short period of time. I am so grateful for people in my life that supported, nurtured, and challenged me to get this thing done! I hope those who have loved me through this roller coaster know how deeply thankful I am to have you.

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## Saving Face: The Experience and Process of Impression Management in Clinical Supervision

Supervision is an essential part of training and monitoring competent counseling professionals (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Falender & Shafranske, 2017). As counseling trainees learn to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world clinical practice settings, supervisors are tasked with supporting the growth and development of their clinical skills while also protecting the public from incompetent care. Supervision serves to impart necessary skills, socialize novice counselors into the values and ethics of the counseling profession, protect clients, and ultimately monitor the readiness of supervisees to become independent professional counselors (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). The supervisor's evaluative function prevents supervisees who do not demonstrate ethical or professional competence from entering the field. Given the vital role supervision plays in fostering counselor growth as well as safeguarding the public, inquiry into understanding more about what facilitates effective counselor development in supervision is warranted.

A great deal of research has focused on improving the efficacy of clinical supervision due to its importance in the training process (Falender & Shafranske, 2017). Much of this research has been geared towards the generation of supervision models and theories that attend to the roles and behaviors of supervisors (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Supervision, however, involves a relationship with more than one person, so it is likely supervisees also influence the process. Impression management, defined as the process of attempting to create and maintain certain desired images of the self (Schlenker, 1980), is one way supervisees may be influencing supervision. This may show up as a supervisee's decision to withhold relevant disclosures (Ladandy, et al., 1996), embellish client outcomes (Ward, Friedlander, & Klein, 1985), or even be excessively self-critical as a means to avoid receiving negative feedback from a supervisor

(Haist, 2014). Many other impression management strategies likely occur in the supervision situation, although the full spectrum of complex motivations, behaviors, and consequences illustrating the concept of impression management is unknown in this context.

The supervision situation aligns with factors that may increase a supervisee's desire to portray desired images of the self. Hierarchy and power differentials, especially where the person in the position of lesser power is dependent on a high-power individual for a desired outcome, tend to motivate impression management behavior in subordinates in social situations (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980). Not only are supervisees in social locations of lesser power, they also show up for supervision with a host of personal reactions, distracting thoughts, and performance anxiety as normative responses to the training process (Ellis, Hutman, & Chapin, 2015; Nutt-Williams & Hill, 1996; Theriault & Gazzola, 2006; Van Wagoner, Gelso, Hayes, & Diemer, 1991). Additionally, supervisor influences—such as lack of training and discomfort with evaluation—and supervision contextual and relational elements provide further fodder to consider that impression management is likely a factor in clinical supervision.

A number of studies indicate that supervisees do indeed work to manage their behavior to control the impressions their supervisors have of them (Haist, 2014; Pitariu, 2007; Ward, Friedlander, Schoen, & Klein, 1985); supervisee non-disclosure, defined by supervisees choosing to not disclose information about their clients, clinical interactions, and internal experiences, has been the focus of most of these inquiries (i.e. Armeniox, 2000; Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010; Webb & Wheeler, 1998). For example, Ladany, Hill, Corbett and Nutt (1996) found that 97% of counseling trainees withheld relevant disclosures from their supervisors. Given that one of the primary functions of the supervisor is to monitor the supervisee's work, decisions to withhold information could lead to consequences for both

training and client care (Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996). Due to the lack of focus on other impression management experiences beyond non-disclosure, as well as the complex interpersonal factors that may influence the process, there is a gap in the literature about how impression management unfolds in the supervision situation. Knowing more about the process of impression management for supervisees may clarify ways supervisors can facilitate more effective supervision. This information could also inform how counselor educators provide effective role induction for the supervision process. Ultimately, the contribution of research towards more effective supervision environments could improve the quality of care novice counselors provide to clients.



## CHAPTER I: Conceptual Framework

Research on the experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision is both necessary and incomplete. An exploration of supervision and impression management, and the relationships between the two, informed how I sought to understand more about how the process of impression management unfolds for supervisees. Exploring how other scholars have conceptualized supervision and impression management called attention to what researchers in the field have already discovered and highlighted gaps that paved the way for the methodological choices of this study.

### Supervision

Clinical supervision serves multiple functions and also provides conditions for challenges and interpersonal dynamics. Multiple roles and functions are inherent in the definition of clinical supervision. To frame the supervision situation, I will explore these challenges as they are initiated by the supervisee, the supervisor, and the supervision context itself.

**Definitions and functions.** Supervised practice is an essential component of developing clinical competence. Bernard and Goodyear (2009) provided a widely accepted definition of clinical supervision:

Supervision is an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative and hierarchical, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s); monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients that she, he, or they see; and serving as a gatekeeper of those who are to enter the particular profession (p. 7).

This definition captures multiple aspects of supervision including intervention, hierarchy, evaluation, and gatekeeping, and a relationship extending over time.

***Intervention.*** An intervention refers to specific tools, competencies, or skills supervisors use to teach and/or support supervisees (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). The interventions of supervision overlap with the skills involved in counseling, consulting, and teaching. However, Bernard and Goodyear (2009) argued that the act of supervision is distinct. Systemic application of interventions for supervision, known as models, generally provide frameworks for supervision from theoretical, developmental, and/or integrative perspectives (Falender & Shafranske, 2017). The three general functions of supervision interventions include assessing the learning needs of a supervisee, changing or supporting a supervisee's behavior, and evaluating and monitoring a supervisee's performance as a counselor (Borders, et al., 1991).

Supervisors may choose to use interventions that involve varying levels of structure. More structured interventions, such as watching partial videotapes or listening to audiotapes of counseling sessions, provide opportunities for supervisors to view and monitor the supervisee more directly. The supervisor may provide structured feedback and encourage reflective processes with the material after watching video of the supervisee. Supervisors rely on supervisees to choose which video or audio clips to share, as well as to disclose internal dialogues and thoughts about the session (Reichelt, et al., 2009). Although all supervision interventions depend, at least in part, on supervisee self-report, many supervision interventions rely more heavily on supervisees to disclose what happened in counseling sessions. This may entail forgoing the use of recordings; instead, supervisees recall and recount moments of the therapeutic process or internal experiences. Supervisees also discuss case conceptualizations, ask questions, and seek guidance based on memory (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Although

supervision that relies only on supervisee memory and self-report is generally regarded as less appropriate for novice counselors, supervisors still commonly utilize this approach (Holloway, 1988). Research by Noelle (2002) suggested that supervision interventions that rely solely on self-report provide opportunities and impetus for supervisees to distort their work, whether this happens consciously or unconsciously. Altogether, this research shows that supervisors may choose to use different modalities for supervision, each with varying levels of accountability. Less structured supervision interventions that rely only on supervisee self-report may provide more opportunities for supervisees to adjust their behavior according to how they wish to be perceived by their supervisors.

*Hierarchy, evaluation, and gatekeeping.* The nature of the supervisory relationship is inherently hierarchical due to the power supervisors hold as evaluators. Supervisors have an ethical responsibility to monitor and evaluate the counseling work of novice counselors, which involves protecting the well-being of the supervisee's clients (ACA, 2014). Campbell (2011) stated, "clinical supervision is a balancing act between the needs of the supervisee and the needs of the client" (p. 3). The supervisor monitors the supervisee's work to ensure that the quality of care offered to the client is, at the very least, ethical and safe (Campbell, 2011). The function of evaluating a supervisee involves providing formative and summative feedback following monitoring a supervisee's counseling work. Ultimately, the supervisor is responsible for a gatekeeping role in which they are responsible for protecting the public from problematic, incompetent, or impaired counselors (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). When novice counselors do not meet the minimal criteria for evaluation, supervisors are in the difficult position of needing to broach a plan for remediation and potentially act as a gatekeeper to prevent the supervisee from entering the field (Lamb, Cochran, & Jackson, 1991). The hierarchical nature of the supervision

relationship has the potential to make both the supervisor and the supervisee uncomfortable and/or anxious, and potentially influences the motivations for upholding certain impressions in the supervision context.

***Relationship over time.*** The final aspect of the definition of supervision is that it involves a relationship that extends over time. There are similarities between the counseling relationship and supervision relationship, which in both cases is generally referred to as the *working alliance* (Bordin, 1979). While it is not the only determinant of the quality of supervision, the supervision working alliance is an important component of effective supervision. The three factors that make up a working alliance as defined by Bordin (1979) include an emotional bond, creation of agreed-upon goals, and task collaboration. When the supervisory working alliance is strong, supervisees tend to report higher satisfaction with supervision (Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999), greater willingness to disclose mistakes (Ladany et al., 1996), fewer challenges related to role ambiguity (Olk & Friedlander, 1992), and greater therapeutic alliances with their clients (Patton & Kivlighan, 1997). The strength of the supervisory working alliance is one of the components that has the potential to influence what and how supervisees choose to disclose in supervision.

**Supervision dynamics.** Dynamics pertaining to the three components of supervision discussed above (intervention, hierarchy/evaluation, and a relationship over time), as well as other factors, such as the unique qualities of the supervisee, the supervisor, and contextual aspects of the situation, contribute to challenges and advantages in the supervision process. I will review some of these dynamics in three categories: supervisee influences, supervisor influences, and contextual elements of the supervision situation.

*Supervisee influences.* Supervisees do not show up for supervision as blank slates. Not only do they bring their own unique strengths, prior life experiences, and vulnerabilities, they are also likely to experience the normative anxiety that generally occurs in training environments (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Several supervisee influences that affect the dynamics of the supervision situation include anxiety and the unique characteristics of counselor trainees.

*Supervisee anxiety.* There are many sources of supervisee anxiety. Multiple factors, such as experience level, personality, maturity, and relationships with clients and supervisors, moderate supervisee anxiety (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Several studies corroborate the finding that when graduate students in counseling first experience clinical environments they frequently experience anxiety (Corey, 2008; Ellis, Hutman, & Chapin, 2015; Theriault & Gazzola, 2006). Trainees worry about what their supervisors think of them (Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010) as well as what their clients may be experiencing (Nutt-Williams, et al., 1997). Trainees also normatively experience anxiety about their competence in general (Theriault & Gazzoli, 2006).

Ambiguity about roles, expectations, procedures, and evaluation are other sources of supervisee anxiety (Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010; Olk & Friedlander, 1992). During graduate school coursework, counseling trainees receive in-depth training and role induction into the counseling process, though they generally receive less preparation for what happens during clinical supervision (Bahrnick, Russell, & Salmi, 1991). The confusion about what actually happens during supervision, including the interventions supervisors use and what is expected from the supervisee, may lead to increased anxiety (Bahrnick, Russell, & Salmi, 1991; Ellis, Hutman, & Chapin, 2015). As anxiety and uncertainty about the role expectations increase, so may desires and self-consciousness related to upholding certain favorable images of the self.

Other factors that impact anxiety for supervisees are fear of negative evaluation and general anxiety associated with being observed and evaluated (Emerson, 1996). Cohen (1980) captured some of the dynamics related to anxiety and evaluation in supervision:

Nobody likes to be evaluated. While constructive criticism may be sought after in supervision, supervisees are often uncomfortable with the evaluative aspects of the relationship. This is especially true in supervision because the judgment of the student's performance as a psychotherapist is inextricably intertwined with a student's self-image. Early in training, 'becoming' a therapist is what the student is about. Being rated as a therapist is often tantamount to being rated as a person at this point in the young therapist's career (p. 79).

Supervisees have a lot at stake when it comes to the ways their supervisors view them. Additionally, the person who is tasked with the evaluative role is often seen as a more experienced and respected judge of character and counseling skills, providing fodder for anxiety related to evaluation and performance (Cohen, 1980).

Bernard and Goodyear (2009) outlined three consequences of supervisee anxiety: (1) the ability to be present for learning, (2) the ability to demonstrate skills that are already present, and (3) the manner in which the supervisee responds to the supervisor. Of particular importance to the current study is how supervisee anxiety may influence interactions with the supervisor. When supervisees are anxious, they may be motivated to portray certain desired images. Indeed, research reveals that anxiety influences what supervisees choose to reveal or disclose in supervision (Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010). When supervisees are anxious about being evaluated, they may choose to withhold relevant disclosures (Ladany et al., 1996). As Bernard and Goodyear (2009) stated, "...the wish to manage supervisors' impressions of

them is motivated at least in part by supervisees' anxiety and certainly affects interactions" (p. 182).

*Supervisee traits, strengths, and vulnerabilities.* People who choose to enter the field of counseling are a distinct population who may possess unique traits, strengths and vulnerabilities. For example, counselors are more likely than the general population to have survived through significant trauma such as physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse (Pope & Feldman-Summers, 1992) and may be drawn to helping others because of their own past painful experiences (Farber, Manevich, Metzger, & Saypool, 2005). In a review of the literature on the topic of why people choose to enter the field of counseling, Farber, et al. (2005) found a high prevalence of prior and current pain including isolation, cultural marginalization, and victimization during childhood. People who choose to become counselors may also be accustomed to the role of caretaker or mediator in their families of origin and have experienced familial dysfunction during childhood (Hill et al., 2013). One of the clinical supervisor's tasks is to help novice counselors learn about the process of bracketing past painful experiences, while simultaneously utilizing the capacity for empathic responding that may result from this same prior trauma (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Supervisors, however, must rely on supervisees to disclose such information if and when it is relevant.

Smith and Moss (2009) argued that supervisors play a key role in helping to assess, contain, and process through aspects of supervisee prior painful experiences that impact client care. Bringing these relevant issues to supervision, however, is risky due to the fear of being evaluated negatively or stigmatized (Zerubavel & Wright, 2012). Although supervision is an appropriate venue to discuss what may be impacting client care, it is particularly difficult for supervisees to initiate discussions about how prior experiences of pain or suffering may be

inhibiting the therapeutic process with clients because of the stigma associated with such disclosures (Zerubavel & Wright, 2012). In a review of the construct of the “wounded healer” in counselor education, Zerubavel and Wright (2012) noted the presence of the themes of stability of recovery, difficulty managing countertransference, compassion fatigue, and professional impairment. Even if supervisors do not react in judgmental or stigmatizing ways, supervisees may still withhold disclosures and requests for support about their own psychological challenges because of self-stigma. Counselors, like the rest of the population, are embedded in a larger social context of stigmatization around mental health challenges (Dinos, et al., 2004). The perceived consequences of disclosing personal histories and challenges to supervisors, especially given the evaluative component of the relationship, may prevent supervisees from taking the risk to seek support and resolution of personalization and personal issues in supervision (Zerubavel & Wright, 2012).

Attachment styles of both the supervisee as well as the supervisor also play roles in the dynamics of supervision. Trusty, Ng, and Watts (2005) found that counseling graduate students utilized higher levels of preoccupation with relationships and desire for approval (anxious attachment style) as an asset to connect empathically with clients. This study explored the effects of adult attachment on emotional empathy through surveying 143 Master’s in Counseling students in their first semester of study. Using structural equation modeling, the researchers found that the attachment dimensions of low avoidance and high anxiety were correlated with higher scores on the Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) measure of emotional empathy (Trusty, Ng, & Watts, 2005). Although insecure attachment styles may indeed provide a counselor-in-training with greater awareness of relationship dynamics and empathic abilities, these same attachment styles likely present challenges in the supervisory relationship. The attachment style of the



supervisee also seems to affect how supervisees experience supervision interventions. Specifically, supervisees with increased preoccupation about relationships or insecure attachment may be more likely to perceive feedback in supervision as criticism or experience increased anxiety in the supervision context (Bennett, Mohr, Brintzenhofesoc, & Saks, 2008; Pistole & Fitch, 2008). On the other hand, Trusty, Ng, and Watts (2005) argued that the supervisory relationship is particularly important for providing a secure base so counseling trainees feel comfortable attempting new skills, new behaviors, and to make new kinds of connections and relationships. Although it is not inherently problematic that many supervisees have experienced trauma or insecure attachment to caregivers, the way these dynamics are handled may make a difference in the process of supervision. When left unaddressed, or when supervisors address these issues in ways that feel stigmatizing for supervisees, there may be impetus for supervisees to uphold or avoid certain images of the self through a variety of behaviors that limit supervision.

*Supervisor influences.* In a dyadic relationship, both parties interact to create a relationship dynamic. Some of the potential influences of the supervisor include supervisor training and discomfort with evaluation.

*Supervisor training.* Novice counselors receive supervision from various professionals with differing credentials and varied preparations for the role. Counselors-in-training in field placements enrolled in a CACREP accredited master's program receive individual or triadic supervision from a clinical site supervisor, a counselor education program faculty member, and/or a doctoral student supervisor who works under supervision of a faculty member (CACREP, 2016). Requirements to be legally capable to provide clinical supervision vary by state in the United States. One analysis of different requirements by state revealed differences in the following areas: requirement of CACREP accreditation of the supervisor's alma mater, years

of experience, matching professional identification, amount of training, continuing education, and requirements of the internship site (Nate & Haddock, 2014). Because of the diversity of professionals who can legally provide supervision, the supervisee experience may differ greatly among students. These differing requirements are all external markers of variance, without accounting for more personal indicators such as theoretical orientation or personality factors.

Unfortunately, many supervisors are not adequately prepared for the role (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Clinical supervisors of master's-level students and new professionals are often master's-level clinicians, though curriculum in counselor education master's programs typically does not include specific training in supervision (Nate & Haddock, 2014). Although supervision training is becoming more available and state licensure boards are more frequently requiring a predetermined number of supervision training hours as a prerequisite for providing clinical supervision, many clinical supervisors still have had little or no formal preparation (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009).

The erroneous assumption that being an effective clinician suffices as training to be an effective supervisor is still widely prevalent in the field (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). This belief, as well as other factors such as clinicians being thrust into supervisory roles out of agency need regardless of training or readiness, are barriers to systemic preparation for the role of supervisor. While a competent supervisor needs to be a competent counselor, other skills are also required such as teaching/conveying knowledge and creating environments for evaluation and monitoring clinical work (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Many supervisors are highly skilled and qualified to provide competent supervision, though lack of oversight and systemic preparation for the role leaves space to consider that many supervisors are also struggling to learn and perform the various functions of the job. Because of the dyadic nature of the

supervisory relationship, the efficacy of the supervisor impacts supervisee behavior and potentially influences a supervisee's desire to uphold certain desired impressions.

*Discomfort with evaluation.* One of the imperative roles of the supervisor is that of evaluator. Bernard and Goodyear (2009) stated "evaluation could be viewed as the nucleus of clinical supervision" (p. 20). Although vitally important for legal and ethical reasons, the evaluative function troubles many supervisors for at least two good reasons: (1) intersection with counselor values, and (2) imperfect standards for evaluation (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009, Friedlander, Siegel, & Brenock, 1989).

Supervisors are trained first and foremost as counselors and often hold values associated with non-judgment, unconditional positive regard, and empathy. The very act of evaluating supervisees not based on personal progress or effort, but instead on some external set of criteria, may go against a counselor's values of acceptance and growth orientation (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Indeed, some studies have shown that despite the necessity of providing difficult feedback during the process of evaluation, supervisors attempt to avoid feedback or provide it indirectly (Friedlander, Siegel, & Brenock, 1989; Hoffman, Hill, Holmes, & Freitas, 2005). Hoffman, et al. (2005) interviewed 15 supervisors of psychology interns about their experiences giving easy, difficult, and no feedback to supervisees. The researchers found that supervisors used varying degrees of directness and reported that it was most difficult to deliver feedback that addressed issues that might be personal to the supervisee (i.e. personality traits) or feedback about the supervisory relationship in general. Factors that positively influenced the experience of providing feedback included supervisee openness, a strong relationship, a desire for feedback, and the supervisor's feelings of competence related to providing feedback (Hoffman, et al. 2005). When supervisors avoid giving difficult feedback, it has an impact on the supervisees'

experience. One of the potential consequences is creating a norm in supervision of avoiding difficult or delicate conversations. Supervisees may pick up on subtle cues that certain topics are off-limits in clinical supervision, which could influence their decisions to either make or withhold particular disclosures.

The second factor that may complicate the evaluative role in the supervision relationship is the imperfect criteria for evaluation (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Supervisors may feel pressure to closely monitor and assess supervisee competence because supervisors assume legal liability over their supervisees' work. Differing definitions of clinical competence, however, have caused researchers and clinicians to disagree in the literature (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Robiner, Thurman, & Ristvedt, 1993). Clarity and research regarding what exactly counselors-in-training need to learn remains unclear (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). State regulatory boards and national standards identify knowledge and skill standards, but research on the topic has produced mixed conclusions (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Some researchers (i.e. Herman, 1993; Orlinsky, Grawe, & Parks, 1994) assert that nonspecific factors, such as counselor personal characteristics, primarily determine client outcomes independent of specific theoretical orientation or skillsets. On the other hand, this quote by Bernard and Goodyear (2009) sums up the other side of the debate: "...any stark conclusion that some or much of training may be irrelevant to producing a competent practitioner makes highly credentialed professionals defensive, including most clinical supervisors" (p. 20). Counselor educators and supervisors intuitively believe that training and acquisition of specific skills is imperative, though performance measures that reliably identify comprehensive competent clinical care still do not exist. This creates difficulties for supervisors to follow predetermined standards or research-based criteria for evaluation. Ambiguity about the evaluation standards, in turn, may affect the

supervision situation and how supervisees respond to concerns about how supervisors perceive and evaluate them.

*Relational and context elements.* Beyond the supervisor and the supervisee contributions to the supervision situation are the dynamics encompassed in the relationship itself and the contextual elements that undergird the experience. The following is an exploration of the dynamics of power/hierarchy, influences of peers, and how social identity and cultural phenomena may play out in supervision.

*Power and hierarchy.* Tied in with the influences of the supervisor and the supervisee is that of the hierarchical nature of the relationship in general. The power dynamics of supervision are such that supervisors hold educational and evaluative power over supervisees; this is true whether supervisors acknowledge their power or not (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Power shows up in the supervisory relationship as interpersonal and coercive. According to the model conceptualized by Strong (1968), a counselor has interpersonal power on the axes of expertness, attractiveness (e.g. perceived similarities in values), and trustworthiness. A clinical supervisor holds interpersonal power and social influence over the supervisee. Supervisors also have the additional component of coercive power because of their ability to hamper a trainee's goals of obtaining independent licensure as a counselor (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009).

The fact that supervisors hold coercive power is not necessarily a problem, though the way each member of the dyad manages this dynamic may have effects on the supervision situation. Indeed, supervisors may use their power in helpful ways such as through teaching, mentoring, and modeling how trusting relationships can occur even when power differences are present (Kaiser, 1992). Doing so may require conscious dialogue about the power differential and how to utilize it in helpful ways (Murphy & Wright, 2007). On the other hand, hierarchy

brings with it the potential for the abuse of power. Supervisees need to feel psychologically safe in order to learn (Emerson, 1996). Punishment, boundary violations, or negative evaluations all cause fear and potentially hinder learning. As Bernard and Goodyear (2009) stated, "...it is likely that the person with less power in the relationship will be more conscious of this fact" (p. 189). Supervisees do seem to be aware of their position of lesser power in the supervisory relationship (Murphy & Wright, 2007), which potentially influences their behavior. Awareness of the power differential may motivate supervisees to withhold relevant disclosures or hide clinical mistakes when they are concerned about the evaluative power supervisors hold over them (Ladany, et al., 1996).

Power dynamics also seem to shift over the course of the supervision relationship. For example, novice counselors at beginning stages of development often rely on and appreciate structure and direction from supervisors (Holloway, 1995). Although there is always a power differential in the supervisory relationship, eventually the goal of supervision is for supervisees to rely less on a supervisor's explicit direction (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). As counseling trainees gain more self-efficacy about their counseling skills, they tend to rely on supervisors for more consultative practices and less structure in supervision (Holloway, 1995).

*Peer dynamics.* The Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) made the decision in 2001 to acknowledge triadic supervision as sufficient to meet supervision requirements in accredited clinical training programs. Triadic supervision involves one supervisor providing supervision to two supervisees simultaneously. Many graduate programs in counseling incorporated triadic, in addition to group supervision, to their training requirements soon after this time (Borders, et al., 2012). Relatively few studies have investigated how triadic supervision impacts the supervision experience (Borders, et al., 2012;

Lonn & Juhnke, 2017). A phenomenological study about the lived experiences of supervisees in triadic supervision conducted by Lonn and Juhnke (2017) found that the presence of a peer made it easier in some cases to make relevant disclosures due to a shared sense of vulnerability. However, peers in supervision also impeded disclosure due to concerns about being judged and knowing peers in other settings and courses. The element of sharing time seemed to be a dynamic that supervisees needed to manage. When time was scarce, supervisees were hindered from asking questions or sharing (Lonn & Juhnke, 2017). In another study that sought to explore supervisee perceptions of individual, triadic, and group supervision, Borders, et al. (2012) found that supervisees in group supervision felt time constraints limited the amount of helpful feedback they received and that group norms of avoiding critical feedback often emerged. These studies on triadic and group supervision suggest that the presence of at least one peer in a supervision setting is bound to influence the experience for everyone involved.

*Social identity and cultural phenomenon.* Cultural phenomena are integral to the work and experience of all counselors. Killian (2001) stated the following:

Since we all inhabit various social locations on ecosystemic axes of race, gender, class and culture, to name but a few, and these locations intersect in unique and sometimes contradictory ways, we are all multicultural, and our interactions with others must necessarily be so as well (p. 63).

Taking multicultural perspectives into account is one of the ethical obligations in the counseling profession (ACA, 2014); supervision is not exempt from this necessity (ACA, 1990; Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Although few in the field disagree about the importance of multicultural influences, social identity, and sociopolitical factors bring up challenges and dynamics for the supervision situation. Both the prevalence of conflict and negative events in cross-cultural

supervision and a discrepancy between supervisee and supervisor training in multicultural competence impact the supervision experience.

Researchers have categorized specific types of challenges and conflicts that occur in cross-cultural supervision including: cultural insensitivity, dismissing cultural concerns, negative stereotyping, and conflicts around communication (Toporeck, Ortega-Villabolas, & Pope-Davis, 2004; Fukuyama, 1994). Because of the inherent power dynamic involved in supervision, unconscious displays of micro-aggressions facilitated by a supervisor with a dominant-group identity may have significant impacts on supervisees, especially those with one or more marginalized social identity (Constantine & Sue, 2007). As Bernard and Goodyear (2009) stated, "...because supervisors have position power, they, by definition, weigh in on one side or the other of the many cultural struggles that define one's place in society, whether the person affected is the supervisee or the client or both" (p. 128).

Although race is certainly not the only cultural factor in supervision, a growing body of literature suggests that counselors-in-training report negative experiences in supervision that stem from racial dynamics present in the room (Estrada, Frame, & Williams, 2004; Falender & Shafranske, 2017) or by supervisors from dominant groups (e.g. White-identified) not attending to racial issues effectively (Jernigan, et al., 2010). When supervisees do not feel safe to discuss racial and cultural issues, they may feel the need to manage their behavior to uphold certain norms that feedback is one-directional. For example, supervisees could be motivated to uphold images of compliance and receptivity to feedback to avoid being negatively evaluated by supervisors who do not deal with racial and cultural issues effectively or who do not solicit feedback about their ability to recognize and acknowledge racial and cultural issues. This could lead to supervisees withholding disclosures about ineffective supervision interventions or cause



them to not challenge a supervisor's micro-aggression out of a desire to manage the impressions their supervisors have of them.

Another challenge that impacts the supervision situation as it relates to multicultural factors is a lack of systemic training, often on the part of the supervisor (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). In a somewhat outdated study conducted by Constantine (1997), 70% of supervisees received formal multicultural training, whereas 70% of the supervisors she surveyed never received any formal training related to multicultural issues. Due to trends in increased awareness and commitment to multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills in CACREP-accredited counselor education master's programs, it is likely that if this study were replicated today, close to 100% of students would report having received multicultural counseling training (CACREP, 2016). Bernard and Goodyear (2009) outlined this challenge succinctly: "...supervisees come to supervision with training in multiracial concepts that their supervisors lack" (p. 147). Although increased likelihood of having multicultural counseling training does not necessarily mean increased competence, a lack of training leaves space to consider areas where supervisors may be deficient. Some studies have examined the consequences of supervisor incompetence in attending to culture and identity in the supervisory experience (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Borders, et al., 2006; Toporek, Ortega-Villabolos, & Pope-Davis, 2004; Fukuyama, 1994). Decreased supervisee satisfaction, decreased multicultural competence for the supervisee (Toporek, Ortega-Villabolos, & Pope-Davis, 2004), increased supervisee distress (Fukuyama, 1994) and decreased client care (Burkard et al., 2006) were some of these consequences. All of these consequences create dynamics that supervisees may face in supervision, potentially providing impetus for supervisees to strategically manage their behavior to uphold certain desired images of the self.

Another concerning statistic is the finding from Duan and Roehlke (2001) that 93% of the supervisors they surveyed reported having no experience supervising trainees who came from backgrounds that were racially or culturally different from their own. The supervisory working alliance is impacted by how responsive supervisees perceive supervisors to be to cultural issues, with higher satisfaction correlated with supervisors who are more willing to bring up and discuss these topics (Burkard, et al., 2006). When supervisors have little experience, training, and/or competence in regard to facilitating conversations about race and culture, supervisees from non-dominant groups are less satisfied with supervision, report less trust in their supervisors, and ultimately disclose less during supervision (Schroeder, Andrews, & Hines, 2009). Dynamics around social identity and cultural phenomena in supervision lay the foundation for scenarios where supervisees may consciously or unconsciously manage their behavior in response to supervisor micro-aggressions, privilege and oppression dynamics, and politics of domination in supervision. These factors hold different implications for individuals depending on their unique intersecting identities, those of the supervisor, and those of the supervisee's clients.

**Supervision summary.** Effective supervision is integral to counselor training. There are many dynamics unique to the supervision situation that facilitate challenges via the multiple functions of supervision and the intersecting influences of the supervisee, supervisor, and the supervision context itself. These dynamics, including the hierarchical/evaluative nature of the supervisory relationship, supervisee anxiety, supervisee traits and vulnerabilities, discomfort with evaluation, and challenges related to sociopolitical factors of privilege and marginalization, influence the supervisee's experience in supervision and potentially provide impetus for supervisees to strategically manage their behavior to uphold certain desired images of the self. Understanding more about how and why supervisees may work to manage the impressions their

supervisors have of them is an opportunity for a more thorough conceptualization of the supervision situation.

### **Impression Management**

Human beings share a universal concern about how other people both perceive and evaluate us (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Impression management is a theory about human behavior that that helped set a foundation for the sub-field of social psychology in the 1950s. Goffman's (1959) seminal research sought to explore the ways in which people strategically manipulate their behavior to portray specific meanings to others in social situations. Goffman (1959) conceptualized impression management through a dramaturgical metaphor, understanding the complex motivations behind human social behavior through the perspective of actors and their audiences. In order to contextualize how impression management may be a relevant phenomenon in clinical supervision, I will discuss the definitions and historical background of impression management theory and factors and conditions from the existing literature that may impact impression management behavior.

**Definition and historical context.** In his seminal research on the topic of self-presentation, Goffman (1959) suggested that people attempt to create their social realities, convey desired meaning, and express their identities to others through the use of impression management. Goffman (1959) theorized that the conscious or unconscious motivation for impression management is related to concern for how others perceive, evaluate, and treat us. Building on Goffman's (1959) seminal work, Jones (1964) extended the idea of impression management to social psychological research, which ultimately led to a theoretical framework for the complex motivations and behaviors of impression management (Jones, 1964; Jones & Pittman, 1982).

Today, Schlenker's (1980) definition of impression management is widely accepted in the field of social psychology: "Impression management is the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions" (p. 6). Schlenker (1980) argued that attempts to manage desired images can also be known as self-presentation insofar as these images are self-relevant. Other scholars (i.e. Jones & Pittman, 1982) have used the terms impression management and self-presentation interchangeably.

Schlenker (1980) argued that the study of impression management involves "self-concept, social identity, the relationship between the person and society, and ways in which people influence themselves and others" (p. 7). Central to his conceptualization of impression management is the ubiquitous nature of the phenomenon—he argued that impression management ought not to be associated with a Machiavellian character or "phony" person who is grossly concerned with appearances. Instead, Schlenker (1980) argued that all people, either consciously or through habit, strategically manage their behavior in social situations.

The characteristics of the social situation seem to influence the types of impressions people want to portray and the management strategies they use. For example, Swencionis and Fiske (2016) found that impression management strategies differ across social status boundaries. People in lower status positions tend to do upward comparisons, where appearing competent may be more important than appearing warm. Those in high-power positions may instead downplay their competence in order to appear likable or warm (Swencionis & Fiske, 2016).

Schlenker and Weigold (1992) distinguished between the processes of impression regulation and impression management, which is a particularly relevant distinction in the context of supervision where self-awareness and reflection are paramount. Impression regulation can be understood as "goal-directed activity of controlling information about some object or event,

including self' (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992, p. 138). This process necessarily includes self-awareness and conscious motivation to manage one's impressions. Impression management, on the other hand, is conceptualized as behavior—with or without self-awareness—that a person uses to manage information about the self. Schlenker and Weigold (1992) argued that at times people use impression management behavior without the self-awareness of impression regulation. An exploration of the different types of impression management strategies and the conditions that facilitate this phenomenon will provide a more complete picture of the concept of impression management.

**Types of impression management.** Based on prior research about impression management and self-presentation, Jones and Pittman (1982) developed a taxonomy to capture a variety of impression management strategies that people use in social situations. Although some (i.e. Leary & Kowalski, 1990) have criticized this taxonomy for its lack of distinction between the motivations of impression management and the processes by which desired images are constructed, Jones and Pittman (1982)'s research formed a conceptual foundation for several current studies on the topic of impression management in clinical supervision (Haise, 2014; Pitariu, 2007).

Jones and Pittman (1982) theorized five general groupings of impression management strategies: ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication. The authors cautioned against over-simplifying these strategies into mutually exclusive categories, as the same behavior may serve multiple complex purposes or functions for different audiences.

**Ingratiation.** Jones and Pittman (1982) refer to ingratiation as the most ubiquitous of all tactics for impression management in social interactions. Ingratiation involves self-presentation behavior that is associated with seeking likability. There are three underlying determinants of

ingratiating behavior in social situations: (1) incentive value, (2) subjective probability, and (3) perceived legitimacy. Incentive value, defined as “the importance of being liked by a particular target” (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 237) is related to both dependence and power. The more dependent a person is on the other’s favorable impression, the higher the incentive value and the more likely a person is to use ingratiation. Subjective probability refers to the perceived likeliness that others will favorably receive impression management attempts. People are motivated to avoid being perceived as unlikable; subjective probability is low if behavior modification “boomerangs” to elicit dissatisfaction in others. Finally, perceived legitimacy describes the moral or evaluative factors that contain behavior. Jones and Pittman (1982) discussed the complexity of these bounds: “...out of a complex mixture of moral forces pushing here for more ‘authenticity’ and there for ‘impression management,’ the individual must decide on the best strategic combination in his or her dealings with others” (p. 237). Human beings enjoy being liked, and behaviors intended to appear likable must not be so obvious that others perceive the actor as inauthentic.

***Intimidation.*** Whereas ingratiating behavior is motivated by the desire to convince others of the attribute of likability, the second type of impression management strategy in Jones and Pittman’s (1982) taxonomy, intimidation, is aimed at convincing others that one is dangerous. Power dynamics are at play in this type of impression management strategy, with intimidation tactics more often flowing from people in higher-power positions to those in lower-power positions. Jones and Pittman (1982) stated, however, “relationships without some form of counter-power are almost inconceivable in contemporary society. And where there are elements of counter-power, there is the opportunity for intimidation” (p. 239). Ideas of power and

counter-power point to the possibility that intimidation behaviors may happen in subtle, covert ways.

***Self-promotion.*** The third impression management strategy in Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy, self-promotion, refers to behaviors that are motivated by the desire to appear competent. Professional and occupational atmospheres tend to increase self-promotional behavior, which is heavily influenced by context. In certain environments, specific talents or areas of competence are more important than others—people tend to be strategic about which talents or skills they display and promote, and potentially even “parade ineptitude” when it comes to minor or less important skillsets in order to build credibility and display images of humility (Jones, Gergan, & Jones, 1963).

***Exemplification.*** Exemplification is similar to self-promotion, but instead of seeking to appear competent, the exemplifier seeks to project the images of integrity and moral worthiness (Jones & Pittman, 1982). A person using exemplification as an impression management strategy seeks to be seen as dedicated, morally right, and self-sacrificing, but must be careful to not swing too far into self-righteousness or martyrdom.

***Supplication.*** The final strategy in Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy is known as supplication. It refers to a person exploiting their own dependency or weaknesses as a means of metaphorically displaying one's “vulnerable throat” to seek mercy. By advertising weaknesses, people using supplication may hope to achieve the benefit of avoiding difficult feedback or criticism from others. Displaying neediness or dependency calls forth a response of social responsibility and obligation of protection from others in social situations. Jones and Pittman (1982) discussed supplication as a last resort strategy that has considerable consequences on self-

esteem such as convincing oneself of an exaggerated sense of ineptitude (Jones, Berglas, Rhodewalt, & Skelton, 1981).

In sum, Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy of impression management strategies of ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication remains the most thorough classification system of self-presentation behaviors. This research provides a preliminary framework to conceptualize the kinds of impression management strategies people use. While useful, this taxonomy emerged from social science research from the 1950s-70s (i.e. Goffman, 1959; Jones, 1964). The taxonomy does not consider sociopolitical axes of power such as racial or cultural marginalization, nor do the authors make explicit who was included or excluded from their inquiry as they sought to explore experiences of impression management. Additionally, research on the validity of this theory tends to be centralized to the field of organizational behavior and workplaces (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). It is unclear whether this taxonomy would be appropriate and comprehensive for capturing the diverse and complex experiences of supervisees.

**Additional motivations and conditions for impression management.** Beyond Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy of the five attributes that people in social situations attempt to achieve, other social scientists have developed theories about motivations and conditions that facilitate the use of impression management strategies (Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi, 1981; Schlenker and Weigold, 1992). Researchers tend to disagree about the extent to which impression management strategies are conscious and/or motivated by deceitfulness (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980), though they generally agree about certain factors that increase impression management behavior in social interactions. Some of these factors, such as the importance of attaining a desired goal, self-esteem protection, and



identity development, make up motivations behind impression management behavior. Other factors that increase impression management behavior, which can be thought of as situational, include conditions of being under scrutiny or in the presence of an individual in a high-power position.

***Goal-relevance.*** Leary and Kowalski (1990) created a model of impression management that examined impression motivation separate from the process of how impressions are constructed. This research provided a framework for understanding the motivations behind impression management that considered both situational and dispositional factors. The researchers argued that human motivations for strategically managing behavior are based on an interplay between three factors: (1) the goal-relevance of impressions, (2) the value of the desired outcomes, and (3) the discrepancy between the images a person is currently portraying and their desired images (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). This theory postulates that people strategically manage their impressions because they want something, and they are aware that their behavior needs to uphold a particular image in order to obtain it. Other researchers (Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi, 1981) corroborated the assumption that the desire to obtain an outcome or goal is a strong motivating factor for impression management. When people have a desired goal in mind, they tend to be aware of the impressions they need to make upon those who have the power to help facilitate that outcome.

***Identity-related characteristics.*** Executing identity-related activities is essential in identity development (Gollwitzer, 1986), so being seen as exhibiting certain desired qualities is important for individuals, especially at a novice stage of identity development. People tend to portray themselves in ways that symbolize their desired self—this involves engaging in public behavior that shows others the identity-related characteristics that are relevant in a given

situation. Leary and Kowalski (1990) provided the example of an assistant professor behaving as a faculty member “should” behave out of a desire to uphold the desired symbol of an academician. This may involve intentionally avoiding exposing areas of lesser competence or ignorance since in some academic environments a professor may be expected to uphold images of being well-informed.

***Self-esteem protection and maintenance.*** Self-esteem protection and maintenance are also motivating factors for impression management behavior (Gollwitzer, 1986; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Goffman (1959) emphasized that people use impression management as a means to avoid embarrassment and bolster self-esteem. People may strategically manage their behavior following an experience of failure or embarrassment to attempt to repair damage that has already been done. Alternatively, individuals may try to bolster their private desired images of self in order to proactively boost self-esteem even without evidence of a public failure (Gollwitzer, 1986; Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

***Scrutiny and/or evaluation.*** People tend to be motivated to manage their impressions when they feel they are under scrutiny or when the “right” impression holds important implications like on job interviews or dates (Schlenker, 1980). Workplaces and school environments seem to facilitate impression management, especially when people are provided with performance evaluations or are heavily monitored (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Swencionis & Fiske, 2016). In situations of heightened scrutiny or when in the presence of a person with higher power, people are more likely to be aware of both their portrayed impressions as well as impression management behavior (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980). Leary and Kowalski (1990) argued that situations that involve high-power people tend to draw awareness to

the importance of portraying a favorable impression because people in positions of power are more likely to be able to confer some valued outcome.

In sum, human beings are motivated to uphold certain attributes including likability, dangerousness/powerfulness, competence, morality/integrity, and at times even weakness (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Motivations for attempting to uphold these images include the desire to achieve a goal or outcome, protecting the self from embarrassment or shame, and upholding certain desired identity symbols of the self. Finally, conditions such as being in a situation under scrutiny or evaluation, as well as in the presence of people in positions of power, heighten impression management behavior.

### **Impression Management and Supervision**

Many dynamics of supervision, which are influenced by the supervisee, the supervisor, and the supervision context itself, seem to align with the conditions that facilitate impression management. These include: the unavoidable power differentials, a context of evaluation, dynamics associated with novice stages of identity development, unclear expectations, supervisor discomfort or incompetence in certain areas such as evaluation or multicultural issues, and supervisee characteristics and/or vulnerabilities. There are likely many other conditions, motivations, and unique ways impression management unfolds in the supervision situation, though research in this area that would lend itself to building a theory about these dynamics is limited.

Power and hierarchy play key roles in the dynamics of both supervision and impression management, with the supervisee being in a position of lesser power. The condition of incentive value (Jones & Pittman, 1982) is one of the power dynamics of supervision, whereby supervisees may feel increased desire to make a favorable impression because of dependence on the

supervisor for a desired outcome (i.e. passage into the profession of counseling). Indeed, research has shown that supervisees are consistently aware of the evaluative power their supervisors hold over them, and for many this causes anxiety (Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010; Murphy & Wright, 2007). One of the functions of the supervisor is to monitor the supervisee's work, which has the potential to increase supervisee feelings of scrutiny, another of the conditions that is associated with impression management behavior (Schlenker, 1980).

The novice stage of supervisee identity development likely influences desires to appear competent to supervisors (Emerson, 1980). Supervisees often respect their supervisors as experienced mentors and desire to appear worthy of the role of professional counselor (Cohen, 1980). Unclear expectations about what should actually be happening in supervision is another source of confusion and opportunity for supervisee impression management (Bahrlick, Russell, & Salmi, 1991; Ellis, Hutman, & Chapin, 2015). When supervisors model non-disclosure, act in stigmatizing ways, or create norms for avoiding difficult topics—which they potentially do because of lack of training or experience—supervisees may follow suit and also choose to withhold relevant disclosures (Fukuyama, 1994; Toporeck, Ortega-Villabolas, & Pope-Davis, 2004; Zerubavel & Wright, 2012). Finally, supervisees show up to supervision with their own unique strengths and vulnerabilities such as prior trauma, insecure attachment styles, and discomfort with being evaluated. These factors all likely impact the supervisee experience of impression management, although no studies have captured the personal experiences and voices of supervisees in regard to these complex and intersecting experiences.

Although there is an absence of scholarly research that gives voice to the experiences and processes of supervisee impression management, some researchers have conducted initial studies on the topic (Haist, 2014; Pitariu, 2007). Several studies have demonstrated that impression

management is present in clinical supervision and may be mediated by factors such as anxiety, self-efficacy, and the supervision working alliance (Haist, 2014; Pitariu, 2007; Ward, Friedlander, Schoen, & Klein, 1985).

### **Research on Impression Management and Supervision**

Despite the relevance of impression management in clinical supervision, only a few researchers have addressed the subject directly (Haist, 2014; Pitariu, 2007; Ward, et al., 1985). Other studies, however, provide frameworks for understanding supervisee impression management strategies, such as supervisee non-disclosure, without necessarily naming the process as impression management or self-presentation (i.e. Ladany, et al., 1996). To explore what researchers have uncovered about impression management and supervision, I will begin with outlining the few studies that explicitly named impression management as a component of the research. Finally, I will review literature that aligns with characteristics of impression management in supervision, though do not necessarily use the terms and definitions of impression management. The latter studies remain relevant for the conceptual framework as they provide information about how supervisees may influence supervision processes through behavior that is motivated, at least in part, by being seen and regarded in certain desirable ways by supervisors.

In the first study that explicitly explored the relationship between impression management behaviors and the supervision process, Ward et al. (1985) measured the effects of supervisee strategic self-presentation on the supervisor's evaluation. The theoretical framework for this study was built on the assumption that supervisees use impression management with their supervisors because of the evaluative component of supervision. In this study, 80 experienced supervisors listened to a brief audio recording of a fictitious supervision session in which a

trainee reported significant change of either improvement or deterioration in a client's mental status. Participants then provided an explanation for the change that was either a defensive self-presentation tactic in which the supervisee took credit for the client's improvement and blamed the client for their deterioration, or a counter-defensive style in which the supervisee attributed responsibility to the client for improvement and took personal responsibility for deterioration (Ward et al., 1985). Supervisors evaluated each participant using the Tetlock's Trait Scale, which measured competence, social skills, and self-confidence, as well as an abbreviated version of the Counselor Rating Scale, which reflected expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. The results of the study indicated that the explanations supervisees used to describe their clients significantly influenced the impressions the supervisors had of them. When supervisees denied credit for their clients' successes, yet took responsibility for client failures (a supervisee counter-defensive behavior), they were judged as somewhat more socially skilled than supervisees who took credit for successes and denied responsibility for failures (defensive behavior). The defensive supervisee was judged as slightly more confident under the condition in which the client improved (Ward et al., 1985). Another interesting finding of this study was that regardless of the supervisee's explanation for client improvement, client progress caused supervisors to provide more favorable ratings for the supervisee on confidence, competence, expertness, and attractiveness (Ward et al., 1985). Whether supervisees are aware of it or not, there may be impetus for reporting positive outcomes in supervision. The researchers acknowledged certain limitations of their study, including that they based their research on the assumption that supervisees primarily use either defensive or counter-defensive self-presentation strategies. Although self-presentation and impression management are likely much more complex in clinical supervision, this study offers some insight into how a supervisee's management of

images of competence may in fact influence supervisor evaluations. This study also demonstrates the potential influence of positive client outcomes on the supervisor's assumptions and judgments of a supervisee, providing grounds to explore more about the factors that motivate supervisees to engage in impression management behavior.

Two more recent dissertation studies have explored how and why impression management shows up in supervision (Haist, 2014; Pitariu, 2007). Pitariu (2007) aimed to understand more about the predictors of impression management in supervision. The researcher surveyed graduate students in their first semester of practicum placement at 13 CACREP accredited master's in counseling programs. One hundred and eighteen participants completed the Impression Management Scale (IMS), which is an instrument created from Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy. Participants also completed measures for counselor self-efficacy and anxiety—the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE) and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). The results of this study indicated that counselor self-efficacy and anxiety predicted with statistical significance the use of the five different types of impression management tactics (Pitariu, 2007).

Pitariu (2007) found that supervisees who scored higher on self-efficacy related to micro-skills, efficacy about the counseling process, and efficacy related to working with difficult clients were more likely to use self-promotional impression management tactics. This suggests that supervisees who felt more confident about their abilities to use counseling skills and work with challenging clients were more likely to present themselves in a favorable light and/or avoid discussing weaknesses with supervisors. On the other hand, trainee beliefs related to awareness of personal values and the importance of the impact of these values on clients were inversely

related to intimidation tactics (i.e. attempts to appear powerful or dangerous) and supplication tactics (i.e. attempts to appear needy or dependent).

Pitariu (2007) also found that impression management strategies were predicted by supervisee anxiety. Specifically, anxiety predicted ingratiation tactics (i.e. attempts to appear likable) and to a lesser extent, exemplification tactics (i.e. attempts to appear dedicated). The results of this study indicated that supervisees used all five types of impression management strategies (ingratiation, self-promotion, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication) in supervision and that the supervisee's race/ethnicity, gender, age, and experience had no significant effects on the use of these strategies. In sum, the findings of this preliminary research on impression management and supervision provided direction for future study, indicating that supervisees normatively use impression management strategies in supervision, and that anxiety, self-efficacy, awareness of values, and the importance of the impact of values on clients mediated the types of impression management strategies supervisees used. Although this study provides information about the presence of impression management, it tells us little about the experiences of impression management for supervisees. The factors that seemed to influence supervisee impression management were limited to the specific measurement tools Pitariu (2007) used, providing room for more exploration about details, process, and additional factors outside of the constructs of self-efficacy and state-trait anxiety.

Expanding on Pitariu's (2007) study, Haist (2014) sought to understand more about how counselor self-efficacy and the supervisory working alliance may be related to impression management behavior in supervision. A total of 157 pre-doctoral counseling psychologists enrolled in APA-accredited training programs completed a survey that included the Impression Management Scale (IMS), the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE), and the Supervisor



Working Alliance Inventory—Trainee (SWAI—Trainee Version). The results of this study indicated a negative relationship between supervisory working alliance and the use of self-promotion impression management strategies. Supervisees who reported stronger working alliances with their supervisors were less likely to use tactics intended to promote the image of competence (Haist, 2014).

Splitting up the different types of impression management strategies, Haist (2014) found a statistically significant negative relationship between ingratiation impression management behavior and counselor self-efficacy and counselor experience level, as well as a positive relationship between ingratiation and gender and ethnicity. Put another way, counseling interns were more likely to use ingratiation behaviors—that is, tactics like favors and flattery intended to portray an image of likability—when they were female-identified, of Anglo-European descent, and had lower self-efficacy (Haist, 2014).

Exemplification impression management tactics were related to counselor self-efficacy, working alliance, as well as ethnicity (Haist, 2014). A strong working alliance and higher counselor self-efficacy together were correlated with less exemplification behavior. Supplication strategies were also negatively related to counselor self-efficacy. Finally, Haist (2014) found the general use of impression management tactics were negatively related to counselor self-efficacy and ethnicity. Taken together, this study indicated that supervisees with lower self-efficacy about their counseling capabilities and trainees who identified as Caucasian were more likely to attempt to manage the impressions their supervisors had of them (Haist, 2014). Of interest in Haist's (2014) study, is the significant negative impact low counselor self-efficacy had on all four types of impression management strategies the researcher measured.

Haist's (2014) findings were somewhat contradictory to those of Pitariu (2007). Haist (2014) found a significant relationship between ethnicity and ingratiation, exemplification, and general impression management use, while Pitariu (2007) did not. Haist (2014) offered a hypothesis for this difference, stating that although statistical significance was achieved, ethnicity only accounted for 1.5% of the reason participants endorsed use of impression management behavior. Haist (2014) also noted the homogeneity of samples with respect to ethnicity may have convoluted the findings. Because of the quantitative and survey method design of these two studies, the researchers were unable to gain more in-depth information about how ethnicity may or may not have implications for impression management behavior.

These three studies, which were all focused on individual, dyadic supervision models, support the assumption that supervisees indeed use impression management in the supervision process, and that their motivations for impression management are related to counselor self-efficacy, anxiety, and the working alliance. Additional studies that do not describe supervisee behaviors with the explicit term of impression management, though do explore ways supervisees manage their impressions in supervision, are relevant to the conceptual context. Supervisee non-disclosure will be explored next (Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010; Yourman & Farber, 1997).

**Supervisee nondisclosure.** Supervisees make decisions to not disclose relevant information to their supervisors at remarkably high rates. Ladany, et al. (1996) conducted one of the first studies that examined the frequency and types of information not disclosed in supervision as well as underlying motivations for non-disclosures in a sample of 108 psychotherapy trainees from master's in counseling and doctoral clinical training programs. The researchers developed a survey for the study based on a series of pilot studies called the

Supervisee Nondisclosure Survey. Participants were instructed to list their thoughts, feelings, and reactions they had not disclosed to their supervisors. The survey provided space for supervisees to write open-ended reflections on the following five areas of nondisclosure: (1) personal issues and concerns, (2) information about clients, (3) supervisee-client interactions, (4) aspects of the supervisor, and (5) supervisor-supervisee interactions. Supervisees also completed the Supervisory Styles Inventory (SSI) to measure impressions of supervisor style. The researchers found that almost all supervisees (97.2%) consistently practiced non-disclosure in supervision. The most commonly cited content of non-disclosure was negative reactions about the supervisor, followed by personal issues, clinical mistakes, concerns about evaluation, and general client observations (Ladany, et al., 1996). When asked what motivated supervisees to not disclose information to supervisors, participants reported three general themes including deference to the supervisor, impression management—which was defined as attempts to minimize a negative impression and maximize a positive impression—and “fear of political suicide.” Fear of political suicide, perhaps an extreme version of impression management motivation, was related to the fear of putting oneself in jeopardy in terms of grades, reputation, or humiliation (Ladany, et al., 1996). Though the explicit goals of this study did not include supervisee experience or process of impression management, the results indicated that the impression management behavior of nondisclosure in supervision is exceedingly common and that supervisees seem to be aware of their motivations to manage desired images of the self.

In another study on non-disclosure in supervision, Mehr, Ladany, and Caskie (2010) surveyed 204 doctoral-level psychology graduate students at the beginning practicum, advanced practicum, and internship level. The researchers were interested in the content and reasons for non-disclosure as well as the influence of anxiety and the perception of the supervisory working

alliance on willingness to disclose information in supervision. Instead of asking about supervision experiences in general, researchers asked participants to only think of their last supervision session to gain a more immediate and perhaps more accurate representation of non-disclosure. The results of this study indicated that 84.3% of trainees did not disclose information to their supervisors in their last supervision session. Non-disclosure of relevant information was not differentiated from irrelevant nondisclosures, and the researchers noted that perceived irrelevance was the most common reason for not disclosing information about the supervisee's personal life. Not all nondisclosures are problematic and may, in fact, be irrelevant to the supervision situation. When trainees perceived a better working alliance with their supervisors, however, nondisclosure was less frequent. Higher trainee anxiety was associated with increased nondisclosure (Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010). This study corroborated the findings that nondisclosure is common in supervision, and leaves room to consider that it is not always problematic.

Armeniox (2000) conducted the only study to date on trainee non-disclosure in a sample of counselor education graduate students. In this study, Armeniox (2000) surveyed 506 counseling graduate students in practicum and internship settings. The results of this study indicated that a significant amount of the variance in trainee's decisions to withhold information from supervisors was accounted for by level of satisfaction with the supervisor as well as the number of hours (experience) the trainees had. When supervisees were less satisfied with their supervisors they withheld more information from them. Counseling students with less hours of experience disclosed more information to supervisors, whereas supervisees with more experience reported disclosing less—these findings are inconsistent with those of Haist (2014), who found that as self-efficacy increased, trainees were actually less likely to engage in impression

management behavior. Armenoix (2000) also found no statistically significant relationship in reported nondisclosure in supervision dyads that were either congruent or not congruent for race/ethnicity or gender.

The only study that has considered the influence of a peer on nondisclosure in supervision is the phenomenological research conducted by Lonn and Juhnke (2017). The researchers coded for three themes related to nondisclosure in triadic supervision: relationships, presence of a peer, and sharing time. Supervisees noted feelings of vulnerability as part of the context of supervision, which were heightened by the presence of a peer. At times, vulnerability fostered deeper relationships and trust. However, the presence of a peer also impeded relevant disclosures due to fear of judgment or desires to uphold images of professionalism to supervisors and peers alike. Participants discussed the experience of needing to share time with their peers and noted nondisclosures were sometimes motivated by lack of sufficient time for supervision in the triadic context.

Taken together, these studies help illuminate some of associated factors and decision-making related to nondisclosure in supervision. These studies, however, raise new questions regarding whether nondisclosure is always an impression management strategy, what other kinds of impression management strategies supervisees may use besides nondisclosure, and how (if at all) specific factors like race, gender, and other identities influence the experience and process of impression management in supervision.

### **Summary of the Conceptual Framework**

Supervision serves an imperative role in counselor training. Although the supervisor is ultimately responsible for facilitating environments for effective supervision, prior research indicates that supervisees also affect the experience, process, and outcomes of supervision by

way of impression management. Many dynamics of supervision seem to lend themselves to conditions that may enhance or influence supervisee impression management behavior. Among these intersecting challenges are the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship, the dependence of the supervisee on a supervisor's positive evaluation, inconsistencies related to training and role induction to the supervision process, trainee anxiety, strength of the working alliance, the potential presence of peers, social identity and sociopolitical factors such as power and privilege, as well as unique supervisee traits and vulnerabilities. Although much research has focused on the specific impression management strategy of supervisee non-disclosure, very few studies have sought to uncover how impression management occurs in supervision. The survey-based research methods of other studies on predictors of impression management strategies leave space to understand more about the complex factors that combine to enhance or diminish impression management behavior. Impression management behaviors in supervision may present themselves in unique ways that researchers have yet to capture or quantify.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Supervisors must rely on supervisees to make accurate and relevant disclosures about their work; when this does not happen there are consequences for the trainee such as diminished learning as well as consequences for client care (Wallace & Alonso, 1994). Richer understandings of how supervisees attempt to control information conveyed about themselves in supervision can inform later supervision practices and processes, holding potential to produce optimal disclosures and discourse in supervision. Learning more about supervisee impression management will add to the knowledge base of supervision and supervision relationships, providing direction to potentially improve the supervision experience and possibly impact client care. The current study aims to address the gap in the counselor education research literature

about the supervisee experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision, and seeks to answer the central question: What is the experience and process of impression management for supervisees in clinical mental health counseling supervision?

## **CHAPTER II: Methodology**

Given the importance of supervision to the profession of mental health counseling, research about factors that impede or promote supervision efficacy holds significant value for counselor educators. Although the literature on supervision theory and practice has gained a great deal of attention in the last three decades, we still know very little about how supervisees influence the supervision process beyond supervisee nondisclosure (Ladany, et al., 1996). Some studies have substantiated the hypothesis that supervisees use impression management strategies in supervision (Haist, 2014; Ladany, et al., 1996; Pitariu, 2007) but researchers have yet to capture the complex motivations, diverse voices, experiences, processes, and/or influencing situations of impression management in supervision. To address this gap in the literature, I conducted a qualitative study using grounded theory methodology to capture the experience and process of supervisee impression management in clinical supervision.

### **Qualitative Methodology**

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies are not just different methods of conducting the same inquiry; the two approaches vary in their philosophical frameworks, and thus meet the needs of different research goals (Maxwell, 2005). The ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions of qualitative methodology were situated to effectively study my research question. A grounded theory methodology informed by situational analysis (Clarke, 2005; Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2017) was appropriate for understanding the experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision.

The ontological assumption of multiple truths formed a foundation for this research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was interested in the processes and mechanisms that activated impression management for a group of supervisees; I did not intend to demonstrate a realist view



of causation (Maxwell, 2005). In other words, the current research question did not seek to uncover *the* one experience and process of impression management or assume that any one participant's experience captured the Truth. This study gave voice to the diverse experiences of supervisees through rich descriptions that embraced complexity and variation.

The epistemological philosophical question is how we come to know “what is” (Smith, 1983). The process for coming to know “what is” from many quantitative approaches is primarily deductive—meaning comes from testing a theory. Grounded theory, on the other hand, involves generation of a new theory primarily based on the data. I used a semi-inductive approach that was co-constructed between myself as the researcher and the research participants (Charmaz, 2006). My approach was not completely inductive, since I entered the research with my own biases, prior life experiences, and interest in this topic. My interactions with participants shaped the study through a flexible and iterative process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A qualitative approach allowed me to pivot in directions that were relevant to research participants. The methodology I chose left space and flexibility to deeply explore a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I began with a broad question in the beginning and became more focused during the research process with input from participants and contact with unanticipated phenomena and influences. The value of flexibility from a qualitative paradigm was to capture the multiple realities and constructs that were important to participants as they emerged during the research process.

This study was not value-neutral. Under the assumption that objectivity does not exist, facts could only be considered as people perceived them, laden with diverse value systems. I saw these values as an integral part of the research (Smith, 1983). My own experiences as both a supervisor and a supervisee could not be unlearned; assuming the role of a blank slate vis-à-vis

my own experiences and commitments would have been impossible. Instead, my role in the research process was not to attempt to avoid contaminating it, but instead to employ reflexivity, asking myself the following questions posed by Clarke, Friese, and Washburn (2017): “How can I be present and hold myself accountable in this research? How can I do so without discrediting the research through personal bias? How can I remain seriously open to considering alternative perspectives or interpretations of the situation I am studying?” (p. 35). Through this approach, I was able to make the link between my own values and the decisions I made in the research process explicit. This research process involved acknowledging my biases and enacting responsibility for them through reflecting on where my values impeded my analyses and findings.

Qualitative methodology is appropriate when exploring largely uncharted and uninvestigated phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prior to this research, literature in the field of counselor education and supervision lacked a theory regarding how impression management unfolds in supervision contexts. Research on the topic of impression management in supervision is limited. A qualitative study was useful for this research question since it would have been difficult to make informed decisions about which measurement tools to use or what dependent variable would be relevant to measure (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) discussed, qualitative research is appropriate for studies in which “all of the concepts pertaining to a given phenomenon have not yet been identified, at least not in this population or place” (p. 40). This was the case for the current research.

Prior research supports the hypothesis that impression management occurs in clinical supervision (Haist, 2014; Pitariu, 2007). These studies, however, were grounded in methodologies that were bound by specific measures and theoretical frameworks. For example,

both Pitariu (2007) and Haist (2014) used the Impression Management Scale (IMS) to explore the experiences of impression management for supervisees. This is the most comprehensive measure of impression management in the field, though it is possible the taxonomy developed by Jones and Pittman (1982) that provided the foundation for the IMS does not fully capture the types of impression management behaviors supervisees use in the supervision context. Jones and Pittman (1982) developed their taxonomy based on prior social psychology research and theorists from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, including much of Edward E. Jones' previous work from Harvard, Duke, and Princeton Universities. Studies based on the experiences of the people they studied (likely predominantly White men, although this is not explicit in their various publications) at these institutions from 40-70 years ago may not accurately account for the experiences of counseling supervisees today. Additionally, the IMS was created to measure impression management behavior specifically in business settings—the particular power dynamics of supervision may be similar to business settings, but also include the unique attributes and ethics of counselor education. Additionally, prior studies examined predictors of impression management behavior such as self-efficacy, anxiety (Pitariu, 2007; Haist, 2014), and supervisory working alliance (Haist, 2014), though the methods used in these studies did not allow for exploration about what other factors may enhance, inhibit, or otherwise affect impression management in supervision.

In conclusion, a qualitative methodology aligned with my research question to understand the experience and process of a phenomenon, to build a theory from the ground up using a semi-inductive approach, to pivot in directions that were relevant for research participants, and to address gaps in the literature.

**Grounded theory and situational analysis.** I used grounded theory methodology that was originally conceptualized by Clarke (2006) called situational analysis, influenced by the work of Charmaz (2006). Grounded theory allowed for a systematic, yet flexible, approach to gather and analyze data to construct a theory that was grounded in the experiences and processes of participants (Charmaz, 2006). The methods of grounded theory and situational analysis allowed me to attend to the experiences of impression management in supervision for supervisees, while considering contextual influences and arrangement of multiple relationalities and their ecologies (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2017).

In order to develop a theory about the process of impression management, I first gathered rich descriptions of the experience of impression management for supervisees. I was interested in gathering information related to how supervisees experienced their own impression management desires and behavior. My second-round interviews primarily focused on how events, actions, and meanings were shaped by the contexts in which they occurred; and finally, how these phenomena in turn influenced one another in the process of clinical supervision. I attended to multiple processes at once and co-constructed theories grounded in participant experiences (Charmaz, 2006). The experience of impression management for supervisees shifted and changed depending on multiple factors; situational analysis provided me an opportunity to attend to these intersecting and complex influencing factors.

Situational analysis differs from prior grounded theory methodology in the conceptualization of how social processes and “context” ought to be considered (Clarke, 2005). Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) defined context as that which surrounds something, but is decidedly not part of it. Clarke (2005), on the other hand, argued that entities are constitutive of each other when they share relationship. I used the term and meaning of “the situation” to avoid

separating the individual from the context, accounting for Clarke's (2005) methodology to see the conditions of the situation as the situation itself. Clarke (2005) argued, "there is no such thing as context" (p. 71). Instead, an individual is surrounded by a culture, which is inseparable from the participant and their experiences. I was interested in how these conditions appeared and were "felt as consequential—inside the empirical situation under examination" (p. 72). This study included the situation of clinical supervision, which was saturated in dynamics of individuals, society, and assumptions of power and privilege—these elements made situational analysis a particularly good fit for the purpose of exploring the experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision. Situational analysis helped me capture complex relationalities as part of the research situation.

Another element of grounded theory as conceptualized by Charmaz (2006) and endorsed by Clarke, Friese, and Washburn (2017) was the co-construction of data. The theory I constructed through this research provided an interpreted portrayal of one piece of the world, the clinical supervision situation, through the lenses of multiple supervisees and myself as the researcher. The experience of impression management is likely ubiquitous (Schlenker, 1980), yet researchers have not explored the processes supervisees go through to manage impressions. My own interest in this topic, as well as personal experiences as both a supervisor and a supervisee, informed my understanding of the data and, ultimately, the co-construction of theory. As opposed to a grounded theory conceptualized by Glaser (1992) who claimed that induction ought to be used when generating a theory (with the researcher attempting to assume a role as a *tabula rasa*), Clarke (2008) conceptualized situational analysis as an abductive and inductive approach. Clark, Friese, and Washburn (2017) argued that all researchers have prior ideas and theories based on a range of experiences in life and through reading the literature. They claim,

“...knowledge, perspective, and experiences should not be denied but instead *examined through the lenses of abduction and reflexivity*” (Clark, Friese, & Washburn, 2017, p. 31). I used abduction and reflexivity to work toward the multiple criteria of trustworthiness in this research process.

Grounded theory and situational analysis facilitated a deep and reflexive methodology that considered social justice and avoided taking a distanced perspective from the data. The purpose of using this methodology was to create a grounded theory that co-constructed a framework from the data to offer insight into the experience and process of impression management in supervision. Such a framework can enhance understanding for counselor educators and provide a tentative guide for taking supervisee impression management into account in counselor education and supervision.

### **Procedures for Participant Selection**

I used purposeful selection of participants for this grounded theory study. My sample included variation, not so I could generalize to the population of all novice counselors, but to create space to hear about a variety of experiences and contexts. This was in support of transferability. As Clarke (2005) advocated, it is important to consider differences in situational contexts and experiences among participants. Strauss and Corbin (1998) also encouraged choosing a sample that can contribute to constructing a theory, which must be done purposefully.

I adhered to a framework for purposeful sampling discussed by Creswell and Poth (2018) who suggest first identifying a homogenous sample of individuals and then selecting a heterogeneous sample made up of people who meet this criterion. I selected from the homogenous population of second-year graduate student counselors-in-training enrolled in a CACREP-accredited master's program who currently see clients and receive supervision. I then

selected a heterogeneous mix of genders, racial identities, and ages. All of these supervisees had experienced more than one supervisor and had also been in triadic and group supervisory relationships. I did not select supervisees in a particular type of supervision relationship; instead, I was curious about a breadth of supervisory experiences since it would have been difficult and potentially limiting to the research to isolate one particular relationship per participant. Supervisees were not able to separate their multiple supervisory experiences or account for one specific type of supervision without being impacted by their other experiences.

The categories of gender, racial identity, and age were identified to capture variation within my sample, as the population of novice counselors in graduate programs is diverse in respect to these identities and experiences. Variation regarding these intersecting identities created space for the voices from individuals with differing experiences. For example, gender socialization influences peoples' experiences both in general as well as in counselor education programs (Harter, 1999; Ulku-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes, & Kinlaw, 2000). Race is also an important factor in the experience of supervision and counselor training. A growing body of literature suggests that people of color report negative experiences in supervision associated with racial dynamics (Garret et al., 2001; Jernigan, et al., 2010; Falender & Shafranske, 2017); hearing voices from students of color was important. Haist (2014) found that ethnicity accounted for variation in use of impression management strategies among supervisees, though little is known about how or why. Age is another way counselors-in-training may differ in terms of experiences of impression management in supervision, since people tend to experience stimuli differently across the lifespan and incorporate different life experiences and developmental processes when they arrive in the supervision situation (Erikson, 1959; Bernard & Goodyear, 2009).

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the rationale for selecting a heterogeneous sample among a homogenous group is to “confirm or disconfirm the conditions, both contextual and intervening, under which the model holds” (p. 157). Transferability is in part established by providing evidence that the theory generated from the research could be applicable to other settings, contexts, time, and people. “It is, in summary, not the naturalist’s task to provide an index of transferability, it is his or her responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). I chose to include variation in the sample of participants to support transferability as well as for maximizing differences in perspectives (Clarke, 2005). According to Charmaz (2006), it was also important to ask myself whether I gathered enough background information to be able to inform a range of contexts that I explored in the study.

My sample included second-year graduate student interns enrolled in a CACREP-accredited master’s of counseling program who received clinical supervision with a clinical mental health counseling emphasis. I recruited voluntary participants through reaching out to faculty via email who were known to me or my dissertation committee members at a variety of universities. Following difficulty with recruitment, I amended my IRB to allow me to reach out directly to potential participants. All participants, except for one, were unknown to me. One participant I knew from a training a number of years ago, though never had any contact with regarding counselor education.

When selecting my sample, I wanted it to include at least one female-identified student and at least one non-female identified student. In regard to race, I intended to include at least two students who identify as people of color. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, a “non-traditional” student is defined as over the age of 24 for undergraduate students



and over the age of 35 for graduate students. I planned to interview at least one student of non-traditional age and at least one student below the age of 35. Although participants fit with multiple identities in the matrix due to intersectionality, the sample ensured that each of these areas were represented.

Charmaz (2006) advocated for a less rigid preconceived notation of sample size at the outset of a research project, due to the uncertainty of when data saturation will occur. I planned to account for the uncertainty of when data saturation would occur, first seeking a sample of eight graduate students in counseling. The rationale for this number was based on achieving a sample with variation in age, gender identity, and race.

Researchers do not agree about the definition of data saturation (Saunders, et al., 2017). Glaser and Strauss (1967) provided the original definition of data saturation as the criterion for stopping sampling in a grounded theory study. They argued that saturation occurs when no additional data are found and the researcher is confident that further sampling would not produce new theoretical information (i.e. new categories, properties, or relationships). However, according to Starks and Tinidad (2007), the concept of saturation instead pertains to whether the theory is sufficiently substantiated by the data. I took into account both definitions of theoretical saturation—1) given the data is there analytical adequacy and 2) given the theory is there enough data to illustrate it?

I found that by the 13<sup>th</sup> interview I heard no new ideas that could not be contextualized in the emerging codebook. Participants' disclosures during and after the 13<sup>th</sup> interview sounded redundant and I was able to categorize all participant disclosures within the coding structure. I also gathered rich descriptions from participants that were sufficient to illustrate the emerging

theory. Following the completion of second-round interviews and member checks, we decided the participants for this study provided enough data for generation of a grounded theory.

### **Methods for Gathering Data**

Prior to gathering any data for my study, I applied for review to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Montana. Following approval, I reached out by email to faculty members at multiple universities and requested that they forward a request for participation to students who currently see clients and receive supervision. Unfortunately, this process yielded no participants. I then amended my IRB application and recruited participants by reaching out to potential participants directly via email or through traveling to their university settings in person. Far more than eight people expressed interest in the study, so I chose my sample through accepting the first eight students who met the variation criteria and let other potential participants know I would contact them if I did not reach saturation with a sample of eight. Participation in this study was voluntary; there was no coercion to participate. I indicated to potential participants that they may discontinue participation at any time during the study, with no consequences.

I screened potential participants over email to ensure they were current graduate students in a clinical mental health counseling program, that they receive supervision, and that they would be willing to participate in a multiple interview and member-check process. I disclosed to participants that this research process would entail multiple interviews until data saturation occurred, with at least two interviews per participant, as well as additional time for member-checking procedures. I conducted interviews in-person, over the phone, or via secure video-conferencing platform. All interviews were audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription, which I completed myself for first round interviews and were transcribed by a service online

called TranscribeMe for second-round interviews. All recordings and transcripts were encrypted and stored on a password-protected hard drive.

The process for conducting interviews was consistent with my decisions to orient the research in constructivist and post-modern philosophical assumptions. Brinkmann (2013) sums up a constructivist approach to interviewing:

Constructivist conceptions reject the romantic idea of authenticity and favor an idea of a subject that is locally produced in the situation. There is thus a focus on the situational practice of interviewing and a distrust toward discourses of data as permanent “nuggets” to be “mined” by the interviewer (p. 12).

This approach involved situating myself as a fellow “traveler” that is involved in the co-construction of data through a relationship with each participant (Brinkmann, 2013). I worked toward facilitating depth in disclosure by creating relationships with participants, using appropriate self-disclosure, providing non-judgmental responses to their disclosures, and using my reflective listening counseling skills.

Interview questions needed to be general enough to capture a wide range of experiences, thoughts, feelings, and actions. At the same time, the questions had to be specific enough to elicit responses that spoke to the phenomenon of impression management in supervision (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). According to Charmaz and Belgrave (2012), a detailed interview script is not necessary. The following five questions served as a guide for my first round of interviews:

1. What are some of your thoughts and feelings related to how you want to appear in supervision?
2. What are some of the ways it is important for you to appear to your clinical supervisor(s)?
3. What are some of the impressions you try to avoid in supervision?

4. What is it like for you to work to uphold these images and/or avoid these images in supervision?
5. How has managing these impressions changed since the beginning of your clinical training? How has it stayed the same?

Although I remained consistent with these interview questions, I devised probes and follow-ups with flexibility as part of the process.

Following first round interviews, I transcribed interview recordings and engaged in preliminary data analysis. Second-round interviews were geared toward uncovering the processes of impression management, which was grounded in the experiences participants shared in the first round of interviews.

### **Methods for Analysis**

I collected and analyzed data through a non-linear process. These activities went hand-in-hand, were interrelated, and happened simultaneously (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Although the current study included flexibility to learn and pivot while embedded in the research process, I employed explicit analytic procedures that conformed to a general contour while leaving space for the serendipitous (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). My data analysis followed recommendations by Charmaz (2006) and Clarke, Frieze, and Washburn (2017), who constructed frameworks for analysis based on prior grounded theorists such as Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998). I used analysis procedures that were grounded in a constructivist paradigm. The processes for analyzing data served the greater purpose of co-creating a deeper understanding of experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision.

The methodological decision to use situational analysis in the current study required a conceptualization of the situation of interest. Clarke, Frieze, and Washburn (2017) provided five methodological implications for the situation: (1) it may be bigger than we think, (2) it is relationally complex, (3) it is radically dynamic, (4) it involves heterogeneity, and (5) it is

political. Situational analysis framework helped me draw attention to multiple and complex aspects of the situation of clinical supervision. One of the advantages of centering the analysis on the situation of interest was the ability to hold a broad picture of the situation while systematically considering the potential importance of multiple elements. The situation of interest was clinical supervision between a graduate student in mental health counseling and a qualified supervisor. I used situational mapping at each stage of data analysis along with analytical coding. My maps kept supervisee experiences active and exemplified patterns between experiences and processes. I also used initial and focused coding of interview transcripts to analyze data (Charmaz, 2006).

Coding included a process of applying names to pieces of text from interview transcripts. Through initial coding procedures I sought to define what was happening and attempted to understand what it meant to participants. I followed Charmaz's (2006) guidelines for analytical coding, which included two phases called initial and focused coding.

Charmaz (2006) identified the first stage of the coding process as the "initial phase," in which the researcher names each word, line, or segment of the data. The goal of this phase was to remain open to all possible theoretical directions and mine data for analytic ideas that I might pursue further in subsequent data collection and analyses (Charmaz, 2006). I coded early transcripts line-by-line, which involved giving names and descriptions to literally what was said in each line. Line-by-line coding did not involve applying abstract concepts/constructs, instead it stated tiny summaries of the data. I worked to apply more analytical and theoretical descriptions based in participant descriptions after I went through all of the data. This was the procedure for developing preliminary codes of information and naming events, dimensions, properties, and/or actions. Charmaz (2006) provided a guide of questions for initial analysis: "What is going on?"

What are people doing? What is the person saying? What do these actions and statements take for granted? How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements?” (p. 38). I engaged in initial coding following first round interviews and used NVivo qualitative data analysis software for structuring and organizing my findings. Since my first round of interviews primarily focused on experiences of impression management, analysis at that stage primarily focused on identifying how participants thought, felt, and acted while involved in the process of impression management during clinical supervision. Charmaz (2006) discussed the parallel process of both coding and interviewing becoming more focused as time goes on, which was certainly my experience. I found that I did not need to do line-by-line coding for each transcript after I had completed very thorough initial analysis of the first few. Participants described very similar understandings, which started to emerge as general themes and clusters of experiences.

I engaged in focused coding by taking codes that emerged from the initial, line-by-line coding and applied them conceptually and selectively (Charmaz, 2006). This included a phase that used the most significant and frequent information—I organized data into categories in this way. All categories necessarily included the experiences of each participant. Axial coding helped me explore relationships between concepts and categories that I previously identified. Through this process, I organized broader thematic categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Focused coding (through axial coding and situational mapping) allowed me to uncover initial ideas related to relationships within and between categories and develop questions and curiosities for the second round of interviews. Focused coding also involved making decisions about which codes made good analytic sense to categorize data incisively and completely (Charmaz, 2006). Instead of attempting to put data back together coherently, focused coding served the purpose of

data-to-data comparison. I shared my emerging codebook with Dr. Murray each week, discussing how naming of categories, sub-categories, properties, dimensions, and situational elements fit for the diverse disclosures of participants.

The process of focused coding was in service of developing an analytic framework. This occurred by categorizing and selecting codes that had overriding significance (Charmaz, 2006). Following the first round of interviews, focused coding pertained to the experience of impression management in supervision. I then engaged in subsequent interviews that were geared toward the process of impression management. Second-round interviews were based on salient categories that emerged through initial and focused coding analysis about the experience of the phenomenon. After second-round interviews, I started again with line-by-line, initial coding, followed by focused coding.

I continued to follow Charmaz' (2006) guidelines as I came to the final phases of focused coding following subsequent interviews. This included keeping all codes active and raising codes to categories. As I raised codes to categories, I made properties explicit, specified conditions under which the processes occurred, were maintained and/or were changed, described consequences, and showed relationships between and among categories. Coding was also supported by my use of situational and relational mapping, as a means of capturing relationships and moving the analytic story in a theoretical direction (Clarke, Frieze, & Washburn, 2017).

Situational maps focused on broadly conceiving the situation through descriptively laying out all human and non-human elements that were involved (Clarke, Frieze, & Washburn, 2017). This was an iterative process where relational elements were depicted after data collection. The goal of situational mapping was to empirically grasp the nature of the relationships versus projecting or fantasizing them (Clarke, Frieze, & Washburn, 2017). Prior to empirically

analyzing the situation, I created abstract maps to include the “the potentially analytically pertinent human and nonhuman, material, and symbolic/discursive elements in a particular situation *as framed by those in it and by the analyst*” (Clarke, Frieze, & Washburn, 2017, p. 128). Mapping occurred simultaneously with the initial coding stage and continued as an iterative process throughout focused coding. As advised by Clarke, Frieze, and Washburn (2017), I made copies of situational maps with the dates included. At the time of the completion of the project, I had over 20 maps with many iterations of symbolic and discursive material. NVivo qualitative software aided in the organization of maps. In addition, I placed myself on the maps in my role as the researcher. A constructivist conceptualization of grounded theory involved acknowledging how I became part of the research situation. Maps were helpful in conceptualizing the passage of time and the situational element of awareness of impression management, since many participants discussed a change in their experiences of impression management once they had conscious awareness of this construct following our first interviews. It was important to make a distinction between the coding process and mapping process—Clarke, Frieze, and Washburn (2017) were clear that analytic codes ought not to even be included in maps. Instead, mapping was in service of enhancing analysis through laying out major elements of the situation, enabling me to look at the situation as a whole and with a unique and often changing continuum of elements. All processes involved in analysis, including analytic codes and situational maps, merged in the end to support the construction of a grounded theory about the experience and process of impression management in supervision.

### **Procedures for Establishing Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness refers to how accurately I was able to characterize the experiences and contexts of the participants in this study. The four criterion areas that establish trustworthiness



are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used five strategies for establishing these four criterion areas in service of ensuring that the experiences and meanings of participants in this study were accurately and credibly represented in my research. These strategies included member checking, prolonged engagement, inquiry auditing, generating rich, thick descriptions in the data, and clarifying my lenses via reflexivity.

**Member checking.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified member checking as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Member checking involved intentionally soliciting participant views on the credibility of the way the data was captured and interpreted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Many, including Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Maxwell (2005), call this the “single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do...” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111). To practice member checking, I brought data, interpretations, and conclusions back to participants and invited them to provide their observations, endorsements, and criticisms. I solicited member checks both informally during interviews as well as in a more formal process once saturation had occurred. Seeking participants’ feedback and consent related to the way the data was interpreted and portrayed was important given the philosophical foundations of this study rooted in co-constructing data and minimizing distance between the participant’s experiences and me as a researcher. My goal was to avoid taking a position of power over the participants, but instead provide a way for them to have a voice in the findings that accurately accounted for their experiences.

**Prolonged engagement.** Another method of establishing trustworthiness through the area of credibility was prolonged engagement. I built relationships with participants as well as others who helped me gain access to them, such as the faculty members who allowed me to recruit their students. I did this via open and transparent communication about my research, both

through email and in person. I listened and addressed questions and concerns about the project with curiosity. The trust built from these relationships extended to the data and research process itself; building relationships was not intended to be just a tool for participants to provide more trustworthy data. My goal was for the participants to also come to trust the research process and be sure that their best interests were considered. I intend for participants, and others involved in the research, to trust that this project is in service of accurate, humble representation of their private worlds and experiences. To communicate my values of treating research participants with respect and dignity, I practiced appropriate self-disclosure and solicited participant feedback about their experiences and involvement in the research process. In addition, I utilized several rounds of interviews as a means of extending time with participants for prolonged engagement. Data gleaned from prolonged engagement is likely to be more complete and less “dependent on inference” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 110). The need for prolonged engagement was substantiated by my philosophical orientation, which embraces the complexities of human stories, represents differences, and takes accountability for power relationships (Clarke, 2005).

**Inquiry auditing.** Dependability and confirmability, the processes by which I attempted to verify that findings were consistent with the raw data and could be confirmed by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), were warranted via inquiry auditing. This was the process through which I utilized outside sources who were not participants in the study for perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The chair of my dissertation project, Dr. Kirsten Murray, served as the primary inquiry auditor. Dr. Murray’s role as inquiry auditor was to meet with me frequently to review my decision-making in terms of both the process and product of the research to ensure that participant voices were presented fairly, accurately, and with apt complexity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). She reviewed my reflexive process, including journal entries and memos, raw data, and

my decisions regarding how I represented and organized participant experiences and processes. I invited Dr. Murray's curiosity, critique, and discussion as an ongoing part of the research process.

**Generating rich, thick descriptions.** I worked toward the criterion area of transferability through generating rich, thick descriptions in the interview and analyses processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005). Abundant, interconnected details were necessary in order to provide descriptions that were rich and thick enough to provide a full picture of what was going on in the research context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I supported rich disclosures from participants during interviews by adhering to a constructivist interviewing approach (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012), remaining curious and non-judgmental, and framing flexible questions that followed participant's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. I recorded and transcribed my interviews verbatim. I also took notes about my observations of the process of the interviews that could not be captured through the interview transcripts. Visiting the raw data and interview transcripts soon after I completed them helped me add more description and situational elements (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used direct quotations in the representation of my research, which provided the opportunity for participants' exact words and experiences to be felt by the reader.

**Reflexivity.** The process of keeping a reflexive journal was in service of all four criterion areas of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. As Clarke (2005) stated, "...we cannot help but come to almost any research project already 'knowing' in some ways, already inflected, already affected, already 'infected'" (p. 12). I held this view of the researcher's role—I could not come into the research context as a blank slate with an invisible presence. Instead, I showed up as a human being, as a supervisor, as a person who has been supervised, and as a woman who is White, in my 30s, and conducting

research for a dissertation (among many other identities). Additionally, the subject of impression management was well known to me given my experience in a previous career where I provided business consulting that was informed by research on this topic. Because of my experiences, the way impression management behaviors showed up for me in my own clinical supervision has been in my awareness for the last seven years as I trained to become a counselor and received supervision. I have been curious about how impression management behavior could be showing up in supervisees, as well, as I transitioned to the role of supervisor. As both a supervisor and a supervisee, I have been interested in how power and hierarchy have the potential to play out in ways that replicate spoken and unspoken politics of domination. My awareness of the link between power and impression management has caused me to look out for ways positional and evaluative power impacts the supervision relationship. I have been aware of the ubiquitous nature of impression management behavior and motivations; my understanding of interpersonal dynamics and relationships in supervision has been informed by my curiosity about what kinds of images supervisees have been motivated to uphold. To account for these lenses through which I see the world, I engaged in activities to help with reflexivity including being transparent, using memos to capture my own reactions, and keeping a reflective journal. This journal provided an opportunity to capture the process of the research, leaving behind rich descriptions that helped establish dependability in the research process itself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

These five methods—member checking, prolonged engagement, inquiry auditing, generating rich, thick descriptions, and utilizing reflexivity—were the means by which I worked to establish trustworthiness in my research process. In combination with my philosophical assumptions rooted in grounded theory and situational analysis, these methods presented a

foundation for a rigorous study that explored the experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the methodologies of grounded theory and situational analysis positioned me to answer the question of how the experience and process of impression management unfolds for supervisees in clinical supervision. The philosophical assumptions inherent in qualitative research, taken with a constructivist and postmodern bent, provided a foundation for a study that considered multiplicities, complexities, instabilities, and contradictions (Clarke, 2005). Eight graduate students in counseling who received supervision, with diverse identities and experiences in regard to gender, race, and age made up the sample of participants in the study. The primary analytic processes I used to create a theory about impression management in supervision were analytical coding (Charmaz, 2006)—both initial and focused coding stages—as well as situational mapping (Clarke, Frieze, & Washburn, 2017). In order to account for the four criterion areas of establishing trustworthiness, I solicited member checking, practiced prolonged engagement, gathered and attend to participants' rich and thick subjective descriptions, and engaged in reflexivity throughout the process. In sum, a position of multiple truths was attended to in this research project, which culminated in building a grounded theory that represents the experience and process of impression management for eight supervisees in clinical supervision.

### CHAPTER III: First Round Analysis

The first round of interviewing and analysis focused primarily on uncovering the experience of impression management in supervision. Some of the themes that emerged in round one were then expanded upon or disappeared in subsequent interviews. Below is an overview of round-one process and analysis followed by open issues and questions that I followed up on in succeeding interviews.

I recruited eight participants to discuss their experiences in supervision. Participants came from five Master's in Counseling programs from multiple regions of the United States. I conducted interviews in a semi-structured format in which I asked a set of questions; follow-up questions were informed by participant disclosures. Five questions guided my exploration of the experience of impression management in supervision:

1. What are some of your thoughts and feelings related to how you want to appear in supervision?
2. What are some of the ways it is important for you to appear to your clinical supervisor(s)?
3. What are some of the impressions you try to avoid in supervision?
4. What is it like for you to work to uphold these images and/or avoid these images in supervision?
5. How has managing these impressions changed since the beginning of your clinical training? How has it stayed the same?

I transcribed all interviews and then used NVivo software to aid in analysis. I conducted analysis using initial line-by-line coding followed by focused coding. **Categories**, *sub-categories*, and *properties* developed pertaining to the experience of impression management in clinical supervision. **Figure 1** represents a conceptual map of the experiences described by participants during round one. The major categories that captured participant disclosures related to their experiences of impression management in supervision included the following: **attuning to supervisor expectations of competence, impression anxiety, overcoming assumptions,**

navigating heirarchy, attuning to safety, willingness to appear as a dreaded image, and protection and isolation.

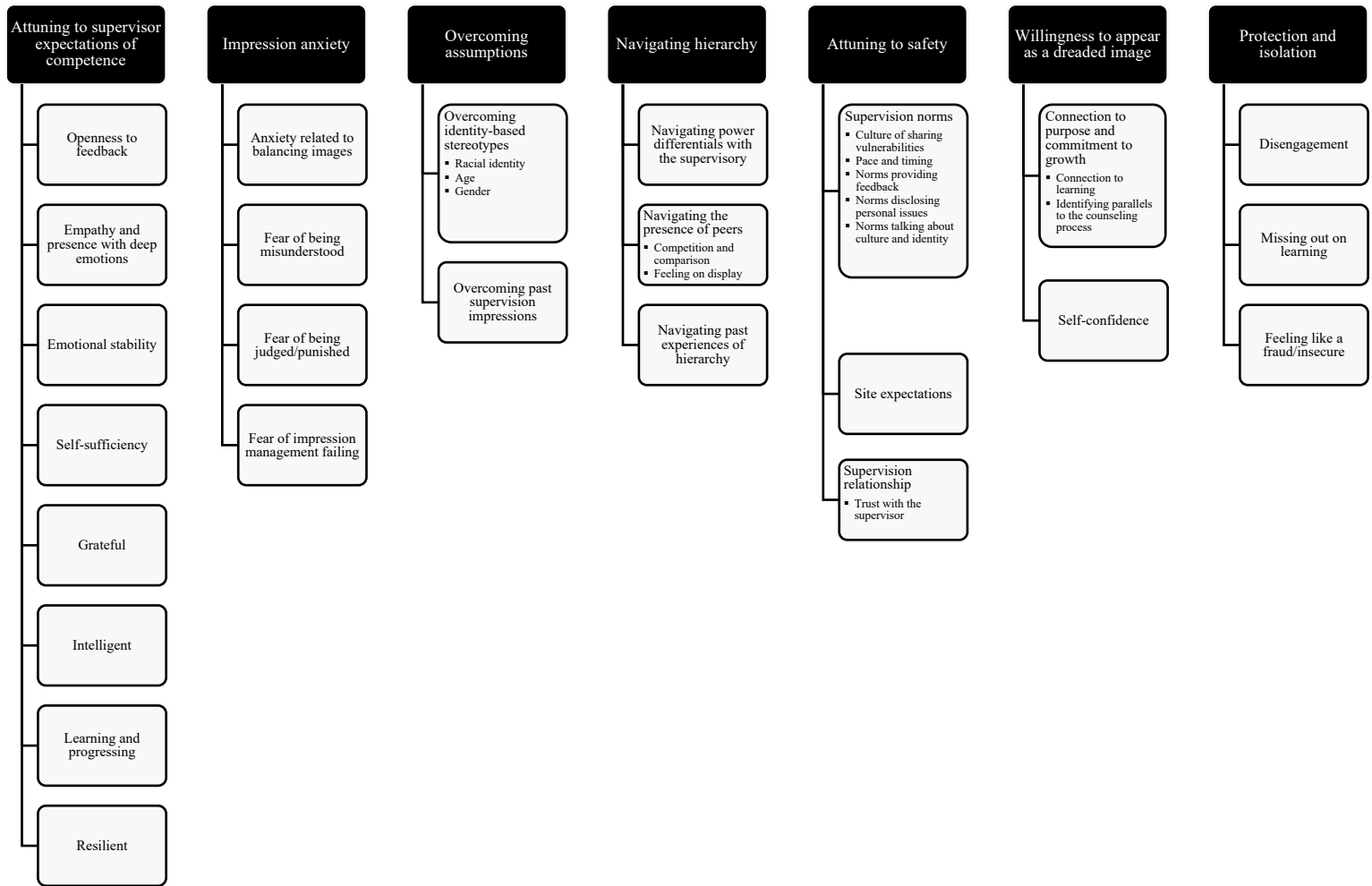


Figure 1: Conceptual map of participant experiences after round one analysis

### Description of Participants

I interviewed eight master’s students studying Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Participants were in their second year of a two-year, CACREP-accredited program, and were currently seeing clients on their internships. All participants were in the first semester of their

internships at the time of first-round interviews and had completed at least one practicum placement prior to internship. Participants came from programs in various locations of the United States including the Northeast, Midwest, and Western regions. I interviewed participants either in person, via Facetime, Skype, or over the phone. Participant names were removed from transcripts and each was assigned a number from one to eight. **Table 1** includes a description of participants.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Racial Identity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Internship placement</b>	<b>Region in United States</b>
1	29	Black	Female	Community agency serving families	Northeast
2	30	White	Female	College campus counseling center	Midwest
3	28	White	Female	1. Clinic associated with a university 2. College campus counseling center	Northwest
4	42	White	Male	1. Clinic in community 2. College campus counseling center	Northwest
5	32	White	Female	College campus counseling center	Northeast
6	24	White	Male	Healthcare agency	Northwest
7	43	White	Male	Clinic associated with a university	Northwest
8	24	Black	Female	College campus counseling center	Midwest

Participant One is a 29-year-old Black female whose internship site is a community agency serving families in the Northeast Region of the United States. Participant Two is a 30-year-old White female living in a Midwestern state. Her internship placement is at a college campus counseling center. Participant Three is a 28-year-old White female who has two internship sites in the Northwest—one at a college campus counseling center and one at a clinic associated with the university of her program of study. Participant Four is a 42-year-old White male living in a



Western state. His internship placements are at a college campus counseling center and a clinic in the community. Participant Five is a 32-year-old White woman living in the Northeast completing her internship at a college campus counseling center. Participant Six is a 24-year-old White male living in a Western state whose internship is at a healthcare agency. Participant Seven is a 43-year-old White male whose internship site is at a clinic associated with a university in a Western state. Finally, Participant Eight is a 24-year-old Black female who is completing her internship at a college campus counseling center in the Midwest region of the United States.

### **Emerging Participant Experiences**

Seven **categories** of experiences developed from the first-round analysis: **attuning to expectations of competence, impression anxiety, overcoming assumptions, navigating hierarchy, attuning to safety, willingness to appear as a dreaded image, and protection and isolation**. Participants also discussed some process-oriented experiences during first-round interviews; I will include initial process-related statements from participants at the end of this section that will warrant further exploration in round-two interviews.

### **Attuning to Expectations of Competence**

The category of **attuning to expectations of competence** is defined by the experience of attuning to a supervisor's cues about behavior that is expected and acceptable in the supervision context. Supervisees all discussed the importance of appearing competent in the eyes of their supervisors. In order to appear competent, supervisees sought to know what images make up a competent counselor. Supervisors' behavior, cues, and style were attuned to by supervisees. They picked up messages about what attributes make a "competent" supervisee. **Attunement to expectations of competence** is supported by the *sub-categories* of *openness to feedback, empathy and presence with deep emotions, emotional stability, self-sufficiency, grateful,*

*intelligent, learning and progressing*, and *resilient* that bolster the experience of demonstrating the images of competence and avoiding the images of incompetence. Each of these *sub-categories* defined behavior that constructed a conceptualization of competence. In round two, all of these definitions of competence were separated from the experience of **attuning to expectations of competence**, since that category later was expanded upon to include other areas where supervisees devised definitions of desirable behavior.

In round one, supervisees discussed awareness of their own behavior in the supervision context and the desire to be thought of as appropriate and competent in the eyes of the supervisor. Below are quotations from participants about the desire for demonstrating the image of competence / avoiding the image of incompetence in the eyes of a supervisor:

P5: I think that first and foremost I want to appear as competent. Responsible, professional, as someone that can be trusted, you know, in the profession and someone that they feel confident having as an intern.

P8: In supervision, I hope to appear competent and like I belong there and like I know what I'm talking about. Yeah, that's my hope. That every time I go into supervision that [I appear as if] I don't make mistakes... that I come off as someone who knows what they are doing, which most of the time I do not know what I'm doing. I try really hard to not alarm my supervisor with how little I feel like I know.

P3: I wanna seem competent.

P2: I do feel like I want to appear... like I have at least some idea of what I'm doing. Um. I feel like I have to like be very professional during our meeting.

P2: It's [the experience of supervision] a mixture of feeling comfortable with my supervisor and also trying to, like, amp myself up a little bit to be more professional.

P2: She's super smart and she has a lot of experience and I mean she's a really great therapist, so I guess I just want to impress her.

P6: Umm and then yeah also I guess the other thing is trying to come off as competent or yeah knowing that it seems like I'm doing a good job with my clients with what I'm reporting based on how I think they're [clients] doing in counseling and how they are progressing... how they're doing reflecting what I'm doing as a counselor.

P6: ...and going with competent also confident which might fit into that competence but like I think I'm doing a good job... I know what I'm doing... that kind of thing.

P1: I try to avoid looking like I don't know what's going on or I have no idea what I'm doing.

P2: Um... And I don't want her to see me as someone who doesn't know what they're doing....

In order to appear competent in the eyes of a supervisor, supervisees discussed the necessity of showing good counseling work via video recordings. Participants Three and Six talked about their experiences of the desire to bring in videos and conversations about clients that showcased effective counseling. This also included showing less work that was deemed incompetent, especially in the beginning of a supervisory relationship.

P6: I think it [desire to appear competent] initially caused me to bring in my more competent areas to supervision as a way of kind of saving face... uhh... essentially kind of bringing in what I thought was my best work so that we didn't have to talk about my worst work.

P3: I mean I also want to seem competent. It sucks to show a tape for someone that you feel like you just did terrible on because they don't see that many and I don't wanna like give the impression that I'm just terrible... Yeah, so that's a big one.

P3: I typically will show one [video] that is with a client that I have a hard time with, but I'm not doing terrible.

The experience of attuning to expectations of competence included noticing behavior and cues from the supervisor, such as an intimidating stare or a response to a vulnerable disclosure. The following quotes from P2 and P5 support the major theme of **attuning to expectations of competence**, describing the experience of picking up cues from supervisors about which images of self are expected and acceptable:

P2: So yeah, I do feel a lot of pressure during it [supervision]. Sometimes she stares at me like I need to know a really good answer to her questions and I don't normally talk that way...and I feel like I have to know the answer right away... like I have to know the answer even though sometimes it takes me a while to think about it.

P5: ...We all come from our own places and people have different levels of comfort with vulnerability or transparency or whatever... [describes her own personal comfort with being vulnerable] until... I get signals from someone else, like others on the staff or my supervisor then I'm like, 'oh shit I got to tidy this up' and then like 'oh no maybe that's not professional.'

Three participants expressed experiencing different expectations from multiple supervisors. They discussed **attuning to supervisor expectations of competence** in each supervisory situation. When asked about experiences of impression management, participants said that they felt differing desires about managing their impressions with different supervisors. For example, P5 and P8 expressed the following:

P5: I've had three different supervisors at this point so it [desire to portray certain images of the self] kind of shows up differently with each person.

P8: I have a few supervisors who... that [insecurities about whether I deserve to be here] doesn't come up as much with.

Participant Two spoke to picking up on the different supervisory expectations in different settings:

P2: I did my practicum this summer in my program and it was a totally different feeling going in knowing that I have supervisors who kind of just let me do whatever. This [supervisory experience]... I can tell I am learning a lot more through this kind of supervision because I feel like I have to really try to do my best rather than just do what I already know.

Definitions of the image of competence were attuned to by supervisees in each context and with each supervisor. Perceptions of behavior that supports the image of competence fell into the following *sub-categories*: *openness to feedback, empathy and presence with deep emotions, emotional stability, self-sufficiency, gratefulness, intelligence, and learning and progressing*. Attributes of competence made up a continuum; supervisees spoke to both the desire to appear one way and to avoid appearing the opposite.

**Openness to feedback.** The first *sub-category* of **attuning to expectations of competence** can be understood as being seen as open to feedback on one end of the spectrum and being seen as a “know-it-all” on the opposite. *Openness to feedback* included the desire to appear as if one is open to learning. Differing from actually *being* open to feedback, supervisees discussed the experience of impression management as including an attempt to appear open to feedback even when this was not congruent with their internal experiences. Participants discussed wanting to appear as if they are in supervision to learn from their supervisors and that they exhibit humility and receptiveness to feedback. The following quotes by P1, P2, P3, and P5 exemplify the side of the continuum that represents the desire and behavior associated with appearing open to feedback:

P3: Yeah, I think it sort of depends on a supervisor, but I would say that I do want... maybe the most important thing for me is to appear open to feedback.

P2: I also want to appear um... humble. Like I don't... like I'm open to know whatever she means. And... um... yeah, so, humble. Um... open to learning. Um... those are the main things, I think.

P1: I want him [supervisor] to see me as trying. Like, you know, I'm capable of doing the work. I'm learning, so I'm not just like 'oh I know it all. I don't need your help.' I'm willing to take in input.

P5: I really love my supervisor and she has so much to offer and so I just like also really want to convey that I really admire the work that she does, and I am a sponge for whatever she wants to throw out there.

Participants also spoke to the desire to avoid appearing as a know-it-all or closed to feedback.

P2 and P3 said the following:

P2: I don't want her to see me as a know-it-all.

P3: So, there's obviously the being closed off to feedback that I would like to avoid, which is just the opposite of what I want to be seen as.

P3: Um I'm really... aware of not...trying not to seem defensive. I am very conscious of the fact that I don't wanna seem like I'm not receiving feedback. That's like a big thing for me.

The following quotes from P5, P2, and P6 demonstrate the behavior that exemplifies how they tried to convey that they are *open to feedback* and learning:

P5: She will first touch base on tapes that she's watched and give me positive feedback and then to answer your question [of what you do or don't do to portray the image of open to feedback] I'll say, 'oh that's great, thanks, wondering what kind of moments stood out for you or where you would have made a different choice or wondering what questions you think could have really served the client that I didn't ask you know I'll ask questions like that...

P6: Umm.... I've tried to bring in myself... not to bring in the most competent parts of myself, to bring in the more vulnerable parts of myself, because that may in turn show competency.

P6: ...I think in that moment [when receiving feedback that I feel resistant to] my response is just saying 'yes, definitely....' just kind of that 'yeah, that's super helpful' but not really meaning it as much. So, it's kind of like saving face. Trying to save face even when you're not happy to receive feedback... still making it seem like you are... yeah, essentially, it's just trying to sell yourself... to sell it the best that you can so that they can see that you're really wanting the feedback even though you may not be... you might not agree with it or it might be kind of more constructive so it might sting a little bit initially because I think that's the big thing that I've noticed because sometimes initial feedback stings and then the more time you just sit with it and think about it you're like okay this actually was useful I shouldn't have been so incongruent or defensive about it.

P2: So we had group supervision yesterday... it was multicultural... like a multicultural lesson kind of thing and we were talking about different experiences that we've had working with people of different cultures and one of the girls was talking about this client she had from Saudi Arabia and was wondering how she can show that she wants to learn more about this woman's culture and so she was asking the group what are some ideas that we have. My supervisor was with us and so I gave her an idea of something that I learned in my counseling program that there's different ways of doing it either like making it this is the elephant in the room and 'we have some obvious differences and I'm White and you're from Saudi Arabia so if there's any time where you may not feel understood by me I hope we can talk about that' and then I said maybe another time some other people might just wait until an incident happens where there is an obvious culture clash and try to address it then and my supervisor kind of stepped in and kind of took my statement and went further with it and was just like 'yeah but you have to also take into consideration all of the other identities we have... it's not just race... it's gender... it's all the different intersections that we've got.' And I felt kind of like 'I know she was right' but I also felt embarrassed, I guess. Even though I wanted to be defensive and, well... I

learned that in my counseling program... I mean I know she was right but instead she asked us what we took away from the situation and I told her it made me think more about all the different identities rather than just race.

A: So even though you had thought about that before.

P2: Hah right....

**Empathy and ability to sit with deep emotions.** The second *sub-category* of **attuning to expectations of competence** is defined by demonstrating *empathy and the ability to sit with deep emotions*. Participants wanted to be seen as capable of handling intense emotions and able to show that they are emotionally moved by their clients. On the other side of the spectrum from showing empathy was the desire to avoid appearing too distanced or emotionally disconnected. Participants Three and Four discussed desires to appear empathetic and avoid appearing disconnected in the eyes of their supervisors:

P3: I guess something that comes up for me is that like.... crying in supervision is a really interesting thing. And.... I've done it with all of my supervisors. Ummm... I kind of like it in a way. Like, I don't like crying, but I like it. I feel like the impression that it gives a supervisor would be that I'm being moved by something, which I feel like makes me feel like I'm being a better counselor. Like if I never cried I feel like... I never admitted things were difficult for me. That's an impression that I want to give too, like things aren't just easy peasy. And like.... I don't know... I guess, yeah I don't want... like some students don't really get emotional in supervision and I find that weird, so I wouldn't want to do that. I wouldn't want to be closed off to that.

A: It's almost like crying is actually a mark of competence because it means that you feel something.

P3: Yeah.

P4: Wanting to come across, you know, as a person who was effective in a situation... empathetic... who can be helpful to somebody... you know I want that to be seen... It's a really a vulnerable position to be in to show tape of your work... you're in situations... I'm in situations that are often emotionally really challenging... they can be really delicate for people. I want to be able to show that I can manage those things... that I'm not overwhelmed by it or that I didn't completely miss something.

P4: And I think part of that is impression management... it's like I want to give the impression that I'm empathetic, but I don't feel that in my body yet...

P4: I want to appear empathetic, like I'm tracking what the client is saying and doing... yeah those are the most general things... I don't want to come across as overbearing with

the client or taking out an expert role or missing it like not feeling it or being emotionally disconnected from someone.

**Emotional stability.** The next *sub-category* of **attuning to expectations of competence** is defined by the desire to portray *emotional stability* and avoid appearing “messy.” Participants discussed the awareness of wanting to make sure their supervisors saw them as *emotionally stable* enough to do the work of a counselor. This experience was discussed by Participants Five and Eight:

P5: Umm...I guess I don't want her to see me as a mess... umm... I did have an experience in group supervision like 3 or 4 weeks ago when everything was kind of insane in my life...I don't know... I was feeling just like I wasn't putting all that I could into my schoolwork... I was super stretched thin or whatever and in group supervision with two of the other interns.... I just lost it, like broke down crying... like snot the whole thing... and it was [supervisor's name] who was with us that day and I just remember feeling like 'oh my God is she going to see me as unstable?' And like just two months before my friend had committed suicide and I was crying in front of her then, which was obviously understandable that I would have that reaction or whatever... and I just feel like...these people must think my life is so insane.

P8: I don't want to come off as super emotional, too.

P8: I know that there's some level of empathy with clients... like it helps you connect with them, but I always worry that they [supervisors] might think 'oh there's some transference here, or there's this or there's that' I always think of the worst-case scenario. 'Oh, she's very emotional, she must be emotionally unstable... maybe she cannot counsel people.'

Participants also discussed the behavior they engage in to attempt to uphold the image of emotional stability:

P8: I think what I do in supervision is if I'm having a bad day, I don't really talk about it. I just pretend like every day is a good day.

P8: I'm a pretty emotional person and in supervision I try to damp that down a little bit.

P1: I also try to avoid like my own personal issues... like the relationships in my personal life.



**Self-sufficiency.** Participants discussed the desire to appear self-sufficient in their work and avoid being seen as needy. Neediness was discussed as a dreaded image of incompetence. Participants talked about trying to get their needs (i.e. questions about clients) met via other avenues besides their supervision environment. Following are quotes from P3, P1, and P8:

P3: I really don't wanna be seen as needy. Like every single session I have a question or I just... I guess... it kind of goes with wanting to seem competent, but I want to seem like I can handle it.

P3: I had a client, a student, yesterday who I was gonna see. I was really, really nervous about it because she has a lot of trauma and I haven't worked that much with trauma and we're not really connecting super great. Um, I'm finding her to be just be a hard person to connect with. And... I was like looking up a bunch of stuff.... and trying to read stuff and then, and just thinking like, I just kinda wanna talk to my supervisor then I decided that I was gonna go talk to her..umm... but I kind of felt bad about that afterwards. I was like... I didn't need to do that. I don't know, it's confusing... it just feels like what is important for me to get supervision on and what is something that I handle myself?

The following quotes demonstrate participant behavior that is motivated by proving the image of self-sufficiency and avoiding the image of neediness:

P8: ... if I really need help, I'll ask. But I usually look for outside sources to help me first.

P8: I also, I'm lucky, if I have a question or if I need some help there's a group of peers, peer supervision that I lean on a lot, too. Like I'll go ask the other people, the other social workers or other counseling intern if they've ever done something like this before or if they can help me out.

P8: Like I ask for help, of course, I ask for a lot of help, but I think I don't ask for as much help as I'd like....I like to ask a lot of questions, I'm very curious, but I feel like I need to kind of damp that down a little bit.

P3: ...I guess that I try to not ask all the questions that I think of but I wanna ask, so if I have questions about a client, I would just try to figure out some other way to answer it, like ask peers or like look something up or something. Before I went to my supervisor about it.

P3: But yeah if I think about... Have I ever done something because I don't want to seem needy? I mean... like there... so there are times... like last week we only had one hour of supervision, and usually we have two, and we haven't actually had two in a really long time.. but I... I don't know if it was really about not wanting to seem needy, but um I

scheduled a client during one of our supervision hours because I didn't have anywhere else to put her. And I was kind of sad about it, like I was like... man we're not going to have that supervision hour and it would have been really nice to find that time some other time, like to have an extra hour of supervision some time, but I didn't want to ask. I didn't like... I didn't ask her. That was maybe not wanting to seem needy.

**Grateful.** Five participants discussed wanting to be seen as *grateful* and avoid appearing ungrateful to their supervisors. This included the desire to portray that they were happy for the opportunity to work at their sites, grateful to be supervised, and to not come across as if they had complaints.

P6: I guess the other thing that just goes back into my own personal self is just being grateful... so coming off as ungrateful for the opportunity I'm getting.... I am getting a good opportunity so what motivates me is to not come off as ungrateful to her.

P6: I guess the short answer is that I try not to come in as pessimistic or complaining.

P3: Yeah, like I don't wanna seem ungrateful....

P7: Uuuuum, I would want to avoid being [seen as] ungrateful.

P8: ...and I'd heard about it [the intensity of this internship placement] before I got there.... Like.... but going there is different. It's like [I think I should act like] 'oh I'm so happy to be here it's one of the best internship sites.' So don't complain...

Participant One discussed behavior that she engages in to portray the image of being grateful—this included not speaking up and asking for her needs to get met in supervision:

P1: I wish I was able to speak up in supervision and say... like you know... what my needs are. Like I've been asked what my needs are... and I try to appear like, you know, I don't need anything... this is good enough... but being able to say 'no this is not working for me and this is what I need from you'.... like I know supervision is about me, but I just struggle with that. Like you're taking an hour out of your day to sit with me... I should be like thanking you.

P1: He's always checking in saying let me know if something's working or not working for you and I'll be like 'at this time everything is working for me' [even when it is not working]

**Intelligence.** Another *sub-category* of **attuning to expectations of competence** is the desire for appearing smart and knowledgeable. Participant Eight discussed the following:

P8: I want to be seen as intelligent.

Examples from P1 and P2 show how they changed their behavior, specifically language, in order to be seen as smart and knowledgeable:

P2: I feel like I have to spice up my language with academic terms.

P1: I want to avoid using regular words when I'm talking about clients. Like using words like 'countertransference' instead of just saying 'I'm having a reaction to a client.' Like the language thing.

**Learning and progressing.** Two participants discussed the desire to appear as if they are progressing towards their goals as counselors. They desired to be seen as actively learning.

*Learning and progressing* makes up the *sub-category* of **attuning to expectations of competence**. Participants Three and Four discussed this experience:

P4: I mean, I have some really specific things that I'm working on as a counselor and I want to....get it [those thing I'm working on] right. Some weeks and some sessions I get it...in the very next hour I may get it wrong and so... um... yeah I want to be able to demonstrate to my supervisor that I am progressing as a counselor.

P3: [I don't want to appear] like I'm just a broken record coming in and saying the same thing. And I also worry about being too vague and like not conveying what I learned.

**Resiliency.** The final *sub-category*, *resiliency*, is defined as the desire to be seen as someone who is not fragile and demonstrates bravery. Participant One spoke to this desire:

P1: So... I often feel like I have to put on a strong... like a brave face... you know like resiliency.

In sum, the **category** of **attuning to expectations of competence** includes the *sub-categories of openness to feedback, empathy and presence with deep emotions, emotional stability, self-sufficiency, gratefulness, intelligence, learning and progressing*, and *resiliency*.

### **Impression Anxiety**

Many supervisees discussed the awareness and experience of anxiety related to the impressions their supervisors have of them in supervision. **Impression anxiety** forms the second

**category**, which is supported by the *sub-categories* of *anxiety related to balancing images, fear of being misunderstood, fear of being judged/punished*, and *fear of impression management failing*. Supervisees discussed experiencing anxiety related to the images they portrayed to supervisors. The following quotes demonstrate the general experience of anxiety related to impression management:

P1: So I struggle with that [the experience of supervision] because I sometimes feel like supervision can turn into counseling... like personal counseling, so... it's like I love it and at the same time I also worry am I saying too much, am I saying too little, am I focusing on the clients enough and not about me? I get very confused about it. I get anxious about it. Like, I love it... but I get anxious about actually being in supervision.

P1: I guess I'm just worried about saying the wrong thing...the right thing...I'm allowed to make mistakes, and at the same time I don't want to make the same mistakes over and over again.

P2: ...It's like every time I go into [internship site] I feel... I never feel comfortable I always feel really like anxious... in my stomach...umm... yeah.

P2: Sometimes I have to do deep breathing before I go in there [supervision] I have to really psych myself up.

P2: It [being with my supervisor] makes me feel a little bit more stiff. Like not fully comfortable.

P2: [Appearing competent is] always in my head when we're talking

P8: I think I'm usually pretty anxious when I'm there. umm.. yeah, anxiety, definitely a lot of anxiety.

P4: I think I personally go back and forth a little bit like on the one hand wanting to show tape where I can say I need a hand with this particular person or the situation or did I handle this right? But also, you know, wanting to look good. Not look stupid. So yeah I mean I think that's probably a pretty common conversation among those of us in the program as we think about supervision... it's like... do I show my really bad tapes and get help or do I show some in which I actually look like I am doing it and you know maybe get less help but also come across better? I think that's something we all think about... I certainly think about.

P4: I have supervision this afternoon and it's sort of like okay in my mind going over this exact question [of what to disclose in supervision]. Like I had a session last night where we really got into the hardest stuff... but I know there's this one part where I kind of

shifted into this didactic expert mode and I'm like 'Goddamnit this isn't what I want to do... I have wanted to work on and avoid and here it is... I do it again.' So, what do I do...? Do I show that tape? Or... like once again I know I kind of miss this thing.... or do I show something where I kind of landed a little bit better? And that's for my personal supervision. so, I think this is a really salient question that I have all the time.

**Anxiety related to balancing images.** Supervisees discussed feeling *anxiety related to balancing images* in supervision. This makes up the first *sub-category* in the **category** of supervisee **impression anxiety**. Supervisees experienced desires to appear as certain images to their supervisors, but sometimes these images were in conflict with each other. For example, they wanted to appear competent, but appearing too competent would jeopardize the image of appearing open to learning. They described an experience of being caught between conflicting images and awareness of striking a balance between and among the images they were wanting to portray. The following quotes exemplify this tension:

P1: ...I am informed about some stuff... like for example I love neuroscience... I love trauma... so I've done my homework and research on that you know just as far as reading the literature and so it's kind of like sometimes when I'm in supervision and they're talking about stuff it's like oh I already know what you're going to say... I already know about this and at the same time I'm thinking to myself 'you need to be quiet because even though you know this you need to listen because you don't know it all...' so it's like I'm straddled between when do I need to give insight and when do I need to be quiet.

P5: ...But yeah, I think the main thing that comes up for me is not wanting to seem like a mess but also not wanting to seem too competent...

P5:...I get a lot of feedback... you know... I'm in group therapy now for school. I get a lot of feedback that I come off as you know like very put together, very confident, whatever, those aren't bad things, but I also want to be [seen as] real and... authentic or vulnerable...? Right, so I guess yeah, it's about striking a balance.

P5: ...Yeah, right, not too put together but not too messy.

P5: ...Yeah, I guess when I find myself... what comes up in a moment where I feel like I've gone too much one way or the other [appeared either too messy or too competent] you know heart pounding, my jaw clenches which then gives me a headache... I'll ruminate on it a lot like tense to my stomach... shallow breathing...

P5: But that [a different supervisor who told P5 that he thought she was exceptionally competent] was kind of a weird thing to hear and made me kind of question how I'm coming off or whatever and so I feel like now in supervision with [supervisor's name] who is my actual supervisor... not almost trying to come off as less competent but like very eager to learn from her...

P3: It was hard to hear that feedback [that P3 was not attending to feelings well] if I don't agree with it or had some question about it or I want it to be clarified. So... I was trying to kind of balance the two of those [appearing open to feedback while also wanting to be authentic about feeling defensive] and be like... and take in feedback... but also question it.

A: Uh huh. So on the one hand, you really wanna appear like you're open to feedback, and on the other hand, you wanna be authentic with the experience of receiving feedback, and so you're kind of caught between these two parts of appearing open but not being disingenuous...

P3: Yeah.

P4: Oh, you know so I think it's a little bit of... I sort of alternate back and forth. I'll show a tape where it's not great and the next week I will maybe semi-consciously choose one where I know I did little bit better. It isn't like.... I definitely... like... let some of that work be shown like the really good work and also the not-so-good work... but I think I find I sort of just parse it out a little bit... balance it out....

**Fear of being misunderstood.** Supervisees discussed awareness of being afraid of being misunderstood in the supervision context, which at times caused them to consciously attempt to manage their behavior to portray a certain desired image of the self. This makes up the next *sub-category, fear of being misunderstood*. The following quotes from P3 and P6 demonstrate this experience:

P3: ...And I just felt like it would have been really... like it [giving supervisor feedback] could have been shut down... I could have been told again that I was being resistant and that just really felt crappy. So I didn't want to feel like I was giving her more ammo... to prove the thing... the impression [of resistance] that she already had.

P3: Yeah, but I do get worried that people will have a judgment about me based on like a couple of different tapes. I had an experience in my practicum supervision and I felt like the supervisor got an impression of me based on stuff that I showed her that I didn't feel like was fair.... was accurate.

P6: I think one [fear] is that I don't want to... I didn't want to reflect back on to my supervisor that she was in any way part of that issue [the issue that he was feeling unhappy with the internship site]... ummm...[he instead tried to portray the image of

gratitude, even when he wasn't feeling grateful because] I'm not wanting her to take the message the wrong way.

A: Sure, because if you came off as ungrateful what would that mean?

P6: Uhhh... That's a great question. I think it would mean that I am [seen as] not essentially doing my job as a counselor.

**Fear of Judgment and/or punishment.** The next *sub-category* under the **category** of supervisee **impression anxiety** is the experience of *fear of judgment and/or punishment* from supervisors. This experience of fear and anxiety may be founded or unfounded in assumptions about what would happen if one appeared incompetent. Participants One, Two, Three, and Six discussed the following experiences related to this *sub-category*:

P1: I understand that being vulnerable is not a sign of weakness, you know, it's good to be vulnerable, but for me I have a hard time like I guess I would say somatically... getting used to it. I can conceptualize in my mind all day.... Okay, like I know they're not judging me but intuitively I still feel it in my body like they are judging me.

P3: And I would say the more times that I withhold [disclosures] are when I'm embarrassed about something...

P6: ...We follow a code of ethics and we are supposed to always work in service of the client so coming off as ungrateful might make it seem from her to me that I am not taking my job seriously or not doing my clients a service and that would mean that they would want to either not... either take me off as an intern or see if I needed some interventions of my own to get me more on board with what they're doing.

P6: They could think I'm not up for the job as a counselor.

P2: [If I appeared incompetent]... maybe she would just like look down on me I think that's really the gist of it. Yeah, she would just look down on me and think that I'm not ready to be a counselor. That kind of a thing. Yeah.

**Fear of impression management failing.** The final *sub-category* under **impression anxiety** is defined by *fear of impression management failing*. This includes anxiety related to exposing actual incompetence or awareness that impression management behavior may not be working; anxiety about the awareness that one is seen as incompetent in the supervisor's eyes.

P8: I mean, I try really hard to appear competent, but I don't think it always works.

P2: I felt like since she was watching me and taking notes while I was doing the intake... it made me come off as not confident and way more nervous. So yeah... and I wanted to be really confident but that was... it made it difficult in that time.

On the other hand, one participant talked about anxiety and impression management behavior lessening when she felt like she had a better idea of what she was doing and was competent in certain areas:

P3: I guess it's [the anxiety about making sure I appear competent] a little less now because I feel like I'm doing it [the work of a counselor] better... like, it was that insecurity [that I was incompetent]...

### **Overcoming Assumptions**

The third **category** of the experience of impression management in supervision after round-one analysis is **overcoming assumptions**. Supervision is not exempt from social patterns of stereotyping and social-political context. Supervisees show up for supervision facing stereotypes. They are aware of how they may have been judged in the past and/or impressions that others may have of them based on what others notice about who they are. Participants discussed being driven to avoid misunderstandings about the self and overcome assumptions. This is intertwined with the experience of impression management, since some supervisees felt desire to overcome assumptions by intentionally protecting or portraying certain images of the self. The category of **overcoming assumptions** was supported by *sub-categories* of *overcoming identity-based stereotypes* and *overcoming past supervision impressions*.

Participant Eight discussed the awareness of how other people might perceive and judge her competence based on assumptions unrelated to her behavior. She identified as a woman with intersecting identities of being Black and Muslim, which influenced her experience of navigating assumptions.

P8: ...Realizing that you come into the room and people have already made a thousand assumptions about you and you really don't know where they fall. You don't know what



someone thinks of you when you meet them. That could be with anything. You've done nothing to be viewed as competent or incompetent, but they've already made an assumption about what kind of counselor you're going to be.

**Overcoming social identity-based stereotypes.** The first sub-category of **overcoming assumptions** is defined by *overcoming social identity-based stereotypes*. This includes a supervisee's awareness of how their intersecting social identities may create or maintain certain images in the eyes of others. Impression management behavior is impacted by social identities; all supervisees come to supervision with unique intersecting identities, past experiences, and consciousness about what others may already be thinking about them. Participant Eight discussed the way her social identities are present in her mind in supervision:

P8: Yeah, I think that's [racial and cultural stereotypes] always in the back of my mind, like.... Like I am not being treated.... explicitly, but... always worried about not being perceived as smart, especially to the other interns. The other one in my program is a White male. So, the privilege is different and what people assume I'm capable of is different.... when I walk in the room.

Awareness of social identity was not only present for participants with marginalized social identities. P7, an individual who identifies with more privilege, discussed his awareness of social identities related to not wanting to appear disrespectful to his supervisor due to differences in social power:

P7: Because I am older than my supervisor and also because I'm a male, I definitely want to avoid, um, embodying more of that conventional social power differential. So, I do, you know, I mean I want to avoid being disrespectful. Um, whatever goes with that...

*Properties of overcoming social identity-based stereotypes* that supervisees spoke to were *racial identity*, *age*, and *gender identity*.

**Racial identity.** Two participants, both women of color, discussed the awareness of their race in the supervision situation. The property of *racial identity* in relation to the experience of impression management can be understood as the experience of awareness of stereotyping and

being perceived and/or treated in a particular way influenced by perceived race. This was described as part of the impression management experience, since these two participants were aware of how others may perceive their race and the stereotypes they desired to overcome in order to prove competence.

A: And are there times that identifying as a black woman.... you feel like you need to appear certain ways because of that in the supervision situation?

P1: Yes, I would say that like 100%... I think that's where my [desire to show] competence comes into play.

P8: Like, usually it's not explicitly stated, I don't think to myself 'oh, this is because you are Black or this is because you're a Muslim woman or this or that' but it does come up in my head sometimes and I think it's why I'm always driven to like... I want to be the best intern. I know there's no such thing as 'the best' or one intern that's better, but in my head there's always that drive, and I think part of that drive is the idea that people don't think I'm capable of it probably.

*Age.* Age was another property of *overcoming social identity-based stereotypes* that supervisees were aware of regarding their impression management in supervision. P8, who identified as "young," discussed how she had to overcome assumptions that she might not be competent based on her age:

P8: I am pretty young. I'm 23. So, I think I've heard some things where people have complained about people who went straight through undergrad to their master's program, that they don't have enough experience to counsel, I've heard that a few times.

*Gender.* Gender was the final *property* participants discussed in relation to awareness about *overcoming social-identity related assumptions*. This can be understood as overcoming assumptions based on the gender socialization. Participant Seven discussed how his masculine socialization influenced his behavior to unconsciously manage his image. He discussed not necessarily showing up incongruently with his emotional experience and outward expressions intentionally, but the difficulty in showing up congruently due to years of gender socialization:

P7: I don't have a problem being emotional. I think I.... I handle that similarly to... so.... to how we handle it socially. Um, I'm not going to avoid being emotional, but when I get

really emotional it can be challenging to like really express... express that congruently, but, but that's not so much some cognitive avoidance as I feel like years, years of that being the behavioral norm.

**Overcoming past supervision impressions.** The second *sub-category* under **overcoming assumptions** is defined as *overcoming past supervision impressions*. One supervisee discussed a prior supervision experience in which she felt she was judged as a particular image. She talked about this experience influencing subsequent supervision situations—creating the desire to overcome a perception from the past.

P3: I was sort of given the feedback that I seem resistant and so that is something that I'm trying really hard... to like not seem resistant and to seem like... I don't know... like I can handle what they're telling me and that I can like take it in and not...like wanna be combative about it...

P3: I kind of felt like she had an impression of me and then she sort of just clung to that impression and I couldn't change it, and so the feedback was the same every time. And so, I am really... like...So I think that I was defensive in that sense, cause I felt like I was being unfairly judged. Um...which, if I get feedback that I think is fair, I don't think that I would be defensive. But anyway, yeah, that was kind like difficult supervision experience cause I feel like it's clouded a little bit of the other ones. It was my first supervision experience.

P3: Yeah. and I feel like I still have remnants of that like experience that pop up sometimes. Like I feel really defensive when people tell me that I'm not attending to feelings... I'm being too cognitive, because that's what she would always say.

P3: I felt like after practicum I was pigeonholed into this person who was like resistant and too cognitive and not attending to feelings and difficult and that that's who I was.... yeah... that was really hard.

### **Navigating Hierarchy**

The fourth **category** of the experience of impression management pertains to **navigating hierarchy**. The hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship was relevant for supervisees and created dynamics that impacted desires to portray certain images of the self. Hierarchy was present in the realm of the supervisory relationship, the presence of peers, as well as navigating power differentials that are experienced internally (created by prior life experiences).

In the following quote, Participant Four discusses his awareness of the hierarchy and the discomfort associated with navigating these dynamics:

P4: ...Going to see a client ... showing tape, knowing I messed this up or I didn't do well on that or whatever it is and then going home and like having to be dad again and really being competent in a different kind of way... I mean shifting in and out of these roles... it can be hard you know... it can be hard. I suit up and go to school at the same time as my children.... it can be kind of funny that way... I think I'm repeating myself a little bit but like sitting down and exposing myself with all of this to someone who is perhaps younger than me... I hesitate to say that but it is true... there's an aspect of it that's true but also then going home and having my kids look up to me and have to know what I'm doing... I think this happens all the time you know everybody experiences that... that you move in and out of role of experiences in your life but there are times where it is stark going between being the dad that's like putting together the sledding adventure with everybody to then sitting down and showing a tape and then I'm like oh my god I didn't even see that or I've been trying to work on that for a really long time there is some whiplash involved in all of that...

**Navigating power differential with the supervisor.** Supervisors hold evaluative power over supervisees. This is a dynamic that supervisees are aware of that influences their experience of impression management in supervision. Supervisees discussed differing levels of awareness and discomfort around *navigating the power differential with the supervisor*, including fear about punishment. The following quotations demonstrate how one supervisee was acutely aware of the power a supervisor held over her:

P3: ...It is also a weird power dynamic. Like I have never felt like I could go talk to her and tell her how I feel.

P3: So, like this supervisor was a professor and I already felt like she didn't like me, period. Like, and I felt like I could have gotten some retribution in terms of other classes.

P3: I felt like I just had to suck it up... because what she was telling me was that I was resistant, if I had gone and talked to her and said I was feeling this way, that would be labeled as more defensiveness and then she would have been like 'you're not accepting feedback, you're bla bla bla, you're resisting.' That's totally how I felt. If I had been able to have a conversation with her, that it would not have helped. And then I was like 'I can't go talk to anyone else, any of the other professors because that's just going to seem immature.' So I just had to go stick it out. Like I think that is a big thing.... Of... supervisees staying with supervisors who are not a good fit because the power dynamic is weird and they don't know how to give the supervisor feedback, or, if the supervisor

doesn't elicit it, which they often don't, or like go talk to someone else because that just feels like you're being petty, like a tattletale or something. And then they would be like 'did you go talk to your supervisor about this?'... I dunno... and there's another girl in my program who has this supervisor right now and she cries after every session and hasn't felt like she can talk to her.

A: So... that power dynamic is in the back of your mind... you're aware of it.

P3: Yeah, and you just have to suck it up. That's what I did. I was like, well, this is who I have so I just have to deal with it. And it made me really bitter, like all semester, because everyone else was like 'oh supervision!' and I'm like 'I feel like I'm being actively harmed in my supervision.'

Participant Four discussed how he felt less pressure later in the program when less was at stake in the power dynamic for him:

P4: It [awareness of the power his supervisor has in supervision] comes and goes. You know when... when I think... it was more prominent last year... because my supervisor was also my professor and there were grades involved and it was very directly tied... the tape was very directly tied to the grade and I only had so many tapes to show. So I think that was a little bit more prominent for me there... now it's less so and I think there may be an aspect of it that's kind of like what I'm talking about... the distance between the tape and the grade or the supervisor and the grade is a little broader and also I think I've just kind of mellowed out a little bit.

P4: I do think that some of that was just sort of settling into my goal a little bit more but I think it was harder last year because I was coming from a profession where I was respected and successful and given a ton of independence and all of a sudden I had really very little and my fate kind of hung in the balance of...you know my fate was dictated by the supervisory relationship and that's eased at this point... I've got the internships that I've wanted to get... I've landed a job... just, the steaks are low. Or it seems like things have fallen into place a little bit here. Certainly, a year ago it wasn't just grades... it was also internship placement... when all of that was really prominent it was definitely... I was a lot more aware of it [the desire to give a good impression]. It's [supervision] just so much more collaborative now to I sit down with my supervisor and it's more like 'okay help me workshop this... here's where I'm struggling.' I've watched so much tape of myself at this point. I've watched dozens and dozens of hours of tape of myself with somebody else so the rawness of that has worn off of it.

P4: I think too that there's a piece that has to do with like I'm 98% locked into a job when I'm done, you know... I know what I'm going to do... I know where I'm going to work and the place that I have the job locked in there's not even the opportunity to watch tape... it's more of a direct... like we work together in groups it's just a different situation... So I think there is a different... if I didn't have that in place then what I would be doing... then I know I would be thinking a lot more about 'okay I might be trying to get a job at the place where I'm on campus where I work' and I think if that was the

situation I would probably be more image-conscious than I am now because I would want to look good because I would probably be thinking about it almost as like a year-long job interview... but I don't have that pressure, so I think that because of that I'm a bit more open to just saying these are my two things I'm really working on... help me out, here's a place where... Just being a little bit more like here's where I did well what do you think... well what do you think? Because I have a little bit of the pressure taken off. I do feel like I'm more... I feel like I'm in training a little bit more... not so much auditioning.

P4: Less is at stake, absolutely. And in those situations where there is a lot at stake for me I have sort of already proved myself. And it's a different set of criteria [what is at stake for me now versus when I relied on my supervisor's evaluation for a job I wanted] it's a different judgment.

**Navigating the presence of peers.** When asked about their experiences of impression management, many participants discussed the impact of the presence of peers on their experiences. *Navigating the Presence of peers* is the next *sub-category* of **navigating hierarchy** that can be defined as the awareness of and impression management behavior related to the presence of peers in a supervision setting. Supervisees were more aware of the images they wanted to portray in the presence of their hierarchical equals—in this context that is defined by other students receiving supervision from the same supervisor.

P3: Especially in internship class when we show [video] in front of the whole group... that's like super anxiety provoking because I want the impression that people have of me to be positive as a counselor and not like, 'Oh she did that weird session.' It's like, Oh yeah, I showed the stuff that I struggle with, but also, I don't wanna only show the stuff that I struggle with because that is just gonna make it seem like I'm doing a terrible job.

**Competition and comparison.** The first *property* of *navigating the presence of peers* is *competition and comparison*. This is defined as comparing oneself to others in a triadic or group supervision environment, inducing increased drive to manage a favorable image of the self. The following quotes demonstrate this experience:

P3: And to top it off the girl that I was with [in triadic supervision] was just totally the favorite. And, like, the supervisor would just... I think there was one time when I was vulnerable and crying or something. Like I was really upset. And we were both saying the same thing like, we were both overwhelmed and upset. And the supervisor turned to the girl that I was with and was like 'you have such a big heart and you're so

compassionate and this stuff just gets to you' and I was like 'yeah, me too!' Like, I feel like [she thought that] I was not empathetic and I was 'cognitive' like she was telling me that all the time, that I was cognitive. And the girl that I was with was like this perfect, yoga... like oozing goodness... and I just felt like the bad stinky child. Ugh. Terrible.

P7: I notice from time to time that [awareness of the impression I'm giving off] will kick up with my peers where I'll feel a little bit of a competitive drive, but you know, it... it is that slightly different dynamic. And that's so interesting because of course like logically and rationally I could care less nor do I think there is any sort of objective measurement of like counselor efficacy at this point. But the emotions sometimes go there and I don't know what that is. If it's just uncertainty or self-doubt or what.

P7: It's more of the general thing. Walk into class and you're like, 'oh, I just really want to do a good job today.' I, you know, so-and-so always had something really insightful. I think I can do better, or I want to do better or whatever.

P8: Especially because I feel like in this internship, there's only two people from my program and the other one... he's a man and I feel like we get compared a lot and I am a lot more emotionally expressive and the other person is not. So, I think a lot of times I am being compared to him, and I worry about that. Because I am a lot more emotional and expressive than this other person.

P8: We are often times in group supervision together, so there's a stark contrast. A few people have commented to me 'you guys are very, very different.' So, I worry like 'is one better than the other?' and I usually think it is because he looks a lot more calm and his face is stoic whereas I am none of those things.

P3: So...I wanna say that this [feelings of comparison with peers] happens mostly in internship class, I really don't like getting feedback from peers. Like. Ugh. I just don't like it.

P3: Um, I feel... I end up feeling very... I compare myself to others. And I end up feeling like, 'Oh my god they knew, they knew this thing about my client that I didn't know...' Like it just makes me feel really insecure. Exposed or something? Yeah... and I also get kind of mad. Like I'm mad... like 'you don't know! You're just a student! Like I don't care what you think'... and yeah, so like in internship class when all the students are sharing and stuff, I'll sometimes be like... whatever.... but then my supervisor will share and I'm like, 'yes, tell me. Tell me what to do.' and I feel like I respect what she's saying a little bit more.

*Feeling on display.* The next *property of navigating the presence of peers* is related to *feeling on display*. Participant Four in particular discussed the awareness of the presence of peers increasing a sense of needing to show competence because he felt on display. He

discussed how fewer opportunities to show video of work (because of sharing time with peers in supervision) increased the desire to show competency:

P4:...I find myself going back and forth between wanting help and yeah probably like wanting to... there's an aspect of being on display... an aspect of asking for help and there are certain situations where it is more comfortable asking for help because I might see my supervisor every week and she knows the breadth of the work but these folks were only going to see one [video] a semester... the aspect of being on display is much more prominent.

P4: And I have two different types of group supervision at the moment with one within my program and once a week with a cohort of four that's up at [internship site] and I... when I show those tapes... just because they're so rare where I'm... I'm only showing maybe one tape a semester with my school group and with [internship site] I might show only 3... at this point I am more inclined with those situations to sort of pick something where I did a decent job because this is the only time where this group of people is going to see. Personally, it's like I just don't know how much help I'm going to get if it's not a regular thing. I don't know if showcase is the right word but in a way it is. This is something I think I did a decent job. So I'm more inclined I think to be aware of the impression in those group situations just because I'm... it's not a regular thing. The focus rotates around as opposed to being on the individual.

P4: ...it's not just me I think it's common to everyone. We're always having that conversation... it's.... you always hear someone saying 'well I wanted to show a tape... but the client didn't show up last night or the equipment didn't work' so yeah without question I think that this is the one shot I want it to be more or less the best one... something I'm proud of.

P4: Yeah and I know my cohort members pretty well... I mean we see each other 5 days a week and we have for a year and a half but they know me in a very specific kind of situation and I have a certain role that I play in the cohort as you know everyone kind of has their place... but suddenly this is a really different kind of... a different kind of display... the whole process in general is very different... it's not.... you know when it comes to the academic aspect of the work and you get very concrete feedback around.... you needed to cite things differently or better or more or give this argument or whatever...

**Navigating past experiences of hierarchy.** When supervisees encounter the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship, old experiences of being in subordination seem to influence their experience. *Navigating past experiences of hierarchy* is the third *sub-category* under **navigating hierarchy**. Supervisees bring with them prior life experiences being in



positions of lesser power. These prior experiences created patterns of thinking and behaving in subordinate roles, including the supervision situation. Many of the images supervisees were aware of wanting to portray or avoid portraying shared commonalities with past experiences in subordination. For some, these past experiences make it more comfortable to be in subordination again; for others it created dynamics where supervisees were aware of not wanting to be viewed as they were in the past. The following quotes demonstrate these experiences:

P5: Where like coming from a ballet background where like everything was critical always it was hard to believe in positive feedback... so I think I've come a long way in accepting it. Trusting it.

P5: Yeah, I mean I think it's kind of a cocktail of things... like what came up for me first is sometimes it just feels awkward to get a lot of positive feedback. Ummm... And not like necessarily uncomfortable but I guess you know I also... as you know come from where there is this very clear teacher-student dynamic like [style of yoga] or whatever and I am very like used to having teachers and I'm very comfortable in a student role.

P1: So it's difficult for me to be vulnerable because I feel like I'm going to be taken advantage of and it's going to be used against me later.

Although P1 described the sensation of worrying about being taken advantage of by her supervisor, when asked about what she thought might happen if he saw her in a negative light she responded with the following, demonstrating how her worry may be rooted in past experiences versus her current supervisory relationship:

P1: I'm sure he would not judge me... I'm sure he would be non-judgmental. Or you know it would be more of a collaborative process like, what can we do how can we fix this? So like what can we do to support you so that you are feeling like you are competent... So I'm pretty sure like for my internal thing that I'm thinking... I'm pretty sure that he wouldn't judge me at all... He would probably be more likely to be like let's explore this.

### **Attuning to Safety**

While it was clear from analyzing the data that supervisees attuned to supervisor expectations of competence in supervision, that theme did not encompass the experience of

attuning to the psychological safety of risking appearing as a dreaded image. The fifth **category** is defined as **attuning to safety**. This category was supported by three *sub-categories*: *supervision norms*, *site norms*, and *supervision relationship*. In general, **attuning to safety** can be understood as the experience of picking up on cues about what is deemed typical in the supervision situation and how psychologically safe it may be to veer from the norm. Attuning was an experience that started at the beginning of a supervisory situation. Participant Seven spoke to the awareness of uncertainty in the beginning of a supervisory relationship and the experience of attuning to cues from his supervisor:

P7: ...And I do think there is that getting to know my supervisor that also affects that [willingness to be vulnerable]... like... is this a supervisor who is willing and able to handle my... my worst... in a way that I can also handle, or do I have to be careful? Um, so yeah, maybe early on there.... there was a tendency to be somewhat less forthcoming than I am now.

P7: I think when she's consistent in her role as supervisor with her way of being as like the clinic director, uh, you know, I, I've never, I've never been surprised by something there. I... I, she hasn't snuck up on me or, or anything like that. And I think that consistency on her part is super helpful, you know, um, because I can imagine some people taking some slightly different approaches to managing groups of people versus individual relationships, but hers is brutally consistent. I think that helps, helps me a lot.

Participant Six shared about how his impression management behavior changed as he learned he was safe to show his vulnerabilities in supervision.

P6: ... The starting up with a new supervisor at a new place you are really wanting to... to put your best foot forward and essentially try to bring only your best self in.

P6: ...It's like kind of the same thing as going into a new job... feeling like you're being watched a little bit more so you need to be putting off the perception that everything is going great and you're not struggling with anything. But as you settle in and they really get to understand you more, that it's okay to bring in those vulnerable, more incompetent areas.

Attuning continues throughout the supervision process. Participant Three discussed the continual gauging of how it felt to bring her authentic self to supervision:

P3: ...Well then there would be times when I would dabble a toe in [to being vulnerable] and just feel like shit after I left and be like 'well, I'm not doing that again.'

The following quote from Participant Eight further supports the general experience of **attuning to safety**. She discussed realizing that it was more important in her supervision situation to appear competent than it was to be authentic:

A: Yeah, they want to know that you're doing a good job.

P8: Yeah, like I'm not putting their license in jeopardy. Since I'm under their license. So that's like the thing in supervision.

Participant Three also discussed what it felt like to not receive cues from her supervisor that would help her feel safer to be more authentic:

P3: ...I feel like I've been needing validation. I really needed someone to be like 'you're doing okay.' Like that's what I needed from her. For her to just be like, this is the developmental level you're at. It's okay to have questions, it's okay to feel scared, it's okay to not know what you're doing sometimes, you're where you need to be. And I needed like, that said to me, and I didn't get that and so I went to see [a different supervisor] and that's what she said... it was like a breath of fresh air. And then my other supervision experiences have included that aspect. Like... 'yes, this is shitty and hard and you're doing okay...'

**Supervision norms.** *Supervision norms* make up the first *sub-category* under **attuning to safety**. *Properties* that support the *sub-category* of *supervision norms* include *culture of sharing vulnerabilities, pace and timing of supervision, norms providing feedback, norms disclosing personal issues, and norms talking about culture and identity*. Supervisees discussed the experience of attuning to the culture of how much vulnerability is appropriate to share, how feedback is provided, openness about personal life/issues, and norms talking about cultural issues. All of these components affected their desires to portray certain images of the self.

Participant Eight discussed the general experience of attuning to the supervision norms in the following quote:

P8: Um... I think both of my supervisors right now are just very type A people, they come in with a schedule of what we're going to be talking about and what they want to

ask me already. So, I think it reinforces the idea that you also have to sort of... I know what they are going to ask me, they are going to go through all of my clients and schedule, what's been going on, what's the diagnosis, what's the treatment plan I'm using with them...

***Culture of sharing vulnerabilities.*** The first property of *supervision norms* is *culture of sharing vulnerabilities*. This includes how normal or abnormal it is to share openly about mistakes and weaknesses. These norms can be spoken or unspoken and are interpreted by the supervisee. The following quotes show how supervisees experienced the culture of sharing vulnerabilities in supervision:

P5: Right, like I was definitely seeking her validation or something like that... 'it's okay to fall apart sometimes even as the counselor'... but umm... yeah... didn't get that so much and like I do feel like that [it's okay to fall apart] was her view on the whole thing, that it [showing vulnerability] was okay, but as much as I like her she's not necessarily a warm open person at least not toward me and maybe that's part of her professional demeanor...

P3: Also, a big thing for me in feeling comfortable with someone is them sharing like their experience of messing up. Or whatever. Like if someone acts like they've never messed up before I don't really trust them... or whatever. Umm... and... so other professors and supervisors have shared like this is where we need to be, everyone goes through this, I went through this.. and that's really comforting for me to hear that.

***Pace and timing of supervision.*** Some supervisees spoke to the importance of the *pace and timing of supervision*. When supervision was rushed, it was more difficult to make vulnerable disclosures. These quotes demonstrate this experience:

P8: But umm maybe when the supervisor style is more abrupt and to the point... I feel like I have to be that way, too. Um and there's not enough room for me to be able to talk about being scared and what's going on. I think when we acknowledge it [the insecurities that go along with learning to be a counselor] it's easier to just be open and honest.

P8: Like even in my practicum site, like nothing was rushed, they [the counselors who worked there] took their time. And I had a lot closer bond with my supervisor there. Even though we were never really able to talk about cultural things, I feel like I brought more of myself into the room because I was more honest about 'oh yeah I feel incompetent today, this really tripped me up.'

P8: Especially in the very beginning with the.. like how many clients we see at [internship site] and how urgent things feel there, I felt like I really had to try hard... ..like I hear about other people's internship sites they are like best friends with their supervisors and I'm so jealous. I wish that was the case, but we honestly don't have the time, we really can't. I also recognize that it's not my supervisor's fault that we don't get to just sit for like two hours.

Norms *providing feedback*. Supervisees spoke to attuning to the *supervision norms* of how feedback is provided, which influenced their impression management experience and behavior. This created the next *property—norms providing feedback*. As was the case for P5 and P7, supervisors created norms where feedback is “tip-toed” around and/or supervisors avoided constructive or direct feedback. For P5, this led to increased behavior of asking for more feedback and the desire to appear open to feedback:

P5: Yeah and like I've noticed because I've had supervision for lab and practicum and both of those experiences were similar and I don't think it was just toward me but there does seem to be some tiptoeing around really direct feedback...

P5: And this has been coming up more because she tends to like give me a lot of positive feedback, which is good... which is fine... but I like have to kind of push her to be a little bit more constructive with what she shares because she watches a lot of my videos and I don't know... there does seem to be this trepidation on her part like to not wanting to make me feel bad...

For P7, the norms of less direct feedback did not seem to have an effect on impression management behavior directly, though they did impact the experience of supervision.

P7: Um, yeah, to be honest, sometimes I would just, I, there are those, those days where I just would love some really direct feedback that just says you need to get better here. Um, but so often it's the ‘wow, what do you think?’ Which I get. I like that part of the process, too. But you know, like it's, it can be, it can be, um, uncomfortable to just be like afloat in a sea of sort of uncertainty. And there are those times you're just like, I just want somebody in a power position to give me some tangible things I can work on...

As was the case for Participant Three, feedback norms can also feel judgmental.

Participant Three discussed the way a supervisor provided feedback in a “judgey” way. She talked about how feedback norms were more comfortable and caused less anxiety when

supervisors made it clear that the supervisee is on track in terms of where they ought to be developmentally:

P3: So, we had to do this thing that was like a qualitative feedback paper, where we found all of our feedback and wrote about it. And actually, after I did that, I thought about bringing the feedback that I had gotten from her and showing someone like, 'you need to talk to her about how she gives feedback because it's really harmfully done and I felt really crappy about how I received this feedback. Because it was phrased like... something like, '[P3] is resistant to theory and defensive.' It was very judge-y, like judge-ily phrased. and not like, other people, when they would do feedback it would be like '[P3] could work on being vulnerable in supervision...' you know, tactfully said... and this was just like '[P3] is this.'

P3: Like it was too much growth feedback and not enough... 'You're doing really well with this, and generally you're doing great.' Like it was 'do this thing differently, now do this other thing differently...' It was too much. And that was practicum experience... like I have no idea what I'm doing. So... yeah... that was just like shitty. And just getting that positive affirmation from my other supervisors has been awesome.

P3 talked about the experience of receiving feedback from a different supervisor, which created different norms that she attuned to:

A: Yeah like feedback comes from a place of 'you're great, you're right where you should be... and also do this thing better.'

P3: Yes! Yes!

A: Okay...

P3: Oh my God Yes.

Participant Six discussed how much a supervisor checked in about feedback, which created norms in supervision and thus affected how open and transparent he felt he could be:

P6: It also helps with my supervisor, you know, she always checks in. She'll say like 'is the way I'm giving the feedback... is it helpful, you know... are you experiencing it negatively?' Just kind of being a part of the process, so if there are changes that need to be made that they'll be made... so having more of that collaborative stance on the feedback is definitely helpful [for being more honest and vulnerable in supervision].

*Norms disclosing personal issues.* Different supervisors created norms around how appropriate it seemed to the supervisee to discuss personal issues and personal life concerns.

This defines the next *property* called *norms disclosing personal issues*. Participant Five discussed experiences of awkwardness when making personal disclosures to her supervisor:

P5: I think it's just her personality, but it's not really what I'm used to so sometimes when I share anything about myself even when it's like 'oh I brought a really good lunch today' I feel like this over-sharer...

A: Okay yeah is it similar to that feeling... 'too much... did I give too much?'

P5: Totally. Like obviously sharing that I have a good lunch is not too much... but I have that feeling.

The following example shows how P5 was attuned to the norms about how much was acceptable to share about her personal life challenges. She described herself as a person who does not have a problem showing vulnerabilities and emotions and that she does not feel she ought to have to apologize for showing emotion. Because P5 perceived signals from her supervisor that emotions may not be appropriate in the context of their supervision, she engaged in behavior such as apologizing for her emotions and stating that she felt much better when she did not feel better. She described how she would have behaved in the shoes of her supervisor, which would have been to normalize and encourage emotional sharing:

P5: And I hate apologizing for my feelings but it's such an old habit that I have mostly grown out of... but I was like 'sorry...' umm... I don't remember what I said but basically 'sorry for being so emotional.' I was like, 'I'm much better today and blah blah blah...' whereas I feel like I in her position would have been like 'are you kidding me? Of course, like, of course you feel that way please don't ever feel like you have to apologize' or whatever. But she was like 'oh, okay.'

***Norms talking about culture and identity.*** The fifth *property* of *supervision norms* that are attuned to by the supervisee are how or if a supervisor broaches the topics of culture and identity. Supervisees of color looked to their supervisors for cues about the norms related to bringing discussions of their own cultures and those of their clients into the room. Also of note is that none of the participants who identified as White brought up this experience. Participant

Eight, a woman of color, discussed how norms talking about culture and identity were part of her experience in supervision:

P8: Yeah like if we talked about it.... 'maybe it's because of these identities that I have such a strong need to appear competent...' I don't feel like we could ever get into that kind of conversation. Maybe they [supervisors] can... but I just haven't seen that.

P8: ...Or they [supervisors] don't talk about themselves. If there is a topic of cultural... or anything about culture, it's always about my culture because I'm the different one. They never talk about themselves.

P8: In supervision, there's usually not identity matches for me. Like I'm not very similar in those constructs to my supervisors ever, or my professors or my peers. So, I'm used to that. There's a difference there.

A:...Is there anything that you wish your supervisors would do that would make you feel more comfortable bringing more of your authentic self into supervision?

P8 Umm... I think having just more multicultural competency would be good. Like that feels... it's not really like I can bring my whole self into any room. It feels like a lot of the time, like maybe they are good at talking about one of my identities but then they are hesitant. I've had people like never bring up the fact that I'm a Muslim, and it's very obvious. So, I do think like that... people are afraid to ask... like they are counselors so they [think they] should know better.

A: So there's a spirit of avoiding very obvious things and that makes you feel like it's off the table, like you can't even bring it up then.

P8: Yeah.

Participant Eight provides further discussion about what her supervisors could to do make discussing race and culture more available to her in the supervision context in the following quotation. Her supervisors do not necessarily know that when she is not speaking up it may be because of privilege and power dynamics:

P8: I think honestly having a conversation about race in the beginning.... you know the privilege and the oppression dynamics.... as far as multiculturalism and in terms of your awareness of your biases and your attitudes about some of this stuff... just like from the beginning... so that we can like both know where we are on the spectrum... And in a way so that they know it's like... 'she's not speaking up so what's really on her mind?'

Participant One also discussed her awareness of attunement to the differences in racial and gender identities.



P1: Okay, so I identify as a Black cisgender woman. So, you know my supervisor he is a White male. And so definitely I look at it [that it is his job to broach the differences in the room] in terms of you know a power differential from a race perspective.

When supervisors do not broach conversations about race and culture, they are reinforcing norms related to how appropriate it is in the supervision situation for supervisees to bring up these topics.

**Attuning to site expectations.** The second *sub-category* in the **category** of **attuning to safety** is *attuning to site expectations*. This includes the spoken and unspoken norms and rules of an internship site. This experience was relevant for P8, who described a culture that felt intimidating, especially in the beginning. The internship site norms reinforced certain images of competence that P8 was aware of wanting to portray. For example:

A: It feels like the culture of the organization supports certain images over other images and you feel like you need to get into those images...

P8: Yes. I feel like it is reinforced constantly that you can be this calm, stoic person... it doesn't matter what's happening, it doesn't matter if there's a police officer in the hall, like you still gotta be calm.

Participant Eight has practiced as a counseling intern in two different sites, the first of which included working with children. When arriving at a center working with adults, she immediately noted different norms that were expected in the internship site:

P8: Yeah like you can be a little silly, a little goofy with children, like that's what's required to be a good counselor of children. But um, at [current internship site] it is completely different. Be more calm, more stoic... with adults. I definitely got that vibe day one. It was like 'Oh, this is what it's like to work with adults.' I can see it. I like it, but it is very different for me.

**Supervision relationship.** The *supervision relationship* is the third and final *sub-category* that is under the **category** of **attuning to safety**. Participants described the experience of attuning to the strength of the supervisory relationship and picking up cues from their supervisors about how safe it would be to portray a dreaded image of the self. The *property* that

supports this *sub-category* is *trust with the supervisor*. Supervisees noted that when the supervisory relationship is strong, they are more willing to be authentic.

P7: Um, I would share that the whole thing [taking a risk to be and/or appear vulnerable] feels easier when I feel valued by my supervisor and when I also like her as a person.

Participant Three discussed the difference between a supervisor in which she did not have a strong relationship and a supervisor with whom she has a strong supervisory relationship:

P3: With my current supervisor, we have a really good relationship... which, thank goodness... just in terms of being connected humans together. I feel like we have a good relationship. So, it [the desire to work to manage my impressions] hasn't been quite as bad.

P3: ...So that was hard... Yeah, and I just never felt connected, I didn't wanna be vulnerable cause I felt like I would have, like I don't know, I just, it was not... it was not a safe supervision experience I felt like.

*Trust with the supervisor.* Supervisees discussed attuning to how well their supervisors know them and how accurate of a perception they have of them. *Trust with the supervisor* is defined by the feeling of security and the thoughts that a supervisor will be non-judgmental and supportive if a supervisee brings in a more vulnerable topic or piece of work. Included in the dynamic of trust is the perception that the supervisor has seen enough strong work that showing more vulnerable work will not result in a global judgment of the supervisee as incompetent. The following quotes demonstrate how three participants experienced that trust with the supervisor mediating their ability to be authentic in supervision:

P6: Umm... So... yeah, it's really just having that more time together, more established trust between supervisor and supervisee that allows me to demonstrate my more vulnerable areas, which I wasn't doing as much in the beginning.

A: Yeah, so that trust piece was really important for you to feel comfortable opening up and feel comfortable asking questions.

P3: Yeah, the trust that someone won't just say a bunch of negative stuff. Like, I do not do well if there's not some sandwich of nice things. Like I don't think anyone does.

P6: I think just the more that my supervisor has gotten to experience me that she knows that even when I bring in... when it seems like I'm not doing a good job or I bring in some of those incompetent areas that she knows that I am doing well in other areas.

### **Willingness to Appear as a Dreaded Image**

Some supervisees discussed the experience of being **willing to appear as a dreaded image** in supervision. This involves supervisees choosing to reveal vulnerabilities, weaknesses, and mistakes to supervisors. The willingness to show vulnerable images of the self was supported by two *sub-categories*, including *connection to purpose and commitment to growth* and *self-confidence*. The following quote from P4 demonstrates the commitment and discomfort involved in his experience of **willingness to appear as a dreaded image**. In this scenario, P4 was having difficulty with acquiring a fundamental counseling skill. His dreaded image is appearing stupid and unnatural as he fumbles through practicing this skill. Because of his connection with his desire to learn the skill (as well as his desire to grow as a person) he was able to practice diligently, at times thinking that he sounded like a “robot running out of batteries:”

P4: You know what shifted for me with that exact thing [connection to learning]... like the feeling reflection ‘you feel sad’...I started thinking of it in a very gendered sports metaphor kind of way.... you know like this is kind of the equivalent of me shooting baskets from the three-point line... everybody knows I'm going to shoot from the 3-point line and like drilling this skill everyone knows what I'm doing... it's very obvious... but I just need to drill this very particular skill until it gets good... until I get okay at it and you know it's felt that way.... there have been many times where my head would recognize, you know, whatever the emotion was happening and I would mechanically say you feel X... and yeah it totally felt awkward as hell for a long time and I felt stupid doing it but then after a while it was just like.... okay you're feeling this and it's becomes a little more natural and now it's not just happening in my head it's like, now it's actually a feeling in my body and my heart and my gut and you know that was something that I was also personally working on and so it tied into my own personal work as a person not just as a counselor... it was my development as a human being to work on this stuff and so I just kind of link it all in... I mean yeah there are definitely times where I sort of felt like... oh I don't know... like a robot that was running out of batteries like [makes robot sounds...] you know like making ridiculous noises. You know like a machine that's been under water and it's dying. But I also have two little girls, a five-year-old and a nine-year-old, and that was also a big shift for me, which was recognizing that I do this... I do this all the time... I do this with my five-year-old when she's scared at night... I just had to

learn how to do this with an adult and there's power in that... it's different in that but it's also really similar. It's learning how to draw on that same place within me from an impression management standpoint in a way there was some difficulty there because the way I am with my children is a very private thing... it's not how I am in the world. And so I can do it... but it's not usually videotaped and put up on the screen for people to watch and so being able to not only draw that part of myself that did know how to do it but then take it a step further and say now I'm going to do it for an adult who is close to my age and maybe even my same gender and take it a step further and say now I'm going to show it to somebody. There are steps in sort of getting used to that with all of those things.

**Connection to purpose and commitment to growth.** The first *sub-category* of **willingness to appear as a dreaded image** is *connection to purpose and commitment to growth*. This includes the experience of not engaging in impression management behavior, but instead being willing to risk appearing like a dreaded image due to *connection with a greater purpose and commitment to growth*. The *properties* that make up this *sub-category* include *connection to learning* and *identifying parallels to the counseling process*. Participant Six discussed the general outlook of connection to a greater purpose:

P6: Umm...But I realized pretty quickly on that you're not going to grow if you just, you know, present your best work and not get feedback on the things that you need feedback on. So, it's not just like 'oh you're doing a good job just stay the course' Rather than like 'okay work seems to be stalling here it seems like you're having a hard time how can we improve that area?' And so I've been in the past few weeks... I've tried to bring in more of my... my areas of incompetence as a way to advance my own growth. Also in the past couple of months my supervisor has been unavailable quite a bit and supervision has been a little spotty in consistency... so having to really even make more, you know, meaningful use of that precious time it's like if I only have so much time to speak with my supervisor I better be bringing in the important things...

Participant Four discussed the courage he gains from connecting to the larger tradition of counseling and the vulnerability that is embedded in the experience of learning to be a counselor.

P4: For me, recognizing and embracing this idea that I was stepping into this whole larger tradition of... you know... the healing tradition and counseling and therapy tradition I was part of this thing I think that was part of what helped me. I remember reading something about Yalom sometime, Irvin Yalom, this litany of counselors he had seen over the decades... he went to psychoanalysis for 7 years he saw a Gestalt person for a while he saw a cognitive-behavioral person for a while... it was just recognizing for me that the work never really ends and I am part of this thing that is bigger than I am... that was a

profound recognition for me and it gave me a lot of a foundation... Okay, I'm part of this larger tradition and I want to be in it and I want to be good at it and I need to face this stuff that's really hard... that was also something that really helped me to get the really long view...

***Connection to learning.*** The first *property* under ***connection to a greater purpose*** involves *connection to learning*. This involves a willingness to appear as a dreaded image in order to support one's learning. Almost all participants discussed this experience:

P6: Yeah, I think the pros of playing into your ignorance and needing information definitely outweighs the pros of being silent about it and saving face.

P8: ...And to learn from them because they are experts. I want to learn as much as I can.

P7: There's moments of me doing counseling that I'm not stoked about and obviously the best way to grow is to review them and getting feedback can be part of that. I've found that, uh, even though a lot of times I know what I'd like to do different in general, it's just so helpful to have that external validation of that. Um, it's also an extra push towards enacting it. Uh, so I find that really valuable. The authentic part is just crucial. I, you know, I am neck deep in this stuff right now of like figuring out what my way of being is as a counselor and whereas a year ago we were like basic skills robots. Um, now we're not.. and I'm still working into that and trying to figure out like what does this look like when I'm most authentically me? So, I also, you know, not only aspire to do that [be authentically me] in counseling, but need to do that in supervision because she is the one who has the biggest voice in my development outside of myself at this point.

P8: Yeah, because, I got the feedback very early like you're not supposed to show a tape where you felt like you did a good job on and someone isn't going to have a comment for you, so you should show a tape where you are struggling because that's where you're going to learn more from, and I just took that advice and that's what I've always done. Like if I think I did a good job then I wouldn't really show that tape because it wouldn't really be very helpful to me.

P4: I just had... I've had enough situations like honestly the very first tape I showed my supervisor this semester it was a session that I thought was pretty good and I was like 'you know I want you to see this I think it highlights some highs and also maybe some lows' and she came in and identified a bunch of stuff that I could work on that were not on my list at all, like not even... I was like 'oh okay...' She agreed with my list of things... then like 'how about this?' And I just hadn't seen that. That's happened to me enough times where I just think that personally, I mean I still want to manage the image absolutely... and I also think that... I am increasingly open to just... 'help me do this.'

P5: Positive feedback is helpful... it gives me the signal that I'm on the right track and keep doing these certain things that I'm getting feedback on but I also feel like if I'm

going to be in supervision I want it to be the most enriching experience possible and soon I'll get to a point where I don't have a supervisor... I'll have colleagues to consult with and all that but I really want to take advantage of someone who has been in the field for a while... so yeah there's that I think for me part of it is kind of clarifying... defining... reiterating the roles [of a supervisee] I guess and then also genuinely being interested... like choices that she would have made because I think we're actually very similar in our counseling style but she is way more honed in and skilled obviously with her experience and so usually I like what she has to say or it's interesting to me.

P6: I've been bringing to my supervisors areas that I feel less competent in.. umm...for example, having a client who is really high anxiety and I'm not really being effective at de-escalation or not trying to 'fix' the anxiety. You know techniques that might have been more effective and also with the topic of suicide that's something I don't think I'm very competent in so... and I was actually... the last supervision I had with her I was pretty honest with her and I said that... I just told her I'd ...you know... when a client brings up suicide it does instill a little bit of fear in me. So in terms of how present that competency is lately I would say it's more in that I have been intentionally bringing in more areas where I feel less competent... And she has quite a bit of experience with both of those things. High anxiety and suicide... She might be able to understand that and identify some ways I can improve in those areas.

P6: Yeah I think early on I was probably more inclined to keep my mouth shut on those [areas where I am unclear]...but I am more inclined to speak up about it [lack of clarity] now because, you know, if I stay silent in those moments [when I don't understand] there could be an opportunity in the future where it would have been helpful to maybe know something that she did [to address the same issue].

P6: And that.. It's kind of one of those things where if you go in needing feedback on something but if you close yourself off to it and then an opportunity arises in the future where you really could have used that feedback and not having it and then afterwards kind of thinking back kicking yourself thinking I really should have gotten feedback on that cause that really could have helped out right now.

P6:...just before I go into her office I'll check myself at a door and be like 'whatever is going on that has me in a more of a resistant mood I can deal with later but this is one hour of supervision a week and it's an important hour so hook yourself up as much as you can'.

***Identifying parallels to the counseling process.*** The next property in the *sub-category* of ***connection to a greater purpose*** is *identifying parallels to the counseling process*. This is defined as a willingness to appear like a dreaded image because of a connection to the vulnerability that the counseling process requires. Participant Seven discussed the desire to be

vulnerable with his supervisors because he expects the same vulnerability from his clients. The following quotes demonstrate this experience:

A: And is there anything else about that you have to say about why it's [impression management] not a big part for you besides the fact that it's not really your personality in general and you feel like you really trust your supervisor? Is there anything else about the situation itself that's contributed to that not being an issue for you?

P7: ...the first thing that comes to mind is, um, I don't know, sort of channeling or modeling the same behavior through myself that I would desire from my clients, you know, so just being consistent and congruent and in that sense, because the relationship doesn't feel totally like she's counseling me, but it's very similar, uh, at and, and at times, you know, as I feel uncertain about myself and become emotional. Um, she's definitely...definitely sliding in the counseling mode to, to some extent as we process through that. So yeah, just kind of that parallel track is, is something I've noted.

A: And um, it, it seems like what you're saying is that you expect a certain amount of vulnerability in the role of being a supervisee. That's, that's part of what it means to you is to be in a position just like your clients are.... vulnerability.

P7: Yes. That's what I'm saying. Very nicely put. And, and also in terms of like counselor growth for me, that is one of the areas I attend to, which is sort of... if, you know, I expect myself to be, you know, 1) uh, in contact with my inner experience and 2) willing to abide by that even publicly, I.e. make myself vulnerable and, and present in the moment. Um, if that's, if that's what I say a fully functioning individual... those are attributes of that individual then and I'm asking my clients to go there. I'm also asking myself to go there.

Participant Four also demonstrated this experience:

P4: I can't ask somebody to go to this place that I am not able to go, you know, and therefore saying okay I need to be able to go there. You know. Like I remember a year ago... getting some pretty hard feedback from my supervisor at the very end of the semester on my final tape... it was really hard... it was very challenging thing to hear at the very end of the semester and then like wait for three and a half weeks. And umm you know sort of going home and saying I have three and a half weeks now and I need... and this is what my clients deal with... this [vulnerability] is how they live their lives all the time... so I need to sort of lean into this [discomfort/vulnerability] and face this thing [appearing incompetent and feeling vulnerable] and really understand it's going to be okay for me... I have enough distance from it [the experience of hearing hard feedback] to know I'm going to be fine... so what happens when I don't react the way I normally do, which is to find ways to distract myself. So I can lean into it [vulnerability] and really feel it and all the things... and it was a powerful experience for me and that's just one example of lots of examples and so you know being able to... for me it's sort of all over the place but sort of looking at what's happening inside of me looking at what's happening with the clients and linking that over to the literature that I dive into and lean into everyday recognizing that is really incumbent upon me to go there [be vulnerable]

yeah I'm losing the eloquent thread here but I have to be able to do the work and so that was my mantra 'I have to be able to do the work....'

**Self-confidence.** The second *sub-category* that supports **willingness to appear as a dreaded** image is named *self-confidence*. Participants described an experience of feeling more secure and connected to their identities as novice counselors and less intimidated by exposing vulnerabilities. When participants felt confident, they were less afraid to risk showing undesirable images of the self. Participant Seven provided a clear example of how his comfort and connection to who he is as a person provided him with a willingness to expose his authenticity in supervision:

P7: ...I'm 43 years old. I have tons of life experience and have done a lot of fun things and had a lot of successes and some failures, absolutely. But I have definitely noticed that through the course of this program I tend to be more calm than people who are younger than me. And I attribute that a lot to that identity formation and being comfortable with myself as well as having, having, um, experiences to reach back on and say I have come up against challenges before I have felt stressed. I have felt questioning of what's going on and I have come through the other side. Like I know what that process looks like. Whereas some other of my younger counterparts... I think have less experience with that as well as not as, not as much time to just be comfortable with who they are. So it's a huge part. I mean, it's, it's inseparable and it's [connection to self] one of the reasons I'm in this field.

P7: ...Well if I go back to the beginning of practicum, which is only 10 months ago, you know, it, it was, I suppose it was more difficult to be really authentic and transparent then and I would... I would ascribe that to 1) my abilities and also to just like, um, self-doubt and being uncertain as heck, I was uncertain of what my role was as a practicum student. Yeah, I'm like, what am I supposed to do here? You know, I don't even know, do, do I just let it [being a counselor] rip?

Participants Four and Six also discussed feeling more at ease, which diminished impression management behavior:

P4: Feeling more at ease with my novice-ness and also being a little bit better at the same time... I've been doing this for at least two semesters which is a lot more than a year ago so I'm just more at ease with where I am...

P6: While I do have my moments of perceived incompetence or low confidence in myself, there usually is an upward trend in confidence and that's just the more that I do



it and the more exposure that I have to the whole process [of supervision] that typically increases my confidence and then just telling myself that because I am incompetent in certain areas doesn't mean that I am incompetent as a counselor. So, you know not letting those individual though smaller things impact my entire holistic view of myself as a counselor.

On the other hand, P3 discussed an experience in which she did not feel self-confident. This highlights the flip side of the same *sub-category*. She experienced a challenging supervision experience from the past with a practicum supervisor who continued to hold power over her in an academic setting. Here she describes the experience of insecurity following this relationship:

P3:...And another aspect of it is me questioning like my aversion to her now is me being resistant? So, I'm like... was she right...? I'm still resistant? And defensive? You know, like... so that is another paranoia that I have, which is maybe, this [a resistant person] is what I am. I am feeling resistant. Like, I feel like that's fine, I'm allowed to feel...I don't know... I have a lot of insecurities about it [about identity versus how I was seen in supervision].

### **Protection and isolation**

When supervisees were not willing to appear as dreaded images, they discussed experiences that fell into the category of **protection and isolation**. This included behavior that led to less engagement in the supervision process, missing out on learning opportunities and feelings of insecurity. **Protection and isolation** include experiences of choosing to reveal less about the authentic self in order to attempt to manage the impression presented to the supervisor. Participant Eight described generally how she has gotten better at impression management as time has gone on in her internship site:

P8: I think I've gotten better at it. Portraying a certain image. Because it feels like nobody has quote unquote 'caught me' yet like, found out that I'm incompetent.

P8:...I had a different personality image of a counselor. But now I know more about how to fit into different cultures and what different counselors look like... what different settings require of you, each setting requires a different kind of person...is what I've come to the conclusion of. So, I think I've gotten better at it [impression management] and I know what to say in supervision.

Participant Three disclosed unwillingness to show her vulnerable areas to her supervisor. She described choosing not to show her supervisor some of her mistakes, rooted in the desire to avoid being seen as “doing terrible”:

P3: Yeah, it's like I know I was doing terrible here, you don't have to tell me. It was a failure of an intervention. Like I know that.

P3: So...I hadn't seen anyone really who was suicidal. And then my first person who was suicidal I feel like I just did a really shitty job of asking everything I needed to ask and like I didn't.... I feel like I didn't ask about means or something....I didn't ask about one of the big things. And I was just like really horrified that I didn't. And I went in and I asked my supervisor, you know, I talked to my supervisor about it and she was like umm... she asked me if I asked that. And I was like....I think maybe I just evaded the question or like... I don't think I lied... but was like...or I pulled something.... I don't know... I just wasn't entirely truthful with her about the fact that I straight up forgot to ask about means. And I don't remember if it was means... I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was something that I felt really embarrassed that I had forgotten to ask and... that was a time that I withheld, because I just, I don't know, I didn't want her... It was right when I first started and I didn't want her to be like ‘Oh my god this girl forgot to ask about means... like that's really bad.’

**Disengagement.** The first *sub-category* of **protection and isolation** is *disengagement*, which can be understood as a supervisee choosing to not engage in exposing vulnerabilities in supervision. Participant Three discussed this experience:

P3: Yeah, I had to sort of start not engaging in supervision because I felt like it was so risky for me.

P3: Yeah, so I would... yeah, I would just stop. I would just not share.

A: And how do you think that impacted the ways you were perceived in your supervision?

P3: I think it made me seem closed off and resistant.

P3: Um... I yeah... there would definitely be times where I would just stop talking because I didn't like getting the feedback. And... and I wouldn't share because I just didn't want... I didn't want to be that vulnerable. I didn't want to hear what she had to say, I didn't think she could say it in a way that would make me feel better, I didn't trust that, so... I would definitely close up and just like... I'd often let the... we did triadic so there was another person, so I would often let the other person like talk first, and then be like ‘oh bummer... we only have like ten minutes.’

**Missing out on learning.** When supervisees engaged in impression management behavior for the sake of saving face versus seeking help, they missed out on learning. Participant Six discussed this as not letting in insight from a supervisor that may be helpful to growth and counselor development.

P6: So essentially it's demonstrating resistance when you come in with resistance it just... it negatively impacts the relationship on both sides because there might be something they can offer you that would be really helpful that you're not letting in and then they may feel like they are not doing their job as well because they are not giving that important feedback.

**Feeling like a fraud/insecure.** The final *sub-category* of the **protection and isolation** can be understood as *feeling like a fraud/insecure*. This involves feeling as if one is performing, pretending, and questioning professional legitimacy. Participant Eight discussed this experience:

P8: Um, sometimes I tell myself I am just faking it until I make it.

P8: I feel like I'm just pretending and one day I'll just be competent.

P8: It definitely feels like I am all in every day. Like as soon as I step off the elevator, I'm like 'Okay, perform.'

P8: I know I am supposed to be there, like they wouldn't let me in if I didn't belong but there's this voice in the back of my head that's like 'how are they letting you counsel people?' It still comes up sometimes.

In sum, the seven **categories** defined in round-one analysis include: **attuning to expectations of competence, impression anxiety, overcoming assumptions, navigating hierarchy, attuning to safety, willingness to appear as a dreaded image, and protection and isolation**. These experiences were bolstered by *sub-categories*, and *properties* that further described participants' experiences in supervision. Although the questions in first-round interviews focused primarily on experiences, participants discussed some processes with me, as well.

### Initial Process-Oriented and Situational Findings

Some participants talked about cause-and-effect as well as how the situational factor of time influenced their experiences of impression management. These emerging processes were expanded upon in second-round interviews. Below is a brief conceptualization of processes that appeared from first-round interviews.

**Temporal elements influencing impression anxiety.** Participants discussed the element of time as an influencing and/or inhibiting factor changing their desires to intentionally portray the image of competence to supervisors. For Participants One, Two, Three, Four, Six and Seven, increased time led to decreased desire to portray only a favorable image of the self. Time may also be linked with counselor identity development. This was further expanded upon in second-round interviews and analysis. The following are initial process-oriented quotes about time and counselor development:

P1: So, I definitely think it [impression management behavior] has changed... I have become more comfortable with saying the wrong thing... making mistakes you know like being open to... I don't even want to say constructive criticism but like, you know, something along those lines.

P4: ... It [supervision] just feels like a much more collaborative experience where like last year certainly every time I put a tape up I'd just feel like okay there's judgment involved, there's power involved, I'm really being rated on very specific skills... and now it's more like I'm actively working on these things... help me figure out this client... help me figure out what I'm doing it's just a much more collaborative experience at this point.

P2: I've gotten more comfortable with it [sharing a vulnerability] as a semester has gone on.

P7: Well if I go back to the beginning of practicum, which is only 10 months ago, you know, it, it was, I suppose it was more difficult to be really authentic and transparent then and I would... I would ascribe that to 1) my abilities and also to just like, um, self-doubt and being uncertain as heck, I was uncertain of what my role was as a practicum student. Yeah, I'm like, what am I supposed to do here? You know, I don't even know, do, do I just let it [counseling clients] rip?

P6: It's like kind of the same thing as going into a new job... feeling like you're being watched a little bit more so you need to be putting off the perception that everything is going great and you're not struggling with anything. But as you settle in and they really get to understand you more, that it's okay to bring in those vulnerable, more incompetent areas.

P3: I guess it's [the anxiety about making sure I appear competent] a little less now because I feel like I'm doing it [the work of a counselor] better... like, it was that insecurity [that I was incompetent that led to the anxiety previously]...

Participant Eight discussed how increased time (along with other factors that will be further defined in round-two interviews) increased impression management due to learning more about what images of the self were expected of her in the supervision context. This highlighted a gap for future inquiry about what internal and external factors, along with the passage of time, seem to influence the desire to appear certain ways to supervisors. Below is a quote from Participant Eight about her process of getting better at managing her impressions to portray a favorable image of herself over time:

P8:...I had a different personality image of a counselor. But now I know more about how to fit into different cultures and what different counselors look like... what different settings require of you, each setting requires a different kind of person...is what I've come to the conclusion of. So, I think I've gotten better at it [impression management] and I know what to say in supervision.

**Process from trust with the supervisor to willingness to show a dreaded image.** Trust emerged as a major contributor when it came to willingness to show a dreaded image of the self. Participant Six discussed how when he had more trust with his supervisor, he was able and willing to show more vulnerable areas:

P6: Umm... So... yeah, it's really just having that more time together, more established trust between supervisor and supervisee that allows me to demonstrate my more vulnerable areas, which I wasn't doing as much in the beginning.

**Process from trust with the supervisor (lack thereof) to impression anxiety.** For P3, who spoke of an experience in which she lacked trust with a supervisor, impression anxiety increased:

P3: Yeah, so I felt very misunderstood and just very like type-cast as like this difficult, resistant person. I don't feel like I was trying to be.

A: Yeah and in that environment of being type-cast, do you feel that brought up even more awareness of how you were being perceived? Like it was almost a... I'm imaging a ping pong game or something, like it just kept elevating...

P3: Yeah.

A: The more she brought that up the more anxious you were about it.

**Process from trust with the supervisor (lack thereof) to protection and isolation.** In addition to lack of trust leading to increased impression anxiety, for P3 it also led to protection and isolation. The following quotes exemplify this process:

A: The more you felt misunderstood, the more activated you felt about what kind of impression you were giving to her and the more you felt actually out of control in terms of the impression you were able to give, and that feeling of being out of control or powerless to change the impression that she had of you just... um... really impeded your supervision. It made you feel like you were not trusted, it made you not trust, and there were ways that probably your clients didn't get... like the energy was more about the relationship in supervision versus how can I help my clients all the time. Like there was a distraction away from that.

P3: Yeah, definitely, there was a lot of that toward the end. Me feeling like I couldn't bring something in.

P3: ...So that was hard... Yeah, and I just never felt connected, I didn't wanna be vulnerable cause I felt like I would have, like I don't know, I just, it was not... it was not a safe supervision experience I felt like.

P3: Um... I yeah... there would definitely be times where I would just stop talking because I didn't like getting the feedback. And... and I wouldn't share because I just didn't want... I didn't want to be that vulnerable. I didn't want to hear what she had to say, I didn't think she could say it in a way that would make me feel better, I didn't trust that, so... I would definitely close up and just like... I'd often let the... we did triadic so there was another person, so I would often let the other person like talk first, and then be like 'oh bummer... we only have like ten minutes.'

**Impression anxiety and fear of misunderstanding as a self-fulfilling prophesy.**

Participant Three discussed the nuance of her anxiety about impressions facilitating certain

behavior that then caused her to be seen just as she feared. For example, she felt labeled and misunderstood in one supervision experience as being “resistant.” Because of her anxiety related to being seen as resistant, she felt less willing to share vulnerably with her supervisor, which she believes led her supervisor to confirm the impression that P3 was resistant:

P3: Yeah, so I would... yeah I would just stop. I would just not share.

A: And how do you think that impacted the ways you were perceived in your supervision?

P3: I think it made me seem closed off and resistant.

A: Okay, so there was almost this self-fulfilling prophesy thing, where you were trying not to appear closed off but then to protect yourself maybe did appear that way.

P3: Yeah.

**Expectations of the self leading to decreased impression anxiety and willingness to appear as a dreaded image.** The internal experience of giving oneself some leeway to make mistakes was associated for Participant Six with a willingness to appear as a dreaded image. This left areas for further reflection and questions in the second-round interviews about what internal experiences may lead to increased or decreased impression management behavior.

Participant Six described his experience in a situation where he was not expected to be perfect:

P6: Umm... I think what I have tried to do more and more every week is.. is just to... yeah really to just embrace the process, the whole thing. And I think also just a big part of it is still understanding my role as an intern and a counselor-in-training. And that it's not my job to be the most competent counselor. So really just knowing my role, essentially, helps to kind of alleviate the anxiety that might come with trying to be [appear] very competent.

**Process of deciding about impression management behavior when two expectations of competence run contradictory.** Participants talked about the desire to appear as many different images that constructed the impression of competence, yet sometimes these images were contradictory. For example, Participant Four discussed the awareness of the images of open to feedback and ability to show effective counseling work on video. It was difficult to decipher from first-round analysis if his desires were to appear open to feedback or to be open to

feedback in order to get help. He discussed a session with a client where he slipped into doing work that he deemed incompetent. Before supervision, he engaged in a decision-making process about whether it was worth risking appearing as a dreaded image of incompetent in order to prove the image of appearing open to feedback:

P4: I have supervision this afternoon and it's sort of like, okay, in my mind going over this exact question [how do you know when to show less competent work?]. Like, I had a session last night where we really got into the hardest stuff... but I know there's this one part where I kind of shifted into this didactic expert mode and I'm like 'Goddamnit this isn't what I want to do'... I have wanted to work on and avoid and here it is... I do it again. So, what do I do...? Do I show that tape? ... like once again I know I kind of miss this thing... or do I show something where I kind of landed a little bit better? And that's for my personal supervision. so, I think this is a really salient question that I have all the time.

P4: I think I personally go back and forth a little bit like on the one hand wanting to show tape where I can say I need a hand with this particular person or the situation or did I handle this right? But also, you know, wanting to look good. Not look stupid. So yeah I mean I think that's probably a pretty common conversation among those of us in the program as we think about supervision... it's like... do I show my really bad tapes and get help or do I show some in which I actually look like I am doing it and you know maybe get less help but also come across better? I think that's something we all think about... I certainly think about.

#### **Expectation to show gratefulness leading to fear of judgment/punishment.**

Participant Six described the connection between his desire to appear grateful (as a means of showing competence) connected to his fear of punishment if not seen as grateful in the eyes of his supervisor:

P6: ...We follow a code of ethics and we are supposed to always work in service of the client so coming off as ungrateful might make it seem from her to me that I am not taking my job seriously or not doing my clients a service and that would mean that they would want to either not... either take me off as an intern or see if I needed some interventions of my own to get me more on board with what they're doing.

**Internal experiences that influence impression management.** Although specific categories related to the internal experiences that lead to impression management did not emerge explicitly in round-one interviews beyond the construct of self-confidence, some participants



hinted at what happens internally prior to impression management. Participant Four described the experience of vulnerability about receiving feedback, since feedback on counseling work feels very personal. He described feedback as being about “who you are,” which led to consciousness about the images he portrays to his supervisor:

P4: But when it comes to the feedback that you get when you're a counselor... I mean it's very personal.... it's you. It's about who you are. It's about who you are as a person. It's definitely very vulnerable in general to do it even with somebody who has seen your work in supervision.

Participant Seven discussed how he has become more self-aware during the process of his program. Although he reported that he rarely intentionally engaged in impression management behavior, his ability to recognize, accept, and understand his internal experiences led to increased ability to share them with his supervisor. It may have been the case that at the beginning of his program he was less forthcoming with his experiences because he was not able to identify and articulate them:

P7: Um, I've changed. Um, I don't characterize those changes as affecting my willingness to be authentic, but they've certainly affected my ability to be congruent with my internal experience, you know? Right. So I have developed my ability to recognize and accept and understand my internal experience and therefore I can bring that in more transparently and in a more authentic way than I could 12 months ago. Um, my willingness I'd say was, was always there... part of who I am or... just aligns well with the attributes of my personality. Um... So I'm much more able. There's no doubt...

To conclude, round-one analysis produced many initial process-oriented findings that provided leads for further inquiries in round-two interviews and analysis.

### **Summary of Findings from Round One**

First round interviews provided insight into the experiences of impression management in supervision as well as glimpses into some of the links between and among these experiences.

The following seven categories emerged from the data: **attuning to supervisor expectations of competence, impression anxiety, overcoming assumptions, navigating hierarchy, attuning**

**to safety, willingness to appear as a dreaded image, and protection and isolation.** It was clear from all participants that awareness of what impressions their supervisors had of them was part of the experience in supervision, and that all supervisees desired to appear competent in the eyes of their supervisors. Definitions of competence were attuned to by supervisees. Findings from round one analysis left me with questions about how supervisees make decisions in the supervision context about whether to engage in impression management behavior or to risk appearing as a dreaded image. For all eight participants, the desire to appear competent to supervisors was ubiquitous, though engaging in impression management behavior was not necessarily a given. I finished round-one analysis with more questions about the processes of how desired images are attuned to by supervisees, what leads to impression management behavior, and what other internal and external factors influence the process of impression management. In Chapter III I have laid out a structure that included **categories**, **sub-categories**, and *properties*. Further inquiry into the experience and process of impression management in supervision in round-two interviews will inform emerging conceptualizations as well as add dimensions to parse out nuanced participant experiences and processes.

## CHAPTER IV: Round-Two Analysis

Chapter IV provides a framework for participant experiences of impression management that in some areas confirms round-one analysis and in other areas clarifies and re-conceptualizes the data. Round-two analysis also adds new information to the evolving theory of impression management in supervision. Following a description of participant experiences after round-one analysis, I will describe the processes participants went through between and among experiences. I also expanded data analysis using situational analysis methodology (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2017) to include SITUATIONAL FACTORS from analytical mapping. Many quotations that support analytical coding will exemplify participant experiences first, and then later demonstrate processes, relationships, and causality among participant experiences.

### Review of Procedures

I reached out by email to invite all eight participants who were interviewed in round one to participate in a second interview. Round-two interviews took place approximately three months following round-one interviews. With the exception of Participant Eight, all participants responded quickly to set up Skype, Facetime, or phone interviews. I attempted to contact Participant Eight again via text, with no response. I address Participant Eight's lack of participation in round-two interviews as a limitation of the study in Chapter VI.

I adhered to a semi-structured interview process for round-two interviews, asking the following questions to expand on round-one findings and explore the processes of impression management in greater depth:

1. How do you come to know the expectations of you in supervision?
2. Tell me more about how your identity and your past influence how you want to appear in supervision?
3. Think of a vulnerability that was present for you in supervision. How did you know if or when you ought to show your supervisor? What happened after?

4. What keeps you from taking risks to share a vulnerability, mistake, or opinion in supervision?
5. How has your experience of impression management in supervision changed since we last talked?

I followed up with further inquiry based on participant disclosures.

After interviewing, I submitted five of the de-identified recordings of interviews to an online service called TranscribeMe for transcription. This service ensured participant confidentiality through using an algorithm that splits content into small tasks, so no individual who transcribes hears the entire content. This service is compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability ACT of 1966 (HIPAA). I transcribed two interviews myself due to audio quality. I reviewed all transcripts for accuracy prior to analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed all second-round data by using initial and focused coding as well as situational mapping. I used open coding procedures to identify, clarify, and confirm the categories of experience that were coded in round one. When participants described new experiences that were not identified in round-one analysis, I took care to engage in line-by-line initial coding followed by focused coding to clarify participant experiences. Participant processes were captured via focused and axial coding procedures. I continued to use a framework for contextualizing the data that included **categories**, *sub-categories*, *properties*, dimensions, SITUATIONAL FACTORS, and processes. Experiences were raised to the level of **category** when they were addressed by each participant. *Sub-categories*, *properties*, dimensions supported each **category**, and were not necessarily part of every participant's experience.

### **Experiences of Impression Management**

After round-two analysis, the structure of **categories** pertaining to experiences of impression management shifted significantly. Round-two interviews influenced

conceptualizations of what desirable behavior looks like; the **category** I had previously named as **attuning to supervisor expectations of competence** was not broad enough. This category expanded to account for internal expectations and site expectations defining what desirable behavior looks like in supervision. The first **category** is now named **attuning to desirable behavior**. The category named **impression anxiety** was substantiated through round-two analysis, though its name changed to **interpreting desired and dreaded images**, which now includes the desired and dreaded images supervisees wish to portray to their supervisors (previously located in **attuning to supervisor expectations of competence**). The category that had been named **attuning to safety** was reconceptualized and renamed to **weighing risk versus utility**. Both categories **willingness to appear as a dreaded image** and **protection and isolation** were rearranged in round two and consolidated into one category, which is called **managing impressions**. The categories of **overcoming assumptions** and **navigating hierarchy** no longer stand as their own independent categories—they were folded into **attuning to desirable behavior**, **weighing risk versus utility**, and the SITUATIONAL FACTORS of HIERARCHY and SOCIAL IDENTITY. Finally, SITUATIONAL FACTORS support the experience and process of impression management in supervision. Second-round analysis also produced many emerging processes, both between and among categories. A visual representation of the new analysis structure is captured in **Figure 2** below.

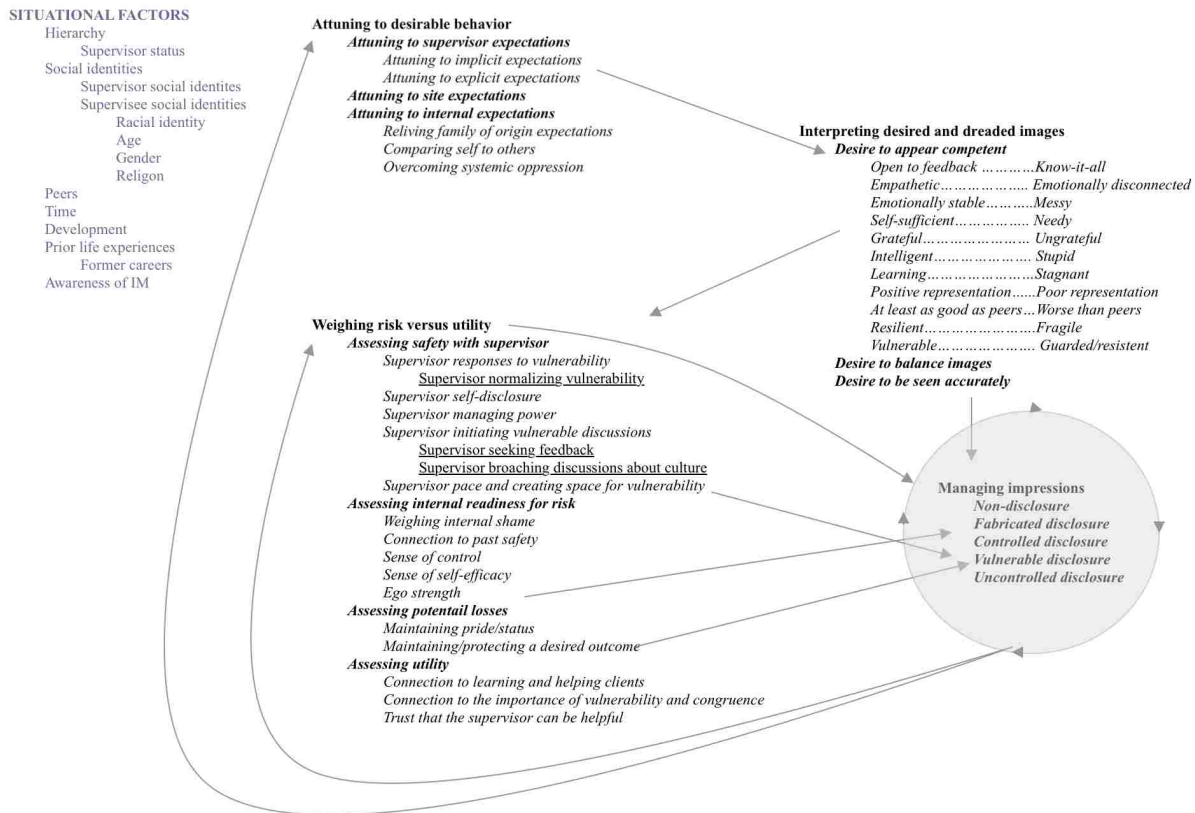


Figure 2: Conceptual map following second-round analysis

### Attuning to Desirable Behavior

The first category, called **attuning to desirable behavior**, is defined as the experience of attuning to internal and external factors that help a supervisee define what behavior is desirable to portray in the supervision context. This category is supported by three *sub-categories* of **attuning to supervisor expectations**, **attuning to site expectations**, and **attuning to internal expectations**. Many details of the experience of attuning to supervisor expectations of competence were present in round-one analysis—in this chapter I add experiences and quotations that are new. The following quote provides a description of the general experience of **attuning to desirable behavior**:

A: Do you have a guess that the definition of what’s expected of you comes from lots of different places?...or do you think that comes from one place more than others?

P2: Umm... I think it comes from a variety of experiences I've had. Like jobs working with professional women and seeing how they are and watching professors... my parents I guess.... And just like her [my supervisor]... Comparing myself to her.

A: Uh huh, and her, okay. So, it's sort of like a lot of different experiences in the past [and present] presentations of what competence might look like come together to form a conceptualization of competence for you.

P2: Yes.

**Attuning to supervisor expectations.** *Attuning to supervisor expectations* was defined in round-one analysis as a **category** and continues to be substantiated as a *sub-category* under **attuning to desirable behavior**. The definition remains the same, which is the experience of attuning to desirable and undesirable behavior as defined by the supervisor. The two *properties* under this *sub-category* include *attuning to explicit expectations* and *attuning to implicit expectations*. Below is a quote from P4 that adds to the experience of *attuning to supervisor expectations*:

P4: But I think as I've gotten to know my supervisors, I also know kind of what they're looking for, what they value, you know? And there are definitely times, whether I'm aware of it in the moment or not, when I think, I'm like, 'Okay, we've been working on this thing, or talking about this thing. Here, let me show you a tape.' And I think that maybe encapsulates it a little bit for better or worse. And yeah, there can be a little bit of playing to what I know they do or what they're interested in. And I don't know if I would necessarily say I'm aware of doing that at the moment. But as I look back on it—yeah, my different supervisors have different things and—not knowing like, [with one supervisor if I say] 'here's a situation where I don't know what's going on.' His eyes light up, and it's like, 'I'm rewarded for this. Okay, great [laughter].' You know? 'So, let me do this.'

A: You're tuning in to what your supervisor thinks is competence. And sometimes that's congruent with what you think is competence. And sometimes it's not.

P4: Right.

A: And you make the decision to sort of manage your image a little bit to impress them maybe, or to connect with them maybe, or to have an experience that feels positive in supervision.

P4: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

The following quote from P6 also demonstrates the experience of attuning to his supervisor's expectations in supervision:

P6: It's actually interesting because I just, between the past semester and this semester, switched supervisors and the two are very different, both in age and experience... kind of... approach. So, I think one of the things that I'm thinking of right now is that switching to my current supervisor, I have to think about why exactly it is, but I definitely don't feel quite that need to impress or be more presentable. It's more of an authentic—I think, one thing, it's because she's closer in age to me and then also, she's just a very energetic like, 'I'm not afraid to be authentic, so you shouldn't be afraid to be authentic either,' kind of person.

*Attuning to explicit expectations.* The experience of *attuning to supervisor expectations* occurred through picking up on explicit or implicit cues. Gathering evidence from supervisors via their explicit cues of competence makes up the *property of attuning to explicit expectations*.

Participants One and Six talked about this experience:

A: How do you pick up on the cues that he wants those things from you or that he trusts you?

P1: Well, he said it during the interviews... he asked us, how do we work alone without a supervisor watching over us. And I was kind of like, 'I work pretty good. I get my work done in a timely fashion.' And he was like, 'Okay, because I don't micromanage, so I kind of trust you to be where you need to be.' That kind of thing.

P6: So, the expectations that are explicitly stated in terms of you need to be here on time, expect you to have some sort of client information or work to talk about, stuff like that.

*Attuning to implicit expectations.* The other way supervisees discussed gathering evidence about what behavior was desirable in the eyes of their supervisors is through *attuning to implicit expectations*. This involves gathering information about what desirable behavior looks like by picking up on implicit verbal and non-verbal cues from the supervisor. Participants Two and Six discussed this experience:

P2: She will you know give me the look or like just ask me more questions [which gave P2 the impression she needed to keep talking, even if she didn't have anything else to say].

P6: I think, again, certain expectations aren't really explicitly stated...it's not really explicitly stated. So then when it's not there's more room for interpretation.

A: Yeah. And where do you construct those ideas? How do you get information to make those ideas [about what she expects from you]?



P6: I would say just observing them [supervisors] just be. Just kind of observing their existence, how they carry themselves. Are they kind of, ‘Hi, how are you? How are things!?’ Very friendly or impressionable or coming in kind of sitting down with a notepad, a notepad in hand: ‘I clearly have something I want to get done in the supervision so let's sit down and get to it’ kind of thing. And I think some of the things... watching some of my instructors, just sped things up. I got more exposure to them kind of on the daily than I do with my supervisors. And watching how they kind of approach their craft as instructors and being in that supervisory role. So, it's kind of just matching—making your observations of what they do and they seem to be like communicating this way. So that when I do communicate with them, I'm going to kind of match my communication style to be on the same or similar level with theirs.

P6: I've had, in varied capacities, several people in supervisory roles over the last couple of years and varied approaches to counseling and supervision is different. So, it really does depend on the supervisor. I have one supervisor who's, I guess you know her, [name of supervisor]. She's my favorite supervisor instructor of the whole program just because she's very knowledgeable and she really knows what she's doing and she is so personable that you can be both [personable and knowledgeable] with her, so versus my current university supervisor, [name of other supervisor], who can be more intimidating. But for somebody who's in [a leadership role], she's a little older, she has more experience, where I come in more with that professionalism. So really kind of creating my own ideas about what that supervisor expects from me kind of defines how I approach it and the vibe that I give off. Same thing with my two supervisors which I've had on my internship site is that the first one being a little older, a little more experienced, calmer. I can kind of try to match that with a calm, more wise approach versus my current supervisor who's younger and more just more vocal in multiple ways... that to come in and be like, ‘Yeah. I'm ready to work, too. Because I kind of sometimes feel like I need to match your intensity here.’ So yeah. Really, once you kind of get to know the supervisor and kind of how they are and how they carry themselves. So, I guess in a sort of way you kind of mirror your supervisor in that way. Because somebody like [name of supervisor] who can be more informal, I'll come in and maybe be more informal. Versus somebody like [name of another supervisor] or my first supervisor at my internship site that I come in a little more—I mean, stoic might be a word that you could use. You kind of have some stoicism sometimes and I'm going to have some stoicism as well kind of thing.

**Attuning to site expectations.** The second *sub-category* of **attuning to desirable behavior** is *attuning to site expectations*, previously named *norms of the internship site* in round-one analysis. Evidence for this *sub-category* was further expanded upon by Participant Two, Seven, and Four:

P2: So, at [name of internship site] we aren't micromanaged, we're kind of on our own. Because we're on our own I guess that is like...[I think] they need to trust me to do a good job, you know, and the only time I get help or guidance about clients is during

supervision so, I want her to see that it wasn't a huge mistake that they took me on as an intern and that I'm okay on my own.

P7: The environment there is very much supportive, collaborative, mentoring. My peers that are in the positions in the office, we've all got an understanding of each other and support each other.

P4: It's different at these two different sites. I mean and that's really interesting. I hadn't really thought about that that much until now, but that is really true. I mean at the [name of first site], we see these folks every day, all day long for months and in a couple cases, years. It's so hard, and we all mess up, and it's like, 'Well, see you tomorrow [laughter]. That was a really rough session. We'll see you tomorrow. We'll do it again.' Whereas with [name of second site] it does feel a lot more... There's eight sessions, and it does feel—if you're lucky, I think the average across the counseling center is four sessions. And so I think that there is a little bit more of an emphasis—or a lot more of an emphasis—on just trying to be helpful to folks kind of in the moment, and there is less of a culture of... I don't think I would even put it this way if I didn't have the other experience, but in comparison, there is less of a culture of risk-taking and vulnerability and being open to not knowing. I mean that is sort of in some ways the mantra at [name of first site]. We have to be open to not knowing because this is so complicated, and you're working at a really deep level, and sometimes you don't know. And whereas at [name of second site], it is more 'let's get into the nuts and bolts of what did you say, when? Was that a turning point in the session that moment?' And it's important because it's session number three and you might have two more with the person. So, there is less of a curiosity about not knowing in comparison to the other place. So, I feel really lucky to have both experiences, and frankly, I think that the experience at the [name of first site] is significantly influencing my ability to be open at the other place too.

A: Yeah. So, there is this piece around the culture of the site is going to really influence what's expected of you in supervision.

P4: Right. Very much so. Very much so. Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting.

**Attuning to internal expectations.** The third *sub-category* under **attuning to desirable behavior** is *attuning to internal expectations*. Formerly **overcoming assumptions** in round-one analysis, these concepts are now represented in the subcategory *attuning to internal expectations*, in addition to two other *properties*: *reliving family of origin expectations* and *comparing self to others*. *Attuning to internal expectations* is defined as the internal experience of having expectations for oneself about what desirable behavior looks like. Three supervisees talked about how their desired and dreaded images of the self are defined, in part, by their own expectations of how they believe they should act. Here are experiences from P6, P1, and P2:

P6: But really the thing that's coming up for me right now is that, at least in my experience, so much of that impression management is an internal construct...I've never had my supervisor tell me what is expected of me or what kind of attitude [I should present], how I should present myself... it's created by me. And some of those things that you were saying earlier about wanting to appear competent, open to feedback, all stuff like that is stuff that isn't always explicitly stated by the supervisor. So... [those expectations are] something that you sense, you kind of pick up on that this is what good presentation in supervision is. So, it's really just kind of creating your own ideas about that... But really, a lot of that does come from your own ideas.

A: Okay and part of that [desire to sound articulate] is just your expectations on yourself to be able to fire back quickly... it's not necessarily that she's [your supervisor] saying that you need to be able to do that? It's just sort of an internal sense?

P2: Yeah, it's me. It's all me.

P1: I've always been an overachiever, straight-A student kind of personality. And I set the expectation for myself, so it's kind of—yeah. I have to be the best at what I'm doing.

A: So, your supervisor could be the warmest person in the world and so non-judgmental and you would still maybe beat yourself up sometimes if you didn't do a good enough job for yourself.

P1: Yes.

P1: I think it's myself. I hold myself to a higher standard. And I want to meet the expectations. Yeah, I want to meet the expectations.

A: Again, those expectations of yourself, of, 'I should be able to do this by myself.'

P1: Yeah, it definitely comes from being an overachiever. It's like, 'Okay, I got this. It's okay. I got this. I can control this [laughter].'

There are three properties of *attuning to internal expectations*. *Reliving family of origin expectations*, *overcoming systemic oppression* and *comparing self to others*.

*Reliving family of origin expectations*. Not surprisingly, internalized images of desirable behavior originated for some in supervisee family of origin experiences. *Reliving family of origin expectations* made up the first *property* that supports *attuning to internal expectations*.

Many of these quotes will come up again as I discuss the process of *reliving family of origin expectations* leading to **interpreting desired and dreaded images** later. Participants One, Two, Three, Five, and Six discussed *reliving family of origin expectations*:

P6: I grew up primarily with my dad who is a hard-working, Midwest, conservative guy. And so hard work was a big value in my house and you get what you work—or what you work for is what you get. And own up to your mistakes. Work hard, do the job right, kind of thing. So, I would say that's kind of the biggest value that's carried over. And a big thing for me is that I like to—I'm a perfectionist in some regards in that way and that I really try to do things really well. And when they're not—when they don't go as well as I would have hoped for, that can be stressful or I don't know what I'd call it. But in terms of how that translates now into supervision is that it's the same kind of thing where I like to work really hard. I like to get notes in on time. I like to be really prompt. Kind of that worker bee kind of mentality. And that I really don't want to be seen as somebody who's slacking in any way. So really trying to stay on top of things all the time is important.

A: Uh-huh. So some of those desired and dreaded images that you might want your supervisor to see you as might be ones that carried over from values that were instilled in you with your dad.

P6: A lot of family of origin values, morals, whatever it is they do, it impacts kind of your later years whether you really are aware of it or not. And that's how I am in everything. That kind of hard worker mentality, but it definitely shows in my internship as well.

A: Are you an oldest child, [P1]?

P1: Yes, I am. The oldest of five children.

A: Oh, you are? That was just a guess [laughter].

P2: Yes. And I am very parentified. So—I know this is off topic, but my siblings would often come to me before they'd go to my parents.

A: It's not off topic. I'm curious. Do you think that that experience of being the oldest and being parentified and being the person who everyone went to for help influences how you are in situations where you're in supervision and you're the one supposed to be asking for help?

P1: Yeah, I would say so. In supervision, definitely. I think for me—yeah, in supervision actually, I know it's a time where I can ask for help, but I don't necessarily ask for help. I'm more receptive towards feedback. And I notice within supervision I'm always looking for criticisms of myself, which my supervisor never does, and he will never do. It's like, 'Okay, I want you to point out something I did wrong so I can fix it.' But it's nothing I've ever done wrong, per se. I don't know. I'm weird [laughter] but definitely, yeah, I think—yeah. [inaudible] I set that for myself.

A: You feel those patterns from the past kind of picking up in situations where [you're in supervision]

P1: Definitely.

A: Yeah and I guess what I'm hearing is the one big way that that shows up is that you wait for a while, you hold things close and you don't speak up sometimes and part of that's just habit like because that's the way you're used to living your life and walking through the world. And do you think some of that's also motivated by this thing that we're calling impression management of like, I don't want him to see me this way or that way?

P1: Yes.

P3: I think personally, and I've actually talked about this in my own personal counseling, I think that the way I was brought up was sort of to emphasize, 'oh you're better than other people,' which is terrible but I kind of feel like that's what I was told kind of growing up, in so many words. And so, I have these two siblings who were really talented and I think that I just— now in the world and I don't always do better than others or I'm average or below average and that has been a hard thing to come to terms with. So, I think it's kind of the way that I was raised.... My sister had the same thing at one point. She said something like either me and my brother and her, either we are kind of full of ourselves and think we're really awesome or we think we're horrible and it's like there's not a lot of in between. It's kind of one or the other. There's not a lot of forgiveness of not being great. But then it's like we can get a lot of self-satisfaction and self-worth out of doing well. You know?

A: Yeah. That makes sense. I'm just thinking of that example that you told me last time we talked around being in a triadic supervision with another person and it felt like she was the favorite child and you were the stinky child, I think was the word you used. That seems like there's sort of a parallel there of wanting to make sure that you're going to be the best in the moment.

P3: Mm-hmm.

A: Yeah.

A: Because you still have that desire to appear competent in his [supervisor's] eyes.

P5: Definitely yes.

A: What are the factors that influence that desire for you?

P5: I think a lot of it is like family of origin... I mean I come from very high achieving family, so I have internalized a lot of these just like the bar that we set as a family and all of that I think a lot of it is coming from within me.

***Overcoming systemic oppression.*** The experience of overcoming systemic oppression was identified in round-one analysis named as overcoming assumptions. It was further supported in second-round interviews. Participant One discussed this experience:

P1: ...My race [impacts my desire to appear competent] because I'm a Black woman. I do feel like I have to work twice as hard to prove myself. And so, I know that's what the majority [of impression desires] comes from and then just my upbringing.

A: Okay. Can you tell me more about the experience of what you're saying around it comes from being a Black woman? Can you help me understand more about that experience for you?

P1: Well, just for me when I meet people and I tell them like, 'Oh, I graduated with my masters.' They're very surprised, very shocked. That kind of thing. And then I am a single mother so, they're like, 'Oh, you graduated from—you got your master's? And I'm like, 'Yes, I have my master's.' So I still [haven't] proven my worth, my education, so I feel like I have to be pristine... a certain way... when I step foot outside my house.

A: ...Do you think that that fits into that category that I named as overcoming assumptions, assumptions that people might have of you?

P1: Yes.

A: Yeah. Like when you walk in a room people might assume things about you just by the color of your skin or by the way that you look, and then you have to overcome that by showing them how competent you are?

P1: Yes.

**Comparing self to others.** Another experience related to picking up on cues about what desirable behavior looks like is called *comparing self to others*. This makes up the third property under **attuning to internal expectations**. Participant Two discussed her experience of picking up cues about desirable behavior from other people she respects:

A: Where do you think those images [of desirable behavior] came from?

P2: I guess watching other people that I look up to and seeing like the things that make them professional... or somebody that could be a good counselor. That's what I feel like is ideal, I guess.

A: So it's true comparison of yourself to others?

P2: Yeah.

On the other hand, Participant Three discussed how she compared herself to a peer intern at her setting, who she did not necessarily respect but who displayed different behavior:

P3: The other intern that's there only does an hour [of supervision] and she just seems like she's totally not difficult at all. I think she doesn't seem to be a super great counselor, but she's just kind of laid-back and chill and I feel like I'm not being that sometimes.

A: She's not needy.

P3: Yeah, and I really don't want to be needy. Yeah. No.

In sum, the first **category** of the experience of impression management in supervision is named **attuning to desirable behavior** and is supported by the three *sub-categories* of **attuning to supervisor expectations**, **attuning to site expectations**, and **attuning to internal expectations**.

The experience of **interpreting desired and dreaded images** makes up the next experience.

### **Interpreting desired and dreaded images**

Round-one produced the category of **impression anxiety**, which changed in round two to more broadly capture the experience of consciousness and desire to appear certain ways in supervision, now called **interpreting desired and dreaded images**. The *sub-category* from

round one of *desire to balancing images* was expanded upon. Due to changing conceptualizations of the experiences and processes of impression management, the impression desires that were defined in round-one analysis as a part of **attuning to supervisor expectations of competence** (for example, *openness to feedback, empathy and ability to sit with deep emotion, etc.*) now are represented as dimensions of competence under the **category of interpreting desired and dreaded images**. Additional dimensions of images of competence emerged in round-two analysis, which I will expand upon in this section. The *sub-category* called *impression desires with peers*, a prominent experience in round one, reorganized to categorize PEERS as a SITUATIONAL FACTOR that influenced the process of impression management. The impression desire of appearing at least as competent as peers is now captured as one of the images of competence. The **category of interpreting desired and dreaded images** is now supported by the *sub-categories* of *desire to appear competent, desire to balance images*, and *desire to be seen accurately*.

**Desire to appear competent.** Participants continued to discuss their *desire to appear competent* to their supervisors in round-two interviews. New properties that help define what desirable images look like in supervision include the desire to be a *positive representation* of an intern (and avoid appearing as a negative representation). Participant One discussed how she felt uncomfortable wearing jeans in the office, even though she was expected to wear casual clothes with her clients since she does home visits. She reported that she tries to speak and dress professionally because she is aware that she is not only representing herself, but the supervisor, the school program she came from, and the agency she works for:

P1: Just for me, I err on the side of caution [by dressing and acting extra professionally]. Because I feel like not only am I representing myself, I'm representing my supervisor, the program, and the agency.

A: So, there's a lot of different stakeholders involved in who you're representing.

P1: Yes.

A: If you give a bad impression, that would mean more than just for you. It would be something for other people.

P1: Yes. That's what I feel.

Participants also spoke to their desires to appear *at least as good as their peers*. This is now a *property of the desire to appear competent*:

P3: Yeah. I think that I want to seem better than others [peers in supervision].

P6: We're [my peers and I] all trying to, in theory, kind of get to the same place, getting through this program, getting licensed, getting a good job, that kind of thing. And to appear that you are behind in any way can definitely be a stressful thing. And you don't want to come in and share stuff that you're struggling with and then have everybody be like, 'Oh. That's not an issue for me,' and somehow internalizing it like, 'Oh. There's something wrong with me, 'or, 'I'm not doing something right because other people aren't experiencing this.'

Finally, appearing vulnerable emerged as a *property* of the desirable images of competence.

Appropriate vulnerability may be a trait that is normative for the counseling profession.

Although appearing vulnerable is desirable, participants wanted to avoid appearing too vulnerable as well as too emotionally disconnected.

P4: There was a shift in my thinking where I sort of recognized that [vulnerability] is a trait of the profession. And in some ways that plays into— 'I will impress these folks if I'm vulnerable.' I mean, I think there is a little bit of that in the back of my mind, but then there's the, 'I'm going to titrate it out a little bit [to not show too much vulnerability]'

**Desire to balance images.** Participants continued to talk about their desires to balance multiple or competing images of the self. The following quotes continue to support this *sub-category*, previously defined in round-one analysis:

P3: So, it's just really, yeah—it's super hard to find the balance between like, 'I am motivated to learn. Teach me.' And like, 'I'm not too annoying and excited and demanding too much of your time.' So that, in the past, has been a difficult balance for me to strike.

A: Right. So, you have to be open to feedback and eager. But you don't want to be so eager that it feels like a burden to her to have to teach you all the time.

P3: Yeah. Yeah. It's kind of tricky.



A: Uh-huh. Yeah. It is tricky. It's really tricky. That reminds me, too, of sort of the other challenge [you mentioned before] of the balance between like, 'I really want to appear competent, but I don't want to appear too competent. Because then, if I'm too competent, then I look like a know-it-all. And so, I want to have some degree of vulnerability, but I don't want it to be too vulnerable that it's too much.' So, there is a kind of balancing act there.

P3: Totally. Because being too confident, it's like even that's pretty bad, too, in this profession.

P6: ...To bring in that personal side into supervision, I try not to do too much. But [I also try] not hide it completely, because not bringing that in [to] supervision would kind of give off the impression that like, 'I don't want to do this. I'm not cut out for this.'

**Desire to be seen accurately.** Round-two analysis produced a new *sub-category* of **interpreting desired and dreaded images**, understood as the *desire to be seen accurately*. This was hinted at in round one, though had been previously categorized under *fear of being misunderstood*. Participant Three discussed a situation with her supervisor where she was afraid of being seen as too sensitive. She worried that because she cries in supervision when receiving feedback that her supervisor saw her as someone who cannot handle receiving feedback.

Participant Three did not want to be seen inaccurately, as if she could not receive feedback.

Therefore, she tried to present the image of resiliency so her supervisor would see her accurately:

P3: [I felt] a little bit fraudulent because then I'm like, 'can I trust you?' [to see that I can handle feedback]. I don't know because I wonder if you're [supervisor] just sort of padding this to help me because I'm being so—because I cry sometimes in the session...in supervision.' So that's definitely a part of my process where I'm like, 'Okay.' Sometimes, I'm like, 'I can't—' sometimes I literally go in there and I'm like, 'I need to not—I need to act put together today so that she feels like she can give me actual feedback.'

Participant Four compared himself with another intern at his site. The other intern showed incompetent work frequently—P4's assessment was that she may have thought of herself as an incompetent counselor. Participant Four desired to be seen as "doing okay" because he thought he was indeed doing okay:

P4: Yeah. And maybe that also speaks to her [another intern at the site] self-concept where it might be more comfortable for her to show a bad tape if she has that congruent concept of herself as not a great counselor sometimes. For me, it's like 'I have places where I'm struggling, and I need help, with but overall I'm okay. I do okay' and so sometimes I want to show where I'm doing okay because I feel like I'm doing okay.

Participant Seven provided an example of his impression desires of being seen accurately, which are a bit more complex. He sees himself as a collaborative and open person, and he has the desire to portray that image of himself to others. Participant Seven had a difficult time deciphering between behavior intended to be collaborative and behavior intended to *appear* collaborative. In the following quote, he discussed how his main motivator is to be seen as who he is. He was curious if impression management for him is the same thing as being congruent. This quote does not directly link the desire to be seen accurately to impression management, since what he describes as impression management may actually fit more with a definition of congruence. However, it does portray the experience of the desire to be seen accurately:

P7: But I do think...my impression management...I can see how everything I've said about how I interact and the assumptions I have and the philosophies I hold, I can see how those relate back to self-concept. And I view myself as collaborative and things like that. And so, it does make me wonder if I'm managing impressions more than I even understand by just being congruent with myself. I don't want to show up and look like I think I've got everything figured out and I'm only in it for me. That would be inconsistent with who I think I am as a person. And so, I could imagine that my actions, decisions, and way of being are filtering through that lens. I mean, I guess I would assume that would be the same for everybody.... My first impression management is probably just to be congruent with myself. And I assume that filters into everything else, including being a counselor-in-training and in supervision. But my impressions, or that management, I think, is formed in those bigger-picture things and just funnels naturally into supervision.

In sum, **interpreting desired and dreaded images**, makes up the second **category** of the experience of impression management in supervision following second-round analysis. The category was supported by *sub-categories* of *desire to appear competent*, *desire to balance images*, and the *desire to be seen accurately*.

### Weighing Risk versus Utility

The third **category** after round-two analysis is called **weighing risk versus utility**. This category encompasses the round-one experiences of **attuning to safety** and **willingness to appear as a dreaded image**, integrating the additional layer of weighing the riskiness of appearing as a dreaded image with the usefulness of taking that risk. **Weighing risk versus utility** is supported by the *sub-categories* of *assessing safety with the supervisor*, *assessing internal readiness for risk*, *assessing potential losses*, and *assessing utility*. The following quotes from Participant Four help illuminate the general experience of **weighing risk versus utility**:

A: Where it's like, 'Yes. I will risk something. If learning for me is more important than saving face.' There's a sort of decision tree, where it's like, 'Do I want to learn something here? Or do I want to save face here?'

P4: I think that gets to the heart of the situation I'm just talking about because showing this episode in a session where I do the thing that I hate that I do, and I know I'm doing it. I'm not learning anything there. But I may be losing face. As opposed to, 'I'm going to show you this thing where I'm legitimately bumbling around, but I want to learn. And I want to learn something.' So that I think gets to the heart of that. Yeah.

A: Yeah. And can you tell me about how you make the decision about what you hold back?

P4: Yeah. I think there's a specific situation that I can hold back. And it's really the only one that really comes to mind. And you know, I spend a lot of time working with college students, or college-age students. I mean, they're all kind of in that age range for the most part. One of my personal challenges that I work on a lot in therapy is the line between these critical kind of brief moments of psychoeducation versus inadvertently slipping over into just lecture, right? There are times people need to know. Like, 'Hey. This is a trauma response. And this is what happens.' But then, being careful not to be pulled into an expert role. Which is hard for me because I've been an expert for a long time in different fields. And I've spent a lot of time in that role. And so that's a—that is a personal thing that I work on—I'm aware of, and I work on a lot. And I think that is a situation where I am a little bit more careful about what I'm showing because some of it is my personal reactions to seeing myself on tape. There are times where I think I'm—I kind of slip into that. And I just really dislike—I dislike it. It's like, 'You didn't mean to, but you're kind of coming across as just this pompous know-it-all.' I see it. I get it. I'm going to work on it. I don't even need to show this. I know the deal. And it's really painful. And I got this one. And so, I think it's a little bit of a combination of feeling a little bit of shame, and also kind of like, 'Goddamn. I did it again. Dammit.' Like, 'I

know this. I don't need to show this pretty rough, vulnerable moment of myself because I know it.' And so that's the main specific situation. But there are others—I feel like there are other moments where maybe I'm aware of what I'm doing, but I'm not quite so embarrassed by my behavior. And I'm willing to say, 'Okay. Give me some help on how to manage this particular situation.'

A: Yeah.

P4: Yeah.

A: Yeah. So, two things I'm hearing. One is that there is a piece around self-supervising. When you feel a sense of embarrassment or shame about your behavior, that also comes along with...When you feel a sense of shame and embarrassment but also self-awareness, and you can self-supervise yourself. It's like, 'I don't need to hear this from someone else because I see it. And I can be my own supervisor in this situation. And I would rather not expose myself to even more embarrassment because I'm giving it to myself enough.'

P4: Right. Yeah. Yes. That, definitely.

A: Yeah. And then, there's another piece for you. It sounds like there's this decision-making process about the utility or the usefulness of showing that vulnerability. It's like sometimes it feels very useful to get an outside perspective, and sometimes it doesn't feel as useful.

P4: Yep. Yep. Definitely.

A: When it doesn't feel as useful, you're like, 'I'll do it myself. It's okay.'

P4: I know this. Yep.

When I asked Participant One when she would take the risk to expose herself to the discomfort of asking for help from her supervisor, she imagined a great deal of anxiety. She stated that she waits until the anxiety of not getting help is intolerable.

P1: I think it [the discomfort of not getting help with an issue] would have to cause me a lot of stress and anxiety [in order to go speak with my supervisor about a vulnerability]. So for example, with the previous client that I had a lot of countertransference with, I was like, 'Okay. I can't hold this in anymore. I really got to talk to my supervisor. This is a issue for me.' So I went to go seek him out and he wasn't in the building so I found another supervisor that I was comfortable talking with because she's a woman. And so I was able to get it out that way. So I think it would have to cause me a great deal of stress and anxiety [in order to go] to talk about with him.

A: ...so there's that threshold that it has to be a lot. It has to be a great deal of discomfort and anxiety going on for you in order to ask for help from your supervisor about it. And I guess I also heard you say that you trust your supervisor a lot and that it's not that you don't think he could handle it. It's also just about your comfort level with that.

P1: Yes.

A: But how do you decide when it's worth showing a more vulnerable or a kind of dreaded image of yourself?

P1: Oh, gosh. I guess I would say, like I said, a lot of stress and anxiety but usually when it starts interfering with my professional life, so my personal life is spilling into my professional life, and my supervisor - because we're all counselors - they can kind of read

my emotions. I'm not one to have the poker face. So he can tell, 'You don't look like your perky self this morning.' I'm like, 'Yeah, I'm tired. I'm going through some things.' And then he'll say, 'Do you want to talk about it?' And I'm like, 'No, I don't want to talk about it.' Okay. So yeah. Like I said, it'd have to be my personal and professional life are spilling inside each other, which I try to do a good job of separating. But I know that can be difficult.

A: Yeah, you have to really need it. You have to really need the help.

P1: Yeah. And it's really hard for me to ask for help. Yeah, it's really hard for me.

A: Yeah.

**Assessing safety with the supervisor.** This *sub-category* was initially *supervisory relationship* under **attuning to safety** in round one. After round-two analysis, these experiences were expanded upon and the name changed slightly to *assessing safety with the supervisor* to occupy a *sub-category* of **weighing risk versus utility**. *Assessing safety with the supervisor* refers to the experience of a supervisee assessing how likely it is to have their needs met by a supervisor and to not be judged for disclosures of vulnerability. Supervisees talked about conditions for psychological safety in the supervisory relationship, which made up the *properties* of this *sub-category*: *supervisor responses to vulnerability, supervisor self-disclosure, supervisor managing power, supervisor initiating vulnerable discussions and supervisor pace and creating space for vulnerability*. The following quotes demonstrate the general experience of **assessing safety with the supervisor**:

P7: [I notice] the way of being of the supervisor in meetings and talking to counselors-in-training just in the office and what not. And kind of watching, assessing, and then I think, with my supervisor, she appeared to be really caring and supportive. So, it made it easy to make the decision to say, 'I'm having a hard time with this. I don't understand. Please help.'

P7: What I noticed [about the supervisor] was just tone of voice, body posturing, facial expressions that were very open, not aggressive, but warm and supportive and then, a fair amount of reflection and empathy. Followed by a... tentative offering of something that might help me after... that is what I have experienced with my supervisor.

P4: I mean, it's a question of trust is what it [willingness to appear incompetent] comes down to. I don't think it's something that I was necessarily willing to do at the outset. Like

I think my first tapes... I tended to show people I was a little bit more proud of, if I had the opportunity.

***Supervisor responses to vulnerability.*** The first *property* of *assessing safety with the supervisor* is *supervisor responses to vulnerability*. This is defined as a supervisee assessing whether their supervisor can be trusted to respond in ways that feel psychologically safe to them. Essentially, this involves trusting that supervisors will validate concerns, understand, and be non-judgmental. Participants talked about noticing how their supervisors responded to their disclosures, taking into account whether it felt like a good decision afterward.

P3: Also, the person definitely has a lot to do with it. My supervisor right now is super maternal, so I feel relatively safe just because she's so supportive. Like sharing with her my vulnerabilities. Whereas with other people, I think I would feel not as safe.

A: So, you picked up on that cue from him that it was okay to share that [vulnerability], because he didn't judge you, or it was okay.

P1: Yeah, yeah.

A: Okay. And how do you know when it's safe to tell your supervisor that they made a mistake or that he's not meeting your needs?

P1: Well, that's a ongoing conversation that we have. And so, my supervisor, he will often say, 'This is your supervision. If you find this helpful, great. If not, let me know, and then we can tweak it, so I can meet your needs.' And so far, I'm finding that very—I find it good in the sense of—he's been doing counseling longer than I have, so I'm more receptive to take what he's saying. So, I feel, for me, even if he were to make a mistake, he's very good at, I guess, just, 'Okay, I made a mistake and..' just reframing a mistake in a way to make sense, I guess I would say, yeah. So, it's kind of like, 'Oh, I'm sorry.' And he'll say, 'I was—' which is not an excuse. He'll say like, 'Oh, I was thinking this way, but now that you're saying that, okay, now I can go on a different train of thought,' so to speak.

A: So he accommodates when he does make a mistake; he changes his behavior?

P1: Yes.

A: So that gives you a signal that it's safe to tell him and give him feedback because he listens to you?

P1: Mm-hmm.

P1: At my level of counseling, I feel like, 'Okay, I should have some kind of competency,' but I really do like the fact that my supervisor reiterates that I just started out in this field; I'm not expected to be perfect. If I were to hold myself up to that standard then, that would be an issue, a problem. He knows I'm going to make mistakes, and I have made plenty of mistakes, and he has been very patient with me in making those mistakes.

A: Okay. And so it feels like now you can show him the mistakes because you're not going to— he's not going to react in a way that's going to feel unsafe for you?

P1: Yes.

Supervisees did not always experience their supervisor's responses to vulnerability as impetus for creating more safety. This came out in first-round interviews and continued to be expanded upon in second-round interviews:

P2: I think... she does judge me for sure. I don't trust her a whole lot not to be judgmental.

A: Ok, so you feel judged when you're with her.

P2: Yes, definitely.

A: What kind of cues does she give you that are judgmental?

P2: ...In the beginning of the year it was the first time we were discussing a case and I guess I didn't really know how to talk about clients yet so I said something like 'some of what they are talking about seems like it might be Autism.' And she immediately jumped at me and said, 'you can't just jump right to diagnosis!' and that really sticks out. Super judgmental. And, I don't know. I guess the cue was a verbal cue. And sometimes she makes faces.

P3: She saw a few tapes of me where I was not doing very good feeling reflections, and I was more cognitive, and then she made this assumption about the main thing that I need to work on. And would be like, 'You're more cognitive.' And that was the one thing when I was like— I don't know. I still don't love it when people say stuff like that. When supervisors tell me stuff like that, maybe it's true, maybe it's just me being defensive. Again [laughter], I don't know. But it was just very difficult for me to connect with her.

*Supervisor normalizing vulnerability.* The dimension of supervisor normalizing vulnerability is now under the *property of supervisor responses to vulnerability*. On one end of the spectrum, supervisors could respond to vulnerabilities by normalizing and reassuring that it was appropriate. On the other hand, supervisors could respond in ways that did not reassure the supervisee. The following are examples of how supervisees noticed whether or not supervisors normalized vulnerabilities:

P3: Whenever I kind of do that [disclose a vulnerability] and I go there, she's always very much like, 'No. It's totally okay for you to be open here.' She's very verbally validating. Almost too much sometimes. But she's never shamed me or anything, verbally, or done anything that makes me feel like it's not okay to be upset.

A: Yeah. Yeah. It sounds like for you reassurance that it's okay to be vulnerable verbally [is important in order to take the risk]. Actually, saying, 'Thank you. You're good. You're on the right track. I'm glad that you showed this.'

P3: 'Thanks for showing this tape that was really hard for you to show.' Yeah. Stuff like that.

P6: Yeah, normalizing's [that it's okay to be vulnerable] a big part of it too. Where if you were to, say, share your insecurities and if she was like, 'That's weird, that hasn't happened to me,' like, 'Oh great.' But she's like, 'Yeah, that happens. That's a super normal thing to experience in your development.'

A: Yeah, and it sounds like with your old supervisor it wasn't necessarily that she was shaming but more that she wasn't automatically that validating and so it left more space for you to experience shame in yourself.

P6: Yeah, she was more of a life coach. She more listened because she was a really good listener and then when you share your vulnerable areas and then kind of sit in that silence, that empty space, that just leaves more, you more interpret and bring the shame back kind of thing. Like I said, with this supervisor, she is more engaged. As soon as I share something, she's like, 'Yeah, yeah', and doesn't really sit in it much.

P4: I mean, I think in some ways, it's [figuring out how safe it is to bring in a mistake or vulnerability] kind of built as we go. I talk about my supervisor at [name of site], his eyes light up when I bring up something I'm struggling with. It's pretty easy to tell, he loves it. He loves it when we dive into that stuff.

***Supervisor self-disclosure.*** Participants discussed their experiences of supervisor self-disclosure of mistakes and vulnerabilities. *Supervisor self-disclosure* makes up the second *property of assessing safety with the supervisor*. The following quotes demonstrate this experience:

P2: Um how do you know when it's safe to show your supervisor vulnerability? Uhhh... I mean, when she shows a little bit of vulnerability, I think. That tells me that it's a safe place and we can be open with each other in that way...I think that's actually something that helped our relationship. She gave us, all the interns at my place, she gave us a seminar and during the seminar it was about termination and it was... she was telling a really sweet story about a client she had terminated with and they didn't have any parents I think so she attended their graduation ceremony and when she was telling that story she cried and that's when I felt like...Ohhh, she is really... she's not like 'on' all the time. She feels things just like me. Which, you know, it feels silly to say that but that's when I started to feel safe sharing emotions with her.

A: So you're saying that when you saw the humanness of your supervisor it felt more comfortable to show that to her as well.

P2: Exactly.



A: Is part of that too... like the norms were created in the room for you to be more vulnerable by her being more vulnerable?

P2: Yeah, yeah. Like, we didn't talk about it... but, yeah it felt like, like I said, this is a safe place. She's showing her emotions so that means it's okay.

P3: She also does a lot of self-disclosure, so she'll be like, 'I—' she talks about herself and her experiences with emotions and situations that aren't ideal as well. So, it makes me feel much more comfortable sharing with her.

P3: And I think a lot of it for me is dependent on whether or not they have opened up about something that they're vulnerable about. And I think for me I'm a lot better at showing sides of myself that I don't love if people disclose to me sides of themselves that they don't love or times that things happened that weren't ideal. That just really, really helps me.

P5: I think that for me it's partly because the person I'm working with, my supervisor you know, something we talked about last time that we chatted [P5 and the researcher] was that my supervisor didn't put a lot of herself into our sessions... like I didn't know a lot about her life or who she was or all of that. We weren't necessarily connecting person-to-person, but like colleague-to-colleague. And I feel like with my supervisor now, like there is always this 5 to 10 minutes just chat about our lives and his partner is pregnant and we're connecting about having kids and it just feels more comfortable and human and I think with that in the picture I have felt more comfortable being fully human and I bring a lot more tapes to our supervision and I'll be like, look I'm really struggling with this client I'm just coming up against a wall and I have no idea what to do... there's still a little bit of fear there that I'll be exposed as this person who really does have no idea what I'm doing in the session or that he won't want me to be an intern there anymore... you know coming up with worst-case scenarios... but I think that for me...at least with him that what has enabled me to put myself out there in that way is that he reveals his imperfections, not only as a person, but also as a clinician... what he struggled with... mistakes that he's made and what he's learned from them... I think all of that just gives me information you know... I know that he's seeing me as a whole person and not just as a person who is confused with a client and therefore, I don't know anything.

A: And the other thing I'm hearing you saying pretty clearly is that when your supervisor shows her humanness or her authenticity more, that leaves space for you to do the same.

P6: Yeah, yeah, definitely. I think in the place where I'm at, authenticity is something that they really strive for. It's funny because like I said to you earlier, my two supervisors that I had the first two semesters compared to this one, they could not be more different. One of them's older, very calm, mindfulness, Zen kind of stuff. Whereas the other one, she's younger and more peppy. Like, 'I'm going to challenge you. Let's work on this! I'm excited! Let's do this.' And those are their authentic selves. Not that my past supervisor never discouraged me from being authentic, but I think with this supervisor, it's okay to be authentic because she really does a good job at validating the uncomfortable areas that an emerging counselor experiences. And that she's sort of like, 'I had those experiences,' and, 'Here's the areas where I struggled.' I think empathy would be a good one, that it's

like, I was in your shoes, I know what it's like, it's scary to be authentic but it's fine. I'm going to be authentic and I hope you're authentic too.

On the other hand, Participant Three talked about the experience of lack of supervisor self-disclosure from her supervisor:

P3: I felt like she didn't share any vulnerabilities with us, so the idea of sharing vulnerability with her was not great. I didn't want to do it.

*Supervisor managing power.* How the supervisor managed their power in the supervision situation seemed to be a factor that influenced supervisees' experience of impression management in supervision. *Supervisor managing power* now makes up the third *property* of *assessing safety with the supervisor*.

P6: So as long as it's not actually damaging your clients, if you bring it [a mistake] up in supervision, then at least for me, it's not going to be a reprimanding situation, like, [she will respond like] 'yeah that's cool that you're in touch with that and that you're aware of it.'

P6: She's very like, 'This is your call. You need to do what's best for you in this situation,' kind of thing, which is nice to hear... It's like, 'We don't make that decision. This is you. You have some power here.' So, to be able to get the advice or the suggestions when you need them but also to have them really help you feel more confident in your decision-making has been a pretty important area for me, personally, in supervision. And when a supervisor can attune to your need to grow personally and match that, I think is helpful [for creating a safe relationship].

Participants Three and Four described experiences in which a supervisor handled power in a way that felt uncomfortable.

P3: I think a lot of it was the power dynamic and sort of the sense that I got from that supervisor that she wanted us to know that she knew more than us, kind of. That it was... for her—it was important to her to feel very like the expert. And I felt like I couldn't argue with that. I felt like I really wasn't allowed to have my own opinion because it seemed so important to her that she—I don't know—be right about it.... She just came off as very—she came off as very defensive to feedback, to me. So, any time I would give her...I never felt like I could give her feedback.

P4: My experience with my doc supervisor is a little different. It's kind of interesting to think about because he actually brings thing—with my other supervisors, they asked me, 'What do you want to talk about today?' And with him he's like, 'Hey, I've got a few things on the list. Du, du, du.' He has a list and it's curious because I'm the first person

he's ever supervised. I don't know what that's about, but it is a different experience with him. And so with him, I sort of maybe have a couple of things that I go in to talk about. But I also know he's going to talk about things and I don't like that as much. He's on this kick right now where he's really focusing on how I address risk in the room and I'm just like, 'I'm doing fine. Stop bringing it up.' But for whatever reason, he keeps bringing it up. And it's totally annoying for me, and I don't like it [laughter]. And I sort of muscle it out and it's fine. We do it. Whereas [with] the other supervisor, it's just kind of what I want to bring.

A: It sounds like how much trust they demonstrate in you.

P4: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's a good—yep. Yeah. I mean, I definitely feel significantly more trust in my primary supervisor in part because she trusts me to bring up what I think I need to bring up. Whereas with the other guy, with my doc supervisor—here's another guy. I feel a little bit like I'm going to clash. [inaudible] maybe or there's something there. It's like, 'Okay, what is [doc supervisor's name] going to—what has he got for me today?'

A: There's a hierarchy that he's trying to establish over you.

P4: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. It definitely feels that way. Yeah, and it's not like—I respect what he's doing, but there's more of a power dynamic there because he does it that way.

Participant Seven discussed what he imagined it would be like to be with a supervisor who yielded power in an uncomfortable way:

P7: I'm trying to imagine supervisors who I might feel uncomfortable with, what their personalities might be like or what their attributes might be that would discourage me from being authentic. And when I image that, I, of course, imagine people that are more closed off, cold, maybe punitive in how they deal with differences in opinion. Or they might perceive things rigidly as fact-based binaries, where I might find it a spectrum.

***Supervisor initiating vulnerable discussions.*** One of the conditions for supervisees taking risks to share vulnerabilities was whether the supervisor first opens the door for vulnerable topics. This forms the next *property* of ***assessing safety with the supervisor, supervisor initiating vulnerable topics.*** Supervisees took cues from their supervisors about what was safe to share based on whether the supervisor first took the risk to open the topic of conversation. Under this *property*, two dimensions arose: supervisor seeking feedback and supervisor broaching discussions about culture. In the following quote I summarized P1's sharing, which she then confirmed, providing insight into the general experience of assessing whether the supervisor initiates vulnerable topics. Participant One generally did not talk about

topics related to cultural identity in supervision because her supervisor seemed to avoid talking about these topics. The following quote demonstrates her general experience of waiting for her supervisor to broach topics first:

A: Yeah, so it's like you're waiting for a cue from him that this is a topic that's okay to talk about. It's not that you don't want to talk about it, it's just that you're waiting for him to give you that signal.

P1: Yes.

A: And it seems like in your supervision with him there are some things that you guys just don't talk about that much maybe because he hasn't really given the signal they're on the table to talk about?

P1: Yes.

*Supervisor seeking feedback.* The first dimension of *supervisor initiating vulnerable topics* is whether or not a supervisor seeks feedback. Participant Three discussed how her supervisors did not seek her feedback in the supervision situation:

P3: And I guess, in terms of the feedback part, it just is really sticking with me that I wish that they would just ask for feedback, and why don't they? I feel kind of annoyed about that because with clients you do that all the time, you're like, 'How is this relationship feeling to you?' And I don't think I've ever had a professor or a supervisor do that, so that's sort of a bummer.

A: It's like you'll follow their lead. They're the leader here, and if they want to open up that conversation you'll go there, but you're not going to just bring it up.

P3: Yeah. Yeah. It'd be really hard to do that.

P3: But in terms of feeling safe—I almost feel like they should ask me how they're doing. That would make me feel safe [to be honest with them] and they don't ever do that. I don't know if I've ever had a supervisor be like, 'I want to talk about how supervision is feeling for you right now. What else can I be doing?' I kind of feel no one does that and that would be nice because it's sort of hard to give feedback just out of the blue. I think at that point I would feel comfortable saying something.

A: If it was invited, you would speak up but you're not sure if it's your role to say something just off the cuff.

P3: Yeah. I mean I think that that speaks to the power hierarchy thing of being like, 'That's not—I can't do that. They're my boss essentially. I can't tell them how to do their job.' And also, there's just this sense of like they have way more experience than I do. Who am I to know how they're supposed to help me [laughter]? They're the ones who should know this. Yeah that's how it feels.

A: I think I get what you mean. You feel like it would be overstepping your boundaries.

P3: Yeah. It would feel like an overstep. I think I would feel uncomfortable telling them how to do their job. I think it is pretty related to—it's like you can complain about them

to your coworkers or your peers or whatever but to actually talk to them about it would feel awkward unless it was a really huge issue or unless they asked.

On the other hand, P5 talked about how her supervisor asked about how he could be meeting her needs better:

P5: But I brought it up to him a couple weeks ago [insecurities about whether I'm using the supervision time correctly] and kind of towards the end of the session I was like 'am I like doing supervision right?' Like... I was just feeling like... is the stuff I'm bringing in the right stuff...?' and he laughed and you know, was like, 'yes 100% this is exactly where I would expect you to be second semester of internship.' And then he was like 'you know, after every supervision we have I wonder if I am bringing enough to you, like am I meeting your needs?' I just thought that was interesting... it was still a professional way, but he was talking about his own insecurities around being a supervisor. It was cool to talk about, because I think people don't generally, explicitly talk about the roles that we're holding in the relationship.

A: Yeah and sounds like contributes to you feeling safer to be yourself and be congruent with him.

P5: Yeah, exactly.

*Supervisor broaching discussions about culture.* The next dimension of *supervisor initiating vulnerable topics* is supervisor broaching discussions about culture. This showed up in first-round analysis and continues to be exemplified by the following quotes from P1:

A: Has he [your supervisor] ever said something to you like, 'Hey, we're different in terms of race and in terms of gender, in terms of age and let's talk about those differences.?'

P1: I want to say yes, but I'm going to have to say like a hard, cold, no.

A: Yeah, and because he's never brought it up, does that make you less likely to bring it up with him?

P1: Yeah, I would say so. Yeah, I would say that and that's a lot—I would say majority of my conversations like, I wait for other people to bring it up. Depending on the situation and the context of the conversation, I wait for other people to bring it up, but once they bring it up, it's like, 'Oh, let's talk about this. Yeah, let's get into this.'

P1: I don't think my supervisor knows I'm Muslim. I don't think he knows.

A: He hasn't asked you about your identities other than the ones that are visible?

P1: I [don't] believe so, yeah. I don't think he knows.

*Supervisor pace and creating space for vulnerability.* The final property of *assessing*

*safety with the supervisor*, which was also part of round-one analysis, is defined by *supervisor pace and creating space for vulnerability*. Participant Six adds to the conceptualization of this *property*:

P6: Because if I was having a rough day or rough week personally, and I came into supervision and my supervisor like started grilling me on work topics, and keeping very task-oriented...that might be sort of difficult for me because I'd be like, 'I'm kind of struggling personally here. It's kind of getting in the way of—I can't really be effective in this kind of setting right now,' and to tap a supervisor that checks into that and really creates a space for it. Not like your own counseling session, but it's like, 'Let's check in. See how you're doing personally. Let's talk about how it's affecting your work,' and not to [be] like, 'We need to figure out how you can be better.' But it's like, 'Let's see how it's affecting it or not affecting it, and what do you do about it?'

All of the *properties* in the **sub-category** of *assessing safety with the supervisor* have to do with what the supervisor does or does not do to create perceived psychological safety for the supervisee. These properties include noticing *supervisor responses to vulnerability*, *supervisor self-disclosure*, *supervisor managing of power*, *supervisor initiating vulnerable topics*, and *supervisor pace and creating space for vulnerability*. **Weighing risk versus utility** also includes the assessment of whether a supervisee feels safe enough internally to take a risk to appear as a dreaded image.

**Assessing internal readiness for risk.** Part of the experience of weighing the risk to disclose a vulnerability seems to be an internal experience. Although there were hints of supervisee internal experiences of readiness for risk in round one interviews, the **sub-category** of *assessing internal readiness for risk* took shape in round-two analysis. *Assessing internal readiness for risk* can be understood as an internal experience of feeling a tolerable amount of internal shame, connection to past safety, and a sense of control to make a vulnerable behavioral decision in supervision. This **sub-category** is supported by multiple *properties* including the following: *weighing internal shame*, *connection to past safety*, *sense of control*, *sense of self-*

*efficacy*, and *ego strength*. The following quote from P6 demonstrates how he experienced fear when about to make a disclosure of a mistake, though this fear is not grounded in worry that the supervisor would respond in a shaming or reprimanding way. Instead, fear originated as an internal experience:

P6: But again, I think a lot of that [fear of being reprimanded] is of my own making because I haven't actually experienced it [reprimanding from that supervisor]. So, I'm kind of, in that sense, if I feel like nervous about being reprimanded it's because I am instilling that belief in myself.... I would say if I do experience that sensation [fear of being reprimanded for making a mistake] it's more me creating it for myself. The good thing about my site is that they are very supportive and they do encourage you to reach out if you need help and that they're not going to really reprimand you unless you break some big ethical protocol in accordance with the clinic policy.

Participant Seven illuminated a different internal experience, which was generally described as lack of shame and embarrassment and the like that would prevent him from showing up ready to learn from his supervisor. Below is a paraphrase from our interview that he endorsed about his experience in supervision of not having an internal sense of lack of safety:

A: So for you, it sounds like when you're in those experiences [individual or group supervision] and you have something that might feel embarrassing to show, your lens of, 'is it safe to show it in here?' is just kind of about what's going on in the room. It's not really about all the stuff that's happened in the past in which you've been humiliated or whatever, it's like, 'Of course I'm going to take the risk, because this is my chance to learn, from my peers or from my supervisor and just be here.' And for someone else, that same exact environment might feel unsafe for various other reasons. And in feeling unsafe, you've noticed that someone else might react in a way that feels more defensive, feels less vulnerable, less authentically seeking support, and maybe more like pushing back on the hierarchy or against the peers.

P7: Yeah, absolutely.

***Weighing internal shame.*** Shame was an integral part of the experience of impression management in supervision. Supervisees discussed the experience of weighing an internal sense of shamefulness about what it might feel like to expose a deficit or vulnerability. *Weighing internal shame* makes up the first *property* of ***assessing internal readiness for risk***. This often

sounded like an experience of imagining appearing as a dreaded image and the shame that would inflict internally.

A: And the other thing I've heard on the flip side and tell me if this resonates with you is that people say that the experience of shame internally is something that influences that desire to protect their image, is that true for you?

P5: 100%.

A: Can you tell me about that experience?

P5: Yeah, I mean... how do I flush that out? Umm... I think that's at the root of any kind of experience in a social / professional setting where there's a crack in this kind of personality or image that we've worked so hard to put forth... so yeah... I think that for me the same kind of feeling floods in... It's just thoughts of like I was saying before now he's [supervisor] going to doubt that I can be a good clinician... like all of my self-critical parts or the parts of me that are afraid that I am actually a phony are going to be validated... yeah... that's primarily it. And then I do a lot of like, there are two other interns there, so when I am in that space I'll go into like... 'well I bet they know so much more than me... they are so much more competent and my supervisor probably sees that and he's wondering what I'm even doing here...' you know, it's that whole thought process spiral.

P3: ...In terms of shame, when I cry, I still have that feeling of I want to apologize. I want to be like, 'I'm so sorry. I'm so emotional,' which I'm trying to stop doing that because that's annoying when people do that. But something in me is like, 'You shouldn't be crying. I guess I worry that I [will appear like I] won't be able to handle being a counselor if I'm crying...crying all the time. So that's kind of a shame thing for me is being like—if I'm crying in front of my supervisor that she'll think that I'm not emotionally hearty enough to be a counselor. So that's kind of stressful.

A: There's this part of you that feels sometimes a little bit of self-doubt around what it looks like to be a counselor. And even though you might know intellectually that it's okay to be vulnerable, there's sort of that sensation inside of your body that says, 'This might not be professional enough,' or something like that.

P3: Yeah, yeah.

A: Yeah. Yeah. And that [sense of shame] gets activated for you when you feel as if you're not as good as others or not better than others, that feels like, 'Oh, gosh. Something's wrong.' It sounds like there's shame in there for you.

P3: Yeah. I would say so.

A: Yeah. And would you say that with that [worry that you're not meeting an expectation] is a sensation of shame... something like the feeling of shame... when you don't feel like you're meeting that expectation of competence?

P2: Yeah, I mean I've never thought about that, but I think now that I'm thinking about it yeah that is a huge factor

A: Is it also part of what makes you want to manage the impression sometimes of trying to appear competent... trying to avoid the sensation of shame?



P2: Yes

A: So, it does feel pretty intertwined with that feeling of shame when you show incompetence it's like I don't want impression management to fail because when it fails I'm going to feel shameful

P2: Uh huh.

A: Yeah. What are some of the thoughts in your mind around what it would mean to ask for help?

P1: I'm incompetent... it's not true, so it's not a core belief of mine, but I still hold it. Like I'm not competent. I don't know what I'm talking about.

A: And so, it sounds like it doesn't really matter how much safety there is in the relationship, it's like you could trust him completely and still there's that feeling inside of you that feels terrified of bringing that [incompetent work] in

P5: Yeah. Definitely. I think that's true for any relationship. Even, I was thinking about with my partner yesterday... it's a very trusting, loving, good relationship and he knows a lot of things about me... and it's kind of a silly example but he was looking something up on Amazon and saw my Save for Later list and I was like 'oh shit that's like one thing you can't look at it's so embarrassing'... like, how much pretend online shopping I do and I just save these things.... I was like 'Noooo... so exposed!' So it's like, any relationship, there are going to be these things... like no matter how safe it is, these things we want to keep close to us because it's shameful or vulnerable or whatever.

A: And so, when is it not worth appearing like a dreaded image? When do you make a different decision sometimes, that says, 'I can't show my real self here'?

P6: Yeah. That's a great question because I definitely have had that happen a few times. I think one of the biggest, probably most common events where that happens is where I have a client who I—and even right now, I don't like admitting this kind of thing, but it's when I have a client that I really don't care for very much or that really just kind of rubs me the wrong way.... For me, coming into supervision and talking about how I don't really care for a client seems—and I guess, this is me kind of creating my own problem about this, is that you're somehow like a bad counselor. You're like unethical or not a caring counselor if you admit that there are certain clients that you don't like. And I did do that [avoid telling supervisor] for a while but then—and then was once I actually did that [disclosed that I didn't like a client] where my supervisor responded like, 'Yeah there have been clients I haven't liked either.' That it's an okay thing. It's something to experience. So I would say, yeah, not coming from that place of unconditional positive regard, which is kind of like an expectation of counselors, to be a person again who just doesn't really like another person....that's something that's hard to show. And at the same time, in my experience, at least once I do it, it's been responded to with respect, and that's just kind of part of the business.

A: So part of what you're describing is almost like a sensation of shame?

P6: Yeah. Yeah, I think one of my initial feelings around it was that I'm not as good a counselor as other counselors because I bring it to the table—I show that I don't like.... whereas other people don't talk about their clients that way. That they're like, 'Oh, this.' They like all their clients. They're not annoyed by their clients. They must be doing better

or differently than I am. So, there is some shame around it. But I think it's more of the shame as an internal sensation rather than something that is kind of put upon you by others. At least, in my experience.

A: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense. And it's almost like you think you should know better. You already have decided that there is a more appropriate way to respond to your client. And so hearing it again from someone else might feel worse because you're already putting that expectation on yourself.

P6: Yeah, Yeah.

A: So, it's [the reason you feel fear about disclosing a mistake] not necessarily a fear that he'll judge you, because you've seen him in the past not judge you when you've made mistakes. But there's something there that still feels like a fear of judgment.

P1: Mm-hmm.

A: And do you know where that comes from? That fear of judgment still?

P1: I think it's myself. I hold myself to a higher standard. And I want to meet the expectations. Yeah, I want to meet the expectations.

A: Yeah. So, there's this process, it sounds like, where you learned about what the expectations were, and you're holding yourself to those expectations. And then there's been some barrier in terms of meeting them and it feels like you don't want to express that out loud to your supervisor, because you already feel like you're not doing well enough and you don't want him to know that too.

P1: Exactly.

A: That seems true? So, it feels like you want to protect yourself from another layer of judgment, because you're judging yourself first.

P1: Mm-hmm.

Participant Seven was helpful in illuminating a sense of lack of shame internally:

P7: I recognize my own humanity. And I think I do a pretty good job of recognizing my deficits without shame for them so that I can just accept them and try to improve. And that's pretty huge. I mean, there's definitely people out there carrying around that shame. And you can see how much harder the process of personal growth is for them. Understandably so. I think that's what's behind it for me.

A: So lack of shame for your deficits.

P7: Yeah

A: Yeah. Helps it feel okay to expose that and ask for help around them and to be authentic with that.

P7: Yeah, yeah. I think so.

***Connection to past safety.*** In round one, analysis revealed a *sub-category* called ***hierarchy from the past.*** Round-two analysis yielded further support for the experiences of the past having an impact on the experiences of internal psychological safety in the present. This now makes up the *property* of *connection to past safety*. The following quotes from P2 describe

how lack of safety in the past showed up with her current supervisor. On the other hand, Participant Seven helps us see how almost always feeling safe in the past influenced interactions with his current supervisor, as well:

P2: ...My parents.... I'm a very sensitive person and I always have been. My parents shamed me sometimes for that... for crying... so ummm... one time in supervision I had an intake [that I did in the room] with my supervisor and it was so sad, her story was so sad and I was holding back tears the whole time [the client was in the room] and then as soon as she [the client] left I just like couldn't hold back anymore and I cried a little bit but it was actually a good experience... she [the supervisor] was really sweet about it and said you know it wasn't bad, but for me it was hard. It was hard to do that. It felt really almost shameful I guess to cry in front of her.

A: Uh huh and that feeling was really sort of a holdover about what it felt like to cry in the past with your parents.

P2: Yes.

A: And that might be part of what you're protecting sometimes when you try not to be emotional in front of your supervisor. Shame from the past?

P2: Yeah, definitely yeah.

P2: My dad is pretty... I don't know like just very... nothing is ever good enough kind of thing... so I'm guessing it [anxiety about impressions] kind of comes from that.

A: Yeah so even if your supervisor is not telling you directly that nothing is ever good enough it can feel that way because of the past?

P2: Yeah, yeah. Yeah I mean that makes sense of course things that we grow up with are what's normal

A: Yeah and the supervisor's in kind of a parental position with you in some ways right

P2: Yeah definitely. Authoritative...guiding and all of that.

Below are experiences from Participant Seven, showing the opposite experience. He described having very few negative experiences in the past:

A: Okay. I'm really curious about this piece that you said before of like, 'I haven't been terribly humiliated in a sense of a core wound by an authority figure or in a position of power,' kind of in a supervision setting or something like that. And it's just reminding me a little bit of this—as I was asking you questions about, 'How do you know when it's safe,' and you're answering kind of like, 'I don't know. I just sort of assume it might be and I go in there and think to myself, 'it hasn't gone horribly yet. It could, but it probably won't.'" There is a sense of—I'm pausing because I don't have the right word, but there's a sense of a lack of fear about it, sort of hitting on an old wound or something like that. Would you say that's true?

P7: Yeah, I have to imagine that that really affects a person's willingness to do it [expose a vulnerability]. I think about things like that in terms of... I think about difficult and painful experiences in terms of frequency and severity. And you can have very few but

very severe and have a real averseness to being vulnerable, you could have a lot that weren't very severe and develop an averseness, or some other thing. But I've had not a lot [of painful experiences in the past], so not a lot of frequency, and not a lot of severity. And I think we are constructing our perceptions of the probability of distribution of risk all the time and there is no way it's not related to what has actually happened in your history, whether that is accurate or not so yeah, I think it flavors it big time.

A: What feeds that outlook [that no one is out to get you] for you?

P7: It [feelings of safety internally] started with parental influence. My dad, in particular, was super positive and supportive. And then environmental feedback that kind of continued that loop and continued helping me build that impression. And I think just a general positive and aspirational nature that recognizes...my humanity.

P7: Yeah. I can say that the desire to appear competent is there, but I actually very rarely act on it, and I've been very vulnerable with my peers as well. And maybe it's for similar reasons that I just described, in terms of I've always been competent. I've always been recognized for achievement and success. So, I just haven't been put in those academic type of situations where I felt embarrassment or shame. So that's not an experience that I've had. And, by this point in life, I'm pretty much like, 'Man, if I haven't had it until now, it's not likely to happen. It could happen, but just not likely.'

*Sense of control.* A *sense of control* about a how much a supervisee felt able to influence the outcome of a disclosure emerged as a factor in the experience of impression management.

Participants wanted to be the ones to see their mistakes and vulnerabilities first and be in control of the disclosure of them. *Sense of control* was also related to how raw a disclosure felt; if a supervisee worried that they would not be able to maintain control over their behavior while making a disclosure they reported feeling less control. The following quotes provide examples about the experience of having more or less control related to vulnerability:

A: Will you tell me more about your decision-making process about telling her when you made a mistake?

P2: Yeah, well maybe I am... I always want to be the one to tell her. I don't want her to tell me that I've made a mistake. So maybe that's part of it. Yeah. I want to own up to it first because it would be a really terrible feeling if she told me that I did something really wrong.

A: So, there's an element of control that feels safer to you. So 'I want to be the one to tell her... I've made a mistake.'

P2: Yes, I think that was the biggest thing when I first started was, there were so many mistakes that I was making and that's normal but it was just so disheartening when I kept

hearing things like that [that you made a mistake] from her... and so I guess... now, it's like ok I'm going to catch them first because I don't want to feel that way [disheartened].

A: Because what would happen if she caught them first?

P2: Um... and I didn't know about it until she told me? I would be caught off guard and I might be more... show more vulnerability, I guess.

A: Ok, so trying to control by showing more mistakes is a way to avoid being seen as vulnerable with her.

P2: Yes! definitely.

P4: And the way that I've allowed—I think enabled myself to be vulnerable, especially with him [doctoral student supervisor] is to just—is to own it— how do I put this? I'm thinking about this because I showed a tape a couple of weeks ago that I was not proud of. And it was... I sort of had this attitude of just, 'I don't know what I'm doing in this situation.' I've kind of owned the fact like I need help with this one situation. This is not necessarily my best work, but this thing happened to me and let me just go after it. I think It's harder for me when I show something where I'm maybe not aware and suddenly realized in the moment that I'm not doing great or my supervisor doesn't think I'm doing great. I think it's like when I have control over it, and I can say, 'This is a place where it's just, I know it's not great. And I need help with it, because it's not great. And I'm just going to own that.' That's sort of what lets me do that [expose a controlled vulnerability] as opposed to the way it just sort of arises naturally and I'm just like, 'Oh shit, I felt this was a decent tape and I was focused on something else.' That's, that's where it's most hard, I think.

A: Was part of the decision not to tell him [your supervisor] in the moment that thing we talked about earlier [the experiencing of a traumatic event] of just like feeling too raw, like it was almost impossible to be controlled around your vulnerability when you knew you were opening something up that was happening in the moment and you felt very little control?

P5: Yeah, I think you just hit the nail on the head. Totally.

A: Like maybe you could take the risk to tell him now... like this happened then, right, but that might not be useful. As useful as it would have been if you had told him in the moment, but it was almost like you couldn't do it in the moment just because it was... there wasn't any guarantee of being able to keep yourself together in the process of telling him and also being around him while you weren't feeling well.

P5: Yep, definitely, that's it.

A: Okay. And is part of what you're saying that you would bring it into supervision but only after it was kind of sorted out pretty well internally? Like you don't want to bring the raw emotion of it into supervision. That's where you go to your personal counselor. But once it's processed a little bit, then maybe you'd be willing to take the risk to bring it to your supervisor?

P1: Mm-hmm.

A: Does that feel true?

P1: Yeah, that feels true.

A: Okay, so is part of what you're saying is that it's just too vulnerable or it's too raw to bring something like that to your supervisor?

P1: Yeah. I would say so.

*Sense of self-efficacy.* For Participants Three and Seven, an internal *sense of self-efficacy* about their capabilities of being able to bring up a vulnerability effectively with their supervisor was a factor in deciding about whether to manage impressions. Participant Seven described an internal experience of feeling that he is capable of bringing up an opinion in a way that would not harm the relationship with his supervisor:

P7: At times, when we've had a difference of opinion, I've just, I think, talked it through. How did I know that it was okay to do that? I think it's more like I just assume it is because I'm also not super personally confrontational. So, let's say she was having a bad day and was in a bad mood. I don't know that that would overly affect my decision to say anything or not because I'm not likely to poke the bear more, so to speak.

A: Yeah. So it sounds like part of what you're saying is that you just have trust that you're going to be able to say it in a way that she can hear it, and then she's going to be able to hear it in a way that doesn't hurt the relationship at all.

P7: Yeah.

Participant Three, on the other hand, discussed thinking that she did not have the *self-efficacy* to bring up a concern in a way that would reflect back on her well:

P3: ...I don't think I've ever really been able to do that [bring up a concern about how the supervisor wasn't meeting her needs]. Because I had that one supervisor who was really unsupportive, I felt, and I never was able to tell her that she was unsupportive. I think I tried to stand up for myself at one point as a way of doing that and it just didn't—I think it just came across as me being resistant [therefore, she concluded that she couldn't do it again].

*Ego strength.* Another *property of internal readiness for risk* is *ego strength*. *Ego strength* is defined as internal distress tolerance in relation to the discomfort of risking exposure of a dreaded image. Participant Four exemplified this property when he described himself in comparison with another intern at his site. The other intern tended to show unfavorable images of herself often, while P4 worked to manage his impressions. He described one of the differences between them as her having more ability to tolerate the difficult experience:

P4: Yeah. I mean, it's funny because I have a colleague that I—one of my cohort members at the counseling center on campus, we have talked about our supervision experiences a decent amount, and I swear every single tape she shows—she walks out of supervision just feeling terrible. Because she picks these— she was like, ‘I need help with this stuff. And I'm going to just show my worst tape every single time.’ I'm like, ‘Why do you do that to yourself? Don't show your worst tape every time. Titrate a little bit. Give yourself a break from that a little bit, like. Show something that you're kind of happy with every once in a while.’ And on the one hand, I think that speaks to sort of being able to manage the real difficult emotion and difficult experience, the shame, and just the embarrassment of bad tape after bad tape.

Participant Two described how she at times had more or less *ego strength*:

A: When is it not worth risking appearing like a dreaded image to her [supervisor] ...are there ever times where you're like ‘nope, I'm not going there... I'm not going to risk that [exposing that vulnerability]’?

P2: Ummm.. yeah and I know I have felt that way several times... I think yeah there was a time I cannot remember what we were talking about, but I was like, no... I'm not going to do this today... I think I was just feeling super emotional that day... it was like I'm just going to lose it if she gives me criticism... so I think I just... luckily... I didn't have any huge concerns that day with my clients, so I just made it a very surface supervision.

Participant Three confirmed my paraphrase that when she feels more confident in her work, she feels more ego strength and less worry that feedback would validate a deep internal fear:

A: When we feel more confident in who we are in our work, we're sort of more willing to show the worst pieces because it's like, ‘I'm not so scared that I'm going to show this to you and it's going to break my ego in half,’ or something like.

P3: Right. That it will validate some deep fear inside myself that—or whatever. Yeah. True.

Participant Five discussed her experience of having more ego strength at this point in her life, as opposed to when she was ten years younger:

P5: You know, it's funny cause I was thinking back to my first job as a 23-year-old and just how I interacted with my boss... granted it's a little bit different than a supervisor / supervisee relationship, but not... I think it's still... you can still relate it to that. But I was very much in protection mode and would have this whole list of questions going on my word document but I wouldn't ask them because I didn't want to seem like I didn't know what was going on.. So yeah, I imagine it would have been the same had I gone through this program at age 23. And you know now at age 33, I feel like umm I've just had different life experiences, I think going through so many different yoga trainings and also being a facilitator of trainings and having a more I guess like realistic, wholistic image of what it means to be a human being and I think what matters has changed a lot in

the past decade. So yeah, I think that while I still do have the thoughts that come in with the feeling of shame and all that, they generally pass through a lot quicker than they did in my 20s and I think that my like self-concept is more firm. And less susceptible to being broken or changed based on what other people think or what I assume they think of me. And yeah just generally I think I have become much less judgmental toward others and I think I have been able to on some level turn that in on myself, too.

A: So, in some ways there's less at stake for exposing vulnerability because there is more ego strength there for you.

P5: Definitely. Yeah. I think I've been through life experiences at this point where I know I am a resilient person and I know I'm not going to be destroyed... like even if... let's say, worst case scenario my supervisor, you know, does think I'm a phony and I lose the internship you know that would really suck, but I wouldn't think that I was a terrible stupid person because of it.

A: Yeah, your whole self-worth is not riding on your supervisor's impression of you.

P5: Yep, exactly.

**Assessing potential losses.** Some supervisees described the experience of worrying about losing something if they took the risk to show a vulnerability. This makes up the third *sub-category* that supports **weighing risk versus utility**. The potential losses that supervisees worried about included the *properties* of *maintaining pride/status* and *maintaining/protecting a desired outcome*. The following quote from Participant One shows how she felt the stakes were lower after her three-month probationary period and she was able to relax more as she thought she had less to lose:

P1: I feel like I can be a little bit more open, and it's probably because I've been working at the agency. So, I passed my three-month—oh, I forget what they call it, but you know when you have to three-month—

A: Oh, like a probationary period. Sure.

P1: Yeah, which I did forget I was on [laughter]. And so, I was like, 'Oh, okay. So, I've made it through three months. Obviously, they like me here. I have a voice. They like what I have to say.' So, I feel like I can relax just a little bit more.

A: You've proven yourself in some way.

P1: Yes.

A: And so, it's like if you made a little bit of a mistake now, that's okay because he's already—it's like he knows that you're doing well, big picture.

P1: Yes.

A: Yeah. So, it feels more comfortable just in general, being authentic with him.

P1: Mm-hmm.



***Maintaining pride/status.*** Some participants discussed the experience of imaging how they may lose pride or status if they risked appearing as a dreaded image of the self. This makes up the first *property* of ***assessing potential losses***. The following quotes from P2, P4, and P5 support the experience of feeling as if their pride is at stake:

P2: I don't really feel like there's a whole lot at stake [when appearing as a dreaded image] other than my pride. And I feel like this is something I'm good at... that's huge to me and like I can do this so if I risk being vulnerable... Yeah. So how much does my fear that my pride is going to be hurt influence how vulnerable I am with her? Yeah definitely like 99%.

A: Okay, so that's what's at stake? Is the sense that you might hurt your ego by showing her something?

P2: Yeah! She's leaving, too, at the end of April so... she's not going to be... I don't think somebody I can use as a reference or help me in any way other than just giving me really good feedback. So, I don't think there's a whole lot of stake there. Just my own feelings of inferiority at stake.

P5: He [supervisor] is the one who personally hired me as an intern, so I feel like I have to prove to him that he made the right choice...

P5: So far, he's given me really positive feedback and I like that he thinks that I have good clinical skills and that I belong here and maybe that would all go to shit if I show him this.

***Maintaining/protecting a desired outcome.*** Beyond pride, supervisees had tangible outcomes to lose if they were given a bad evaluation from a supervisor. *Maintaining/protecting a desired outcome* is the next *property* that supports ***assessing potential losses***. This was related to power and hierarchy. Participants were aware that their supervisors held a position of power over them and they were concerned about what would be at stake if they risked appearing as a dreaded image.

P3: Right now, actually, my supervisor told me that they might have a full-time position at my site and asked me if I would be interested in applying for it if they were to get the funding for it. And now, I feel like I'm like, 'Oh my god, I got to be super competent. Got to seem like I got a lot of good ideas. Got to do it really well.' So, it stresses me out a lot more to share with her and cry in front of her and that sort of thing.

A: So, you needed them to give you a positive evaluation, so you needed to seem competent to them.

P2: Yeah. All of that. That feels definitely true.

P5: He [supervisor] holds a higher position within the counseling center than my previous supervisor did, and I think that's a part of it [why I want to appear competent]... he's the director and might one day be the person I reach out to for a job if a position opened so there's that added layer... and then I think another component is that he will be on the panel for my orals defense and he'll be the only one who's ever seen any of my clinical work... the rest of the people will be exposed to it for the first time so I feel like he could be an advocate and a support if he's seen that I do good work... so there is a lot riding on the relationship now and in the future...

P6: And I think underneath it all there is this desire to impress because they have a say in not only our grades but our completion of the program. They have some sway over our outcomes and actual job references... we do want to impress so that when the time comes they won't have any reason to hold us back. Or when we need a reference, yeah, you expect [inaudible] thought highly of you so here's a good reference. So, there is that wanting to impress because of their stake in the game, really.

A: Absolutely. Yeah, that power dynamic where you have more at stake. Yeah.

P6: Yeah. Because I would say with the people that don't have as much decision [power] I find it a little easier to maybe not be on the ball as much versus my internship supervisor, my university supervisor was also the grant coordinator. These people have a little more power, I guess would be the word here. And so I need to really—impression management is maybe a little more important with them than it is with others.

Participant Four discussed the opposite experience of not having a desired outcome to protect:

P4: And then I think the last piece of it, the very last piece of it that comes up is I have a job, like, and I may have mentioned that before, but it's formal at this point, and I'm locked in so, I know my—and it's [name of the internship site]... So, I know that my colleagues [classmates] at the counseling center on campus, we talked about it a little bit. I think that they sometimes are more reticent to bring incompetent work because it's [supervision] like half a job interview and I just don't have that.

A: Yeah, the stakes are lower [for you].

P4: Yeah, the stakes are lower.

In the following quote from P1, she describes how her supervisor had the power to add another client to her caseload if one terminated. She made the decision not to tell him that she stopped seeing a client because she was hoping to protect her schedule:

A: Can you tell me about the decision process for you, as you were trying to decide, 'Should I tell him or not tell him this thing happened?'

P1: Okay... normally what we do is we go over clients in supervision, and I usually get the chance to talk about the client that is most salient for me. And so I need to tell him I'm really having difficulty meeting this client [disclosing a vulnerability that she hasn't been able to meet the expectation of meeting with this client weekly], but I still haven't been putting in any effort, and then it was kind of like, I don't want to be assigned any new clients [supervisor has the power to assign new clients if one drops off schedule], and yeah. So, I just pretty much weighed it out in my mind. Like I went back and forth. And then I was like, well I just won't choose to focus on this client until I have relevant information to tell him [avoid disclosure]

A: Okay, so you thought about the costs and benefits of talking about it out loud? And then decided, 'I'll just wait'?

P1: Yeah.

To summarize, the first three *sub-categories* of **weighing risk versus utility** include *assessing safety with the supervisor*, *assessing internal readiness for risk*, and *assessing potential losses*. The *sub-category* of *assessing potential losses* was supported by the *properties* of *maintaining pride/status* and *maintaining/protecting a desired outcome*. The last *sub-category* of **weighing risk versus utility** is *assessing utility*.

**Assessing utility.** *Assessing utility* of risking appearing as a dreaded image makes up the fourth and final *sub-category* of the experience of **weighing risk versus utility**. This came out in round one analysis, as well, but had been named and listed as an independent category under **willingness to appear as a dreaded image**. After round-two analysis, this experience became more nuanced and expanded to **weighing risk versus utility**. *Assessing utility* is defined as the experience of assessing whether taking the risk to appear as a dreaded image is worth it. Two *properties* that support this *sub-category* were previously present in round one. They included *connection to learning and helping clients* and *connection to the importance of vulnerability*. A new *property* emerged in round two emphasizing the experience of *trusting that the supervisor can provide help*. The following quotes demonstrate the general experience of *assessing utility*:

P3: I just think that it's a relationship [supervisory relationship] in which I should probably be honest about how I'm feeling and that that will contribute to supervision. And so, in this profession, it just seems so important to not cover up those insecurities and those sides of yourself because they're what we're working with every day, and they're clearly going to be triggered in times that I don't want them to be. I mean, usually I'm not super happy about it when I do it [expose a vulnerability], but like I can rationalize it with like, 'There's a reason for this. There's a utility in my vulnerability right now. It will [pay back] eventually.'

A: When it feels like you being vulnerable actually helps you get your needs met later for being a better counselor.

P3: Yeah, yeah. And I'm really working this semester on understanding my emotions during sessions. So, it's like, if I'm trying to work on that, then I should probably try to understand my emotions when in supervision and be able to be as honest as I can.

P6: But the way I think about it is, you're not going into just complain or just show your weakness. It's like, 'Here's something that I need. This could be built on, so help me build on that.'

A: There's some usefulness or utility for that vulnerability.

P6: Yeah. It's for a good purpose, I guess, would be the short way, is it is for your own benefit, your own development as a counselor to be vulnerable, just as the same way it is to be a client.

A: So, it sounds like for you when it feels useful to be vulnerable, you'll do it even when it doesn't feel good?

P2: Yeah, exactly.

P4: Yeah. I don't need to put it [a mistake or vulnerability] up on the screen again to have somebody tell me what I already know. Yeah. Definitely. And so, yeah, I mean... It is a little bit of a fine line where—yeah, showing somebody something vulnerable where it's like, 'I know this. I can deal with it,' is one thing. And showing somebody something vulnerable where I'm able to really lean into it and say, 'I didn't know what I was doing here.' Yeah. I think that there is a distinction there for me. I mean, I'm thinking, specifically, about a situation from two weeks ago where I had just—I felt like I was kind of pulled into just a really frustrating experience with a client. And wasn't sure how we got there, and how to get out of it. And I was able to sort of just lean into that a little bit more and say, 'Help. I legitimately got stuck.' So yeah. I think that's— yeah. We've said it enough. But there is a difference there, yeah.

The following quote shows how a decision about the lack of utility of a disclosure is also part of the experience of impression management in supervision:

A: Some people have shared with me that sometimes it doesn't feel useful to appear vulnerable to their supervisor... it's like ... 'I know I did the mistake I saw myself do the mistake I just don't want to hear from someone else... it's not going to be helpful... I see it... I got it... I'm still working on it I'm annoyed with myself for... for making the same

mistake over and over again and I'm just not going to show it cause I don't want to hear it'... has that ever happened to you?

P2: Yeah [laughter] Every. Single. Time. Yeah. Exactly. It's like I don't need somebody else to say it to me too because I already got it.

***Connection to learning and helping clients.*** *Connection to learning and helping clients*

was present in round-one analysis. The following quotes continue to support this *property*:

A: Okay, yeah, so how do you decide when it's worth risking your pride or not?

P2: If it's something that I feel very lost and I don't think I can figure out on my own and I don't want to hurt my client then of course I will risk being vulnerable. I think that's more important.

A: So occasionally it's really worth going there with your supervisor even when it doesn't feel good?

P2: Yeah, you're right. Yeah.

A: Can you remember a time where you really didn't want to appear vulnerable to your supervisor, but you did anyway because you needed help with a client?

P2: Yes, let me think for a second, I'm sure... yeah... I had a client who I really cared about and she had an issue that I think was beyond me and beyond my capabilities right now but I really wanted to try a different method of intervention and so that's when I was able to be a bit more vulnerable with her [supervisor]. I really didn't want to because I was not in a good mood that day but...yeah... [I did it anyway].

P3: So, I showed a tape today that I was really kind of... didn't want to show and I could have showed another one that was— I still needed help with the other client, but it wasn't quite as like, 'Look.' And I guess I was just like— again, it was sort of just like, 'Okay, I just need to do it. This is what they're asking of us. This is the point of this.' I just sort of have to remind myself that even if it feels uncomfortable, it is the point and it's the thing that will help me grow and learn the most out of anything...mostly just kind of like, 'Okay. Yeah, this doesn't look great.' But also, I truly need to help this client. I think that everyone will understand why it's difficult for me, why this person's difficult for me.

P4: And so for me, there's just, I feel like there's a bit more of just an attitude of like, 'This is my time to just— as kind of painful as it can sometimes be, just kind of lay it all out there and say, 'I want to get better, help me.'

A: Yeah. Yeah. So that connection to learning is really sort of the antidote of saving face sometimes.

P4: I mean, absolutely. That's absolutely it. And it's funny to even put it that way because I often think about that with some of the clients that I have about trying to help them stay curious through these moments of shame, and I've talked about it kind of in that exact language. If you're curious, it's hard to be ashamed about something. And so, I have kind of applied that to my own learning to a degree, or totally.

A: And so, what makes it worth it to you to appear incompetent sometimes?

P5: Because I know that's how I'm going to grow and learn... if I always go in there seeming like I'm on everything and like I know what's going on I'm not serving myself as a counselor in training but I'm also not serving my clients. And I think actually now that I say it out loud, I think at the end of the day it's like my client's experience is more important than me seeming good. You know? So especially like people... when I bring people into supervision that I've had up to 20 sessions with them at this point and there are a couple of them who I just feel like we've plateaued or really big things are being unearthed and I feel like it's a little bit out of my scope of competence in terms of the issues they're bringing up and I'd rather feel vulnerable for however many minutes and be like look I really don't know how to do this than fail my client.

P5: Ultimately, I think every time if something feels important enough, I've risked that image being threatened to put the thing out there.

A: I'm wondering, just knowing you a little bit and knowing some of your past positions where you've had supervisors or people you know, mentoring you, that you've had a lot of experience of being in a mentee role and it being useful. Like you have memories of that.

P5: Yeah, absolutely. I think even in dance from an early age I have always had mentors and yeah, I think that I've developed a lot as a mentee and looking back I can see the ways in which I really could have taken advantage of my mentors more if I wasn't so afraid to come off as not being perfect and that yeah I definitely see that kind of working its way into my relationship with my supervisor now. And even when I went to school you know prior to grad school I definitely wanted to put forth this image of being a really good student and like really like not overachieving but like super high achieving. I graduated from undergrad with a 4.0 and like it feels good to be seen in that way and to feel confident in all of that.... But I think I missed out on a lot of other kind of layers or textures of the academic experience, you know, as a student and mentee so I went into this program you know 10 years later like you know, I'm just going to go into it to learn... not to be seen as a good student. And I've really carried that through with my professors and with my supervisors, and I think I've gotten a lot more out of it because of that.

P6: But I think it's something that I've tried to do more is to be more authentic because I think that's where the best improvement's going to come from. Because if you're kind of afraid and hide your weaker areas, areas that you could improve on, then it's [supervision] not going to be as effective.

*Connection to the importance of vulnerability.* The property of *connection to the importance of vulnerability*, which was present in round one, continued to show up in round two.

The following quotes from P6 and P7 demonstrate this experience:

P7: For me, it [commitment to being vulnerable in supervision] started with, I think, just a way of being that is willing to be vulnerable and believes in it for the sake of growth and mutual exploration of whatever the issue at hand is.

P7: ...And sort of the nature of being in the counseling profession. And even though I'm still new into it, it's just like every day you build on your understanding that everybody got problems [laughter]. We've all got our internal narrative, and we've all got those parts of us that we're hiding away. And man, I don't care how much power you have. If you're my supervisor or the department head or the college dean or whatever. You got your issues, and if you give me long enough with you, we will find them [laughter].

A: Absolutely. Yeah. So, you're also saying there's connection to humanity in general. Just this connection to the fact that we're all imperfect. That's a condition of humanity.

P7: Absolutely is. And I guess I have a philosophical view of that that accepts the spectrum and accepts the gray and maybe even assumes that you can't really have the positive without the negative. You can't just truncate the distribution at zero and expect everything to be the same or everything to work out. So, I don't even strive towards somehow making every single aspect and element of my life positive because I think it would result in a less rich experience and a distorted, limited view of what's really going on. So there's that [laughter].

P6: There is a certain amount of impression management with them [peers]. But at the end of the day, they're people who are— we're the same in a lot of ways. And [I remind myself] to not forget that. Because when you start viewing them as potential job opponents or that they're adversarial in any way, [it] really takes away from the experience. So, to remember that they're there to support you just as you are to support them. And that you get each other through, and that it's okay to be vulnerable and to show that you aren't always perfect. Because chances are they aren't either and it could be a good opportunity to connect in that way...we're all there because we want to help people. That's really what brings us all together... And that if our goal is to help people, then competing with each other or trying to outdo each other is— deviates from that goal.

*Trusting that the supervisor can provide help.* A couple supervisees talked about not wanting to risk appearing as a dreaded image if they assessed that their supervisor would likely not be able to respond to them in a helpful way, thus limiting the utility. This made up the third and final *property of assessing utility*—*trusting that the supervisor can provide help*. Quotes from Participants Four and Three demonstrate this experience:

P4: Yeah. And then there's this staging of trust in the people who are in there to support you about whether they can and how much they can.

A: Right. So, it's like, 'I will show you some things and ask for help when I feel that you're going to help me with it and you would hold that space.' And if maybe, if you gauge them as less competent or having less to offer in some way you're not going to just put your whole self out on the table.

P4: No [I would not put my whole self on the table]. And I would say the less trust I have, the more I purposely I try and funnel the experience down to, 'Let's work on these maybe two things or one thing that I want to talk about right now.'

P3: [In response to why she doesn't bring up a need in supervision] I don't know how much she would change if I even talked to her. I think that potentially the things that I would want from her are the things that would be hard for her to do because she's a human too. She's not going to be amazing at everything...

The **category of weighing risk versus utility** is supported by the four *sub-categories* I presented in this section including *assessing safety with supervisor*, *assessing internal readiness for risk*, *assessing potential losses*, and *assessing utility*.

### **Managing impressions**

In round-one analysis, I organized two separate categories of supervisee behavior. These included **protection and isolation** and **willingness to appear as a dreaded image**. In round two, it became clear that there are more than two options for supervisee impression management behavior. This new category, **managing impressions**, captures the range of behavior supervisees may enact to either intentionally attempt to manage their impressions of self or not. The *sub-categories* that make up this **category** include *non-disclosure*, *fabricated disclosure*, *controlled disclosure*, *vulnerable disclosure*, and finally, *uncontrolled disclosure (impression management failure)*. **Managing impressions** is substantiated by many experiences that were captured in round one. Specifically, *fabricated disclosures* were experiences that I learned about in round one, though they were captured under the category of **protection and isolation**. During first-round interviews, participants had not yet disclosed much about internal experiences of shame. Some participants talked about lying to their supervisors, though these behaviors were intertwined with internal sensations. The first-round analysis included both behaviors and internal sensations in the **category of protection and isolation**. Second-round interviews included much more detail about internal feelings that helped clarify input about *fabricated*



*disclosure* in round one. As a result of the thorough data extracted from the first interviews, *fabricated disclosure* will not be further substantiated in this chapter. However, additional experiences in each of the other sub-categories will be integrated in round-two data.

**Non-disclosure.** Participants One, Three and Five discussed the behavior of choosing not to disclose a vulnerability or mistake. This makes up the first behavioral choice related to **managing impressions**. The following are examples of *non-disclosure* in supervision:

P3: I had this girl who I saw last semester and then I emailed— she no-showed me and I emailed her and I was like— I just said, ‘Hey, you didn't show up. Is everything okay? Would you like to reschedule?’ And she emailed back and said like, ‘Hey, can we reschedule? I'd like to reschedule after Thanksgiving.’ And for some reason I just kind of missed that like it just sort of slipped under my radar and I— maybe I read it but I forgot about it and I just recently refound it and I was like, ‘I never responded to that girl.’ And she was like, ‘Oh, can we reschedule for after Thanksgiving,’ and I didn't respond to her and I haven't seen her since then and I was like, ‘Oh, no.’ And I haven't told— actually, you're the first person I told because I feel really bad about it because I didn't really— I don't know, I just didn't really want to make it seem like I [inaudible]. I don't know. Stuff like that just doesn't feel good. So I don't know. Maybe I should still work it out, but I wasn't totally sure what to do. But it would be harder— it would be much harder for me to admit something like that [to my supervisor].

A: So then what happened after you were like, ‘Oh, I feel so bad about this. I don't want to bring it up to my supervisor’? What happened next?

P3: I [laughter] I covered it up.

P1: Yeah. I would say, with some of my clients. I haven't been visiting a client as often as I probably should be, and so I haven't shared that with my supervisor because we're expected to see our clients at least once a week. And so, I haven't said anything because I am afraid of what he will say. So, yeah.

P5: I do still kind of grapple with... this has been a very tough semester for me just like personal life stuff. [Describes what happened that included something traumatic]... basically it was a ten day panic attack. Probably the worst I've ever felt in my mind and body. It was really scary. Living minute-by-minute like trying to get by. I definitely felt torn. You know, I was at internship seeing ten clients a week somehow. And also going like completely insane. But I didn't share the experience with my supervisor. And I still think about that and I think it would have been fine given our relationship and maybe even helpful, but I didn't want him to see me as someone who maybe couldn't do the work or maybe needed to take time off or wasn't as strong and resilient as he thought I was. That was just interesting to me. And yet, a big part of me during that time was like wishing that he knew because I felt like I was coming off as so weird. You know. So off. But I didn't share it. So that's interesting.

**Controlled disclosure.** It was a common experience for participants to make the choice to expose a vulnerability, deficit, or mistake, yet do so in a way that did not provide the whole story or was “padded” intentionally with more desirable images of the self. Participants Two, Three, Four, and Five discussed this experience and Participants Seven discussed noticing *controlled disclosure* in others:

P7: So, I have I think witnessed people not be completely authentic, not flat out lying and trying to fool everybody... but just trying to manage the message... the impression that comes up with their opportunity for growth in a way that I'm like, 'That doesn't seem like completely what's going on there.'

P5: I kind of forgot about this but I did in a much more controlled way bring it [something that I was really struggling with] up to [supervisor's name] the next day I was like 'yeah I kind of had this breakdown in internship seminar yesterday' but I still didn't share the thing about [the traumatic experience]... but I was just like you know, 'I'm feeling like there's a lot on my shoulders right now, I'm super stretched thin' ...it was kind of a more... like, package and bow version of what I was going through. And probably more like typical grad student like last spring semester feeling stressed and overwhelmed and it felt safe to present that story.

A: Yeah, you weren't like 'I feel like I'm going to die, everyday.' It wasn't sort of the truth.

P5: Yeah, which was exactly how I was feeling [like I was going to die everyday]. But I was just like 'you know, stress...and a kid...I feel so depleted, I don't have any time for myself' and that was all real and very much a part of what was going on... but... yeah, honestly just letting that little bit out was helpful.

A: In a controlled way where you got to choose.

P5: Yeah.

A: Yeah. It's like you would rather show controlled vulnerability.

P3: Yeah. I would rather be like, 'This thing kind of sucks, and I'm kind of dealing with negative emotions' than have this crazy meltdown in front of her that makes her feel like she needs to buy me a gift card for a massage. So yeah. That's tough.

P4: [I'd rather show a vulnerability] in a way that advances my career but not in a way that makes me look stupid and incompetent.

P4: There was a shift in my thinking where I sort of recognized that [vulnerability] is a trait of the profession. And in some ways that plays into— 'I will impress these folks if I'm vulnerable.' I mean, I think there is a little bit of that in the back of my mind, but then there's the, 'I'm going to titrate it out a little bit [to not show too much vulnerability]'

P5: It still feels... it will always feel a little bit nerve-wracking to bring those things [vulnerabilities and mistakes] into supervision.... and then I make sure to pad those sessions with like things I'm feeling confident about.

A: A lot of people have told me that they've tried pretty hard to make sure that vulnerability is controlled. Like they are willing to do it and willing to show that vulnerability, but they want to make sure that they've seen the mistake first. Does that feel true for you?

P5: Definitely. You know, I don't have any examples of accidentally having something exposed, knock on wood, thus far in internship, but that 100% resonates. That kind of sense of controlled vulnerability.

P5: So, I tape a lot of my sessions and I've definitely had certain sessions where I'm like 'wow I'm really glad that these don't automatically go onto this like shared server where my supervisor can just click in to any session and watch whatever he wants.' It's not like I'm doing anything bad or unethical, but you know, some sessions where I'm really sleepy or talk too much or whatever. So yeah thinking about like, ok, say he watched one of those and I go into supervision and he's like 'Oh, so I watched your session with so-and-so,' I think I would just freeze and be terrified because I didn't have a chance to kind of collect my thoughts around it, like how I'd want to present it, not like defend myself but maybe explain the choices I made in that session and kind of outline where I think I went wrong or things I could have done differently. I would feel like very exposed and like deer in headlights and yeah... I think that like the core emotion there would be shame again.

A: yeah. So... it sounds like there is some aspect of control that is still involved when you choose to show a vulnerability to your supervisor.

P5: Yeah, definitely. I mean I'll show things that I'm grappling with, but I feel overall confident in the session. You know, yeah. That's that. I think the controlled vulnerability is a big piece.

P4: I think the difference between me and her [a classmate who often chooses to show vulnerabilities in supervision] is that she kind of drags her ass into supervision saying, 'I don't know what I'm doing. This is terrible. I just need help.' And whereas I'm like, 'You know, I had a really good week but there's a couple of sessions where I struggled on a couple of things, let's watch those couple of things.' And for me, it's a little bit more like that the foundation feels pretty good but there's like some bolstering and some patching and some things that we're going to do. Whereas her, she just kind of goes in with just like the foundation... just doesn't even—she's not even presenting it as being there. So, I think that speaks to some of your early questions too of like for me, it's easier for me to be vulnerable about specific targeted areas where I want to work on this specific targeted issue as opposed to like my entire concept of myself as a therapist. I think that's both an image thing and that's also a self-concept thing. I think that overall I am okay and I do want to work in these few things. But by doing that, it also helps my confidence and it helps all those things.

**Vulnerable disclosure.** Another behavioral option in supervision is to take the risk to expose a deficit, opinion, mistake, or vulnerability. This is not impression management; in fact, it is the opposite. This *sub-category* is named *vulnerable disclosure*: Participants Four and Six discussed this experience:

P4: So, my primary supervisor is a woman and where I felt a little bit I think sensitive with her is she and I express empathy differently. She's just a lot more like ... in there. There's a lot more—I mean, just like visually—I mean, I see she's doing it [expressing empathy] to me as we're in supervision. And my style is—I don't know if it's more 'male', I don't know what it is, but it's different. And so I sometimes have felt a little bit more vulnerable in those moments. And I've just kind of asked about it like, 'Hey, my style is maybe more gruff than yours is. What do you what do you think of that?'

P6: It [feeling incompetent with a client] was something that I was hesitant to talk about in supervision initially, but, again, was one of those vulnerable areas. Eventually, I did, and the outcome was great.

**Uncontrolled disclosure (impression management failed).** When asking about experiences of impression management, two participants told me about exposing their vulnerabilities to supervisors without control. This happened when they wished they could portray a more desirable image of self yet were not able to do so. These experiences can be thought of as *uncontrolled disclosure (impression management failed)*. This came up in first-round interviews, as well. Below are additional experiences from Participants Two and Three during the second round:

P3: It's kind of tricky because, for me, sometimes I feel like I can't really control it [showing a vulnerability]. I don't know. It's... thinking about the decision is hard because sometimes I feel like it just comes out, and I'm not a closed book, really. I'm relatively expressive, I think, in my emotions. So I think a lot of the time it sort of just comes out without me really thinking about it

A: And so, when you are kind of—so it's helping me when you say, 'I don't think it's a decision that happens when I'm willing to show a dreaded image. It's not like I'm willing, it's more like sometimes it just happens. I might just become emotional, I didn't mean to.' And then there is another process of willingness that is more like willing to show a bad tape or willing to talk about a mistake that you made or something like that. So there's like—it seems like for you there's definitely this unconscious process of like, 'I'm showing a dreaded image. I didn't mean to, it's just happening.' And then there are other

times where you have to make a decision like, 'I made a mistake and I need to tell you that I made this mistake.'

P3: Yeah.

P3: I had a thing with my supervisor.... At the end of last semester, I had gotten a bad grade on a paper that was actually graded by that professor [who had supervised her in practicum]. And it was very upsetting to me because I felt like it was a very unfair grade. And I felt like I had been sort of targeted by this person that doesn't like me. And I tried to—because I was at work when I got the grade. I was at my internship site, and I tried to sneak out, and she [supervisor] saw me and was like, 'Are you okay?' And then, I literally started sobbing. And it was very—I still think about that, and I'm like, 'Oh God. I can't believe I did that,' because I was gasping sobbing. I just really let it—I really let loose. And that definitely was not the decision that was—I would have preferred to sneak out and not have to do that. And then, she actually ended up getting me a gift card for a massage the next week. And that's another thing where I was like, 'Oh shoot. You think that I'm just so fragile that I need [laughter] a massage.' So I don't [inaudible] even really remember what your question was, but it made me think about showing the tender parts of ourselves. That was very upsetting to me. I was very upset about that. I felt very embarrassed and unprofessional, and.... I was like ...I wouldn't do this to any other boss. Just sob in front of them about something. It was pretty embarrassing. So yeah. I don't know. It is hard to show something that is tender...

A: You do know what it feels like when you don't feel competent in there... which is that you feel unprepared or you feel like she's asking you questions that you don't know how to answer in the moment.

P2: Yeah, yeah absolutely.

A: ...You're in a situation where someone's kind of firing questions at you and it feels... you're unsure how to express yourself in a way that feels true maybe because you need more time, is that part of what's happening?

P2: Yes. Yes, that's why it's so difficult in supervision because I usually like to plan things out or write things down and I guess just being asked questions that I don't know how to answer makes me feel incompetent.

A: Okay, so there's an experience inside you that feels incompetent when you're not prepared or you don't feel like you have an answer right away.

P2: Yes.

A: And that's a vulnerable feeling. Underneath that it sounds like there's some judgment of yourself which is 'I'm not doing this good enough.' Does that feel true?

P2: Yeah I think so. And that's something that I'm working on.

A: ...you're not really necessarily... choosing to show the vulnerability. Feeling incompetent... it's just that sometimes you do feel incompetent and you feel like sometimes that shows without you choosing to show it.

P2: Yeah... you are really good.

This section concluded the four main **categories** of the experience of impression management following second-round analysis: **attuning to desirable behavior, interpreting**

**desired and dreaded images, weighing risk versus utility, and managing impressions.**

Following are emerging SITUATIONAL FACTORS that contribute to and shape the experience of impression management in supervision for these supervisees.

### **Situational Factors**

In round one, participants shared hints about various SITUATIONAL FACTORS that influenced their experiences of impression management in supervision. These experiences were folded into multiple categories and had not been previously arranged as SITUATIONAL FACTORS. Round two analysis and situational mapping illuminated how the HIERARCHY of the supervisory relationship becomes an element of the situation that is always present and impacts supervisees in various ways. Additionally, SOCIAL IDENTITIES that were salient for participants in relation to their impression desires and impression management behavior continued to emerge in round two analysis. SOCIAL IDENTITIES such as age, racial identity, gender, and religion of both the supervisee and the supervisor made up SITUATIONAL FACTORS in round-two analysis. The presence of peers was felt as consequential during first-round interviews and had been previously coded under the category named **navigating hierarchy**. After situational mapping in second-round analysis, PEERS became a SITUATIONAL FACTOR, as well as TIME, AWARENESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT, counselor DEVELOPMENT, and PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES.

**Hierarchy.** Participants hinted at experiences related to the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship many times throughout interviews. Supervisees discussed these experiences directly at times, as well. The following quote demonstrates the way HIERARCHY was on P3's mind in supervision. HIERARCHY was centered around knowledge and experience that influenced power dynamics.

P3: Yeah. I mean I think that that speaks to the power hierarchy thing of being like, 'That's not—I can't do that [provide feedback to a supervisor]. They're my boss essentially. I can't tell them how to do their job.' And also, there's just this sense of like they have way more experience than I do. 'Who am I to know how they're supposed to help me [laughter]? They're the ones who should know this.' Yeah that's how it feels.

A property of HIERARCHY involved the supervisor's status. Participants discussed the awareness of their supervisor's power within the structure of the school program or the internship site. Participant Five exemplifies this experience:

P5: He [supervisor] holds a higher position within the counseling center than my previous supervisor did and I think that's a part of it.... he's the director and might one day be the person I reach out to for a job if a position opened so there's that added layer...

Additional experiences from the **category of navigating hierarchy** in first-round analysis will fold into the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of HIERARCHY when generating the final grounded theory of the experience and process of impression management in supervision.

**Social Identities.** The SOCIAL IDENTITIES of both the supervisees and the supervisors made up another part of what was consequential in the supervisory situation. The SOCIAL IDENTITIY of race was salient among supervisees who occupied a marginalized identity. Participant One spoke about her experiences with her race in supervision:

P1: ...My race [impacts my desire to appear competent] because I'm a Black woman. I do feel like I have to work twice as hard to prove myself.

Participant One also discussed how her supervisor's race was a factor in her behavior and experience in supervision as well:

P1: Yeah, I do play dumb sometimes and I think it's because of his privilege, I will say it's because of his privilege, like his gender, his race, and his educational status [as an older, White, male].

On the other hand, P7 discussed how his SOCIAL IDENTITIES were located in privilege. Our conversation brought to his attention how he does not have the experience of overcoming racial or cultural-based stereotypes because of his privileged SOCIAL IDENTITIES:

P7: ...I come from a place of, I think, a lot of privilege and a lot of my multicultural attributes working in my favor, so—going all the way back, I'm a White male, middle class, in a society that seems to...descendant of European immigrants, came over, bootstrapped it, made it. The system is built for people like me. And so, if I go all the way back, I've always just pretty very easily fit in the system. And I don't know if I learned how or if it's just a sociocultural influence or what, but I haven't clashed with the system or the powers that be within the system. I have very few times, but I was so self-assured that they [others who he clashed with] were just way off base that it [the experience of clashing] wasn't even hard for me....So, no. I haven't had power struggles or a lot of slaps on the face or issues with people holding power over me. I can remember very few, and they were very short. Now, I'm a middle-aged, White, educated, middle-class guy. So, yeah. I haven't had a lot of those flavors or experiences that maybe other people have had.

Age was also a salient SOCIAL IDENTITY for several supervisees; they discussed age in relation to the processes of managing impressions. In some cases, supervisees discussed their age in relation to their supervisor's age:

P7: I'm older than my supervisor. I mean, in many ways, I can tell that I have just as much or more experience in life than she does, and so, I mean, I perceive her as being in a position of power over me, and I respect that. I also feel like some of my situation does level it out a little bit. And in times when we do sometimes get off supervision topic and into personal life, the roles, in fact, change really fast. So, yeah. I guess that all that to say, I can at least, in some ways, perceive myself as an equal, if not also having an opportunity to mentor, and so that eases, or counterbalances, other power dynamics that might put me in a subordinate role.

For P6, who identified as younger, the experience of his age was anxiety-provoking:

P6: It's a funny thing for me because I'm one of the younger people in my cohort and there is kind of this desire in me to not seem like the baby of the group and then kind of try to present myself as older than I am to really kind of be more of an equal with those older more experienced people. Yeah, it's because to be put in that young green student with older more experienced people, there is that difference in—I don't really call it power dynamic, but just kind of overall wisdom that I like to have... that kind of wisdom

**Peers.** Although a great deal of information about supervisee experiences of impression desires with peers was illuminated in round-one analysis, this shifted in round-two analysis to become a SITUATIONAL FACTOR. The rationale for this change was driven by the way participants discussed the presence of their PEERS. Their experiences related to PEERS in the



supervision situation were primarily internal—participants imagined what PEERS might be thinking about them, and in turn experienced sensations of impression desires. Actual interactions with PEERS were not disclosed, which is why PEERS became an appropriate SITUATIONAL FACTOR that were felt and imagined by participants. Additional quotes about supervisee experiences that were influenced by the factor of PEERS in the room are below:

P3: I think that I get really anxious about comparison, especially with peers. I just had to show a tape that I was not happy about in group supervision, and it was very nerve-racking.

P6: Today I was actually in my internship lab with my peers. I'm presenting a case and that is something I've been thinking about all week. I want to present—I want to come in seeming like I'm on top of my game here. And I don't know. Some of the others might experience that too, but I think that some people do and I know I have experienced that at some point, some anxiety about not being in the same plane, as somehow being behind in a certain way. I can think of an example, a couple of weeks ago where one of my peers, she was pretty vulnerable and talking about that she had potentially a client that was on the autism spectrum and frankly, she didn't know how to work with this person because she didn't have any training. She didn't really know much about it and wondering if she was at a full level of competency to do that. And I could tell as soon as she said it she was like, 'I need instant', not gratification—I need instant normalizing. I need you guys to support me here,' because she really didn't want to give off the impression that she was being unethical or being not good enough, that kind of thing. And yeah, so I think in terms of the peer thing— is that we are all— kind of the ways that we get there are different. But we're all trying to, in theory, kind of get to the same place, getting through this program, getting licensed, getting a good job, that kind of thing. And to appear that you are behind in any way can definitely be a stressful thing. And you don't want to come in and share stuff that you're struggling with and then have everybody be like, 'Oh. That's not an issue for me,' and somehow internalizing it like, 'Oh. There's something wrong with me,' or, 'I'm not doing something right because other people aren't experiencing this.'

**Time.** I discussed emerging processes in round-one analysis that related to the passage of TIME. Participants in round-two interviews continued to discuss how TIME impacted their experiences of managing impressions. Below are two more examples:

P5: I've noticed this semester a change in being more comfortable revealing the dreaded image or you know what I would say is being more congruent.

P6: So, compared to where I started in supervision to where I am now, I would say I've kind of taken that 'professional trying to impress' approach back a little bit and coming in more like, 'I'm actually floundering right now.'

**Development.** Supervisee DEVELOPMENT is defined by the experience of change in counselor-identity over time. In the following example, Participant Three discussed her DEVELOPMENT as a counselor over TIME:

P3: I mean, I was just listening to tape today while I was writing notes up and feeling like it wasn't too bad. I don't know. It seems, partially, just kind of instinct. Like, 'Okay. That went pretty well.' I think that that's something that I've only just been able to start to develop. I don't think that I had that a year ago. I would have had no way to see if I was doing okay. But now, I think I've maybe seen enough that I sort of know what [bad work looks like]. Yeah. I mean, a lot of it is feedback from people too.

**Prior life experiences.** Many supervisees talked about their PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES as they were related to interpreting desired and dreaded images of the self. PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES included the property of prior career experiences. In the following quote, Participant Five discussed how her prior life experiences as a classically trained ballerina show up for her in the supervision situation:

P5: Where like coming from a ballet background where like everything was critical always it was hard to believe in positive feedback... so I think I've come a long way in accepting it. Trusting it.

Participant Seven also talked about his prior life experiences:

P7: ...I'm 43 years old. I have tons of life experience and have done a lot of fun things and had a lot of successes and some failures, absolutely. But I have definitely noticed that through the course of this program I tend to be more calm than people who are younger than me. And I attribute that a lot to that identity formation and being comfortable with myself as well as having, having, um, experiences to reach back on and say I have come up against challenges before I have felt stressed. I have felt questioning of what's going on and I have come through the other side. Like I know what that process looks like. Whereas some other of my younger counterparts... I think have less experience with that as well as not as, not as much time to just be comfortable with who they are. So, it's a huge part. I mean, it's, it's inseparable and it's [connection to self] one of the reasons I'm in this field.

In the following quote, Participant Seven discussed his former career as it related to his PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES:

P4: My former career.... [Describes former career that included a great deal of success and independence]... So I was fairly good.... really successful. And so, it's more a question of now— not only was I really successful, but I was the expert. I didn't have a mentor. Not really. I mean, I had a few people that I looked up to, but the thing that I was creating, it was like I was the mentor, like I was— people were asking me. And so there definitely is a sense now. I mean, it's very hard to go back and be a novice, first off. I mean just in general, it's really hard to be in a position of not knowing totally what I'm doing and being new at something. And I think also, there is this— I've had 13 years, or a dozen years, or whatever it's been, of professionally saying, 'Okay, if I don't know how to do something, I'm it—' there isn't any way I can even ask. I'm just going to go figure it out until I get good enough that I'm now the one coaching other people. But I was able to do it without...and I didn't have the luxury of a supervisor, really. And so now, to be... especially on campus at the counseling center on campus ...to have a really formalized supervision process, is definitely a— it's vulnerable. It also at times— I mean, I have to sort of fight this at times. It feels a little bit like a step-down, very much so. Like I went from being the boss to being like the intern. And my boss is someone who's a decade younger than me, and like all the pieces that go along with that, and has been in school for his entire adult life. And so it definitely takes a little bit of a conscious effort to say, "Okay, this is my supervision time. Oh, you know, it's time for me to show something." And again, I think the way I've sort of gotten around that is by saying, "I'm going to be a little bit of in control of this situation and show something that I know is bad," but like I'm going to own it. And it's sort of my thing, that I'm owning and I want to help on this thing.

**Awareness of impression management.** The final SITUATIONAL FACTOR is AWARENESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT. This involved a supervisee's knowledge of the construct of impression management. Many participants did not know what impression management was at the outset of the study. Upon being asked about their experiences with it, they came to understand the construct. This influenced their experiences of the supervision situation.

P3: I've been thinking about it, because sometimes I'll go into supervision and be kind of concerned about how my supervisor's perceiving me. And then I think about your study and I'm like, 'Hmm, interesting this is coming up.' So, I've noticed it happening much more than I did originally. I never really thought about the concept of trying to seem a certain way. And now I'm noticing it a lot more [laughter].

A: More aware of it.

P3: Yeah, for sure.

A: Since we talked last a couple months ago, did you have any other thoughts that came to mind about impression management that you wanted to share with me now before I dive into asking you my own questions?

P1: To be honest, yes and no. It's not like been at the forefront of my mind, it's like been in the back of my mind when I go into supervision now, like am I trying to appear competent and confident or is this just how I am [laughter]? Yeah, so it's like kind of been like [inaudible] back of my mind, but that's pretty much it.

A: Sure, cool. So it's been more in your awareness than before?

P1: Yeah.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS after round-two analysis include HIERARCHY, SOCIAL IDENTITIES, PEERS, TIME, DEVELOPMENT, PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES, and AWARENESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT.

So far, I have laid the groundwork for a new emerging conceptualization of the experience of impression management in supervision. Major categories that emerged in round-two analysis included: **attuning to desirable behavior, interpreting desired and dreaded images, weighing risk versus utility, managing impressions**, and SITUATIONAL FACTORS. The next step of the analysis process was to connect the emerging relationships between and among these categories of experiences.

### **Emerging Processes**

Second-round interviews focused heavily on process. I used focused and axial coding to establish processes between and among participant experiences. I analyzed the specified conditions under which the processes occurred, were maintained and/or changed. I worked to describe consequences and uncovered relationships between and among categories. The process of impression management was illuminated by seeking descriptions in the data that conceptualized how supervisees ended up in one of the five *sub-categories* of **managing impressions**. It was clear from round-one data that all participants had the desire to appear

certain ways to their supervisors, though supervisees did not always intentionally manage behavior in order to portray desired images of the self. The following section will answer the why, when, how, and why not of impression management in clinical supervision.

The two most prominent processes identified in the data include: **attuning to desirable behavior** leading to **interpreting desired and dreaded images**, then on to **weighing risk versus utility** followed by **managing impressions**. These dominant processes, as well as the multiple smaller processes between *sub-categories*, *properties*, and dimensions, will be explored to explain how these participants consciously manage their images to show a more favorable version of self.

**Process of attuning leading to interpreting desired and dreaded images and/or managing impressions.** **Attuning to desirable behavior** was a starting point for the process of impression management. Participants discussed having many different **desired and dreaded images**, but in order to know what images made up desirable behavior in their specific supervision settings, supervisees needed to tune in to expectations. These expectations came from the supervisor, the site, and internally from the supervisee. There were multiple processes that involved **attuning to desirable behavior**. The data showed that *attuning to supervisor expectations*, *attuning to site expectations*, and *attuning to internal expectations* all led to **interpreting desired and dreaded images**, and in some cases, directly to **managing impressions**.

**Attuning to supervisor leading to impression desires and/or managing.** A common process of *attuning to supervisor expectations* leading to **interpreting desired and dreaded images** and then to **managing impressions** is well established for participants. The following

quotes from P4 and P6 demonstrate the process of how *attuning to supervisor expectations* leads to **managing impressions**:

P4: But I think as I've gotten to know my supervisors, I also know kind of what they're looking for, what they value, you know? And there are definitely times, whether I'm aware of it in the moment or not, when I think, I'm like, 'Okay, we've been working on this thing, or talking about this thing. Here, let me show you a tape.' And I think that maybe encapsulates it a little bit for better or worse. And yeah, there can be a little bit of playing to what I know they do or what they're interested in. And I don't know if I would necessarily say I'm aware of doing that at the moment. But as I look back on it—yeah, my different supervisors have different things and— not knowing like, [with one supervisor if I say] 'here's a situation where I don't know what's going on.' His eyes light up, and it's like, 'I'm rewarded for this. Okay, great [laughter].' You know? 'So, let me do this.'

A: You're tuning in to what your supervisor thinks is competence. And sometimes that's congruent with what you think is competence. And sometimes it's not.

P4: Right.

A: And you make the decision to sort of manage your image a little bit to impress them maybe, or to connect with them maybe, or to have an experience that feels positive in supervision.

P4: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

P6: So really kind of creating my own ideas about what that supervisor expects from me kind of defines how I approach it [managing my impressions] and the vibe that I give off....I can kind of try to match that [supervisor style] with a calm, more wise approach versus my current supervisor who's younger and more just more vocal in multiple ways... that to come in and be like, 'Yeah. I'm ready to work, too.' Because I kind of sometimes feel like I need to match your intensity here. So yeah. Really, once you kind of get to know the supervisor and kind of how they are and how they carry themselves. So I guess in a sort of way you kind of mirror your supervisor in that way. Because somebody like [name of supervisor] who can be more informal, I'll come in and maybe be more informal. Versus somebody like [name of another supervisor] or my first supervisor at my internship site that I come in a little more— I mean, stoic might be a word that you could use. You kind of have some stoicism sometimes and I'm going to have some stoicism as well kind of thing.

P6: So, it's kind of just matching— making your observations of what they do and they seem to be like communicating this way. So that when I do communicate with them, I'm going to kind of match my communication style to be on the same or similar level with theirs.

Participant Six shared about how he moves through the process of *attuning to supervisor expectations*, then through the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of supervisor age, finally to *assessing safety with the supervisor*.

P6: ...Switching to my current supervisor, I have to think about why exactly it is, but I definitely don't feel quite that need to impress or be more presentable. It's more of an authentic—I think, one thing, it's because she's closer in age to me and then also, she's just a very energetic like, 'I'm not afraid to be authentic, so you shouldn't be afraid to be authentic either,' kind of person.

On other hand, Participant Two discussed her process of *attuning to supervisor's expectations*, but not receiving clear messages about what competence looked like. Not knowing exactly what competence looks like resulted in increased impression anxiety.

A: How do you know what her image of competence is... how do you know how to be competent for her?

P2: Hmm sorry I'm just... that's a good question... how do I know how to be competent for her? I don't, really. I mean, that's always something that I struggle with... is not being sure what she thinks of me...I have to prepare... otherwise she will, you know, give me the look or like just ask me more questions... yeah I guess it's hard for me to... I know I'm not making any sense right now... it's hard for me to talk with her and... everybody so... yeah.

A: Let me see if I'm understanding what you're saying.... so you don't always know what's expected of you and that's actually an anxiety-provoking experience for you in that you're not actually sure what competence really looks like in there.

P2: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

In the following quote, P2 discussed how she picked up on cues from her supervisor's intimidating behavior (*attuning to implicit expectations*) leading to wanting to make a good impression (**interpreting desired and dreaded images**):

P2: I mean, she's a little bit intimidating so I wanted to make a good impression.

The following quote demonstrates P6's process of *attuning to implicit expectations* leading to the **impression desire of appearing competent**, resulting in **managing impressions**:

P6: I've had, in varied capacities, several people in supervisory roles over the last couple of years and varied approaches to counseling and supervision is different. So, it really does depend on the supervisor. I have one supervisor who's, I guess you know her, [name

of supervisor]. She's my favorite supervisor instructor of the whole program just because she's very knowledgeable and she really knows what she's doing and she is so personable that you can be both [knowledgeable and personable] with her, so versus my current university supervisor, [name of other supervisor], who can be more intimidating. But for somebody who's in her [leadership role], she's a little older, she has more experience, where I come in more with that professionalism.

**Attuning to sites leads to impression desires and management.** The supervisees' perceptions of *site expectations* led to **impression desires** in several cases. Participants Four and Two discussed this process. In the first quote, Participant Four shared about how he has a stronger **desired image** of *appearing competent* at his second site because of the culture there.

P4: It's different at these two different sites. I mean and that's really interesting. I hadn't really thought about that that much until now, but that is really true. I mean at the [name of first site], we see these folks every day, all day long for months and in a couple cases, years. It's so hard, and we all mess up, and it's like, 'Well, see you tomorrow [laughter]. That was a really rough session. We'll see you tomorrow. We'll do it again.' Whereas with [name of second site] it does feel a lot more... There's eight sessions, and it does feel—if you're lucky, I think the average across the counseling center is four sessions. And so I think that there is a little bit more of an emphasis—or a lot more of an emphasis—on just trying to be helpful to folks kind of in the moment, and there is less of a culture of... I don't think I would even put it this way if I didn't have the other experience, but in comparison, there is less of a culture of risk-taking and vulnerability and being open to not knowing. I mean that is sort of in some ways the mantra at [name of first site]. We have to be open to not knowing because this is so complicated, and you're working at a really deep level, and sometimes you don't know. And whereas at [name of second site], it is more 'let's get into the nuts and bolts of what did you say, when? Was that a turning point in the session that moment?' And it's important because it's session number three and you might have two more with the person. So there is less of a curiosity about not knowing in comparison to the other place. So I feel really lucky to have both experiences, and frankly, I think that the experience at the [name of first site] is significantly influencing my ability to be open at the other place too.

A: Yeah. So there is this piece around the culture of the site is going to really influence what's expected of you in supervision.

P4: Right. Very much so. Very much so. Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting.

P4: Yeah, yeah. So then my other site, which is the one that I that I talked about last semester, is the counseling center on campus. And it is it is much more about showing tape and about skills. And I think that's kind of the distinct, the big distinction, between the two sites. Like at [name of the first site] it's... it's all about how do we conceptualize these people... thinking about deep level character change. At the [second site], it's about 'we're going to see them for eight sessions, eight hours total. That's it. And how do we help folks from a skill level?' So just to kind of lay the groundwork for the different types



of sites that I have and the different attitudes that are there and then so that the counseling center.... it's just that's the place I think where I have a lot more... personally, I feel a lot more vulnerable [impression anxiety].

With the following quote from Participant Two, the process of *attuning to site expectations* (the expectation to work independently) led to the **interpreting desired images of appearing**

*competent*:

P2: So, at [name of internship site] we aren't micromanaged, so we're kind of on our own. Because we're on our own I guess that is like...[I think] they need to trust me to do a good job, you know, and the only time I get help or guidance about clients is during supervision so, I want her to see that it wasn't a huge mistake that they took me on as an intern and that I'm okay on my own.

Participant Four talked about *attuning to site expectations* leading to the choice of *vulnerable disclosure* in the **managing impressions category**:

P4: And I honestly think that some of that is—what's allowed me to be able to do that [expose a vulnerability] is also being at [name of alternate internship site]... it's just that the overall attitude that you have to face your own challenges, what's dark in your own life and kind of be willing to go in the nooks and crannies and be willing to do it.

P4: And so first off, at that site, it's definitely a lot safer to just be like, 'I don't know what the hell I'm doing' because on the one hand there's no tape, and on the other hand he's [supervisor] a psychoanalyst and a 'just let it rip' man, go all in—let it go... lay out the hopes and fears... and they all [the clinicians that work at that site] do it, that's the point. And so it's really encouraged—I had like a crappy dream about a client, I shared it with him, I mean, that's like the point of it. And so I think at that site it's especially easy to share my incompetence because we're—it's [name of internship site], it's people that are there for seven hours a day, it's incredibly complex clients, and there is definitely... the whole place has a degree of 'shit, I don't know. This is really hard stuff.' And so there's sort of the whole place has a little bit of definitely not incompetence, but like a being willing to not know.

A: Acceptance of that as a norm.

**Attunement to internal expectations leads to interpreting desired images, assessing internal safety, and managing impressions.** The following quotes from P2 and P6 demonstrate how the experience *of attuning to internal expectations* led to **interpreting desired and**

**dreaded images.** In the first quote, Participant Two confirms my paraphrase that the **desired image of *appearing competent*** via sounding articulate comes from her internal desires:

A: Okay and part of that [desire to sound articulate] is just your expectations on yourself to be able to fire back quickly... it's not necessarily that she's [your supervisor] saying that you need to be able to do that? It's just sort of an internal sense?

P2: Yeah, it's me. It's all me.

Participant Six also discussed how his **desired images** are an internal construct:

P6: But really the thing that's coming up for me right now is that, at least in my experience, so much of that impression management [desire to appear a certain way] is an internal construct...I've never had my supervisor tell me what is expected of me or what kind of attitude [I should present], how I should present myself... it's created by me. And some of those things that you were saying earlier about wanting to appear competent, open to feedback, all stuff like that is stuff that isn't always explicitly stated by the supervisor. So... [those expectations are] something that you sense, you kind of pick up on that this is what good presentation in supervision is. So it's really just kind of creating your own ideas about that... But really, a lot of that [impression desires] does come from your own ideas.

In the following example, P1 described how ***attuning to internal expectations*** of **desirable behavior** led to ***non-disclosure impression management*** (not asking for help):

P1: I think because I'm so used to having to do everything, so for me, asking for help is—okay, so if I'm asking for help, then for me that's a key indicator that I'm way past my threshold when I probably should have asked for help a long time ago. So I would literally hold it in until the last second. And it's like, 'Okay, the house is on fire. I need help [laughter].' It's embarrassing, because it's like, 'The house is on fire and I need help.' And I saw, like, the stove catch on fire. I should have asked for help then.

A: Sure. What stops you from asking for help when the stove catches fire?

P1: Because I think I can manage it all and I can do it all.

In the same vein, P1 discussed how her ***internal expectations*** of being an overachiever led to ***weighing internal shame*** when not met—this was independent of her supervisor's response.

P1: I've always been an overachiever, straight-A student kind of personality. And I set the expectation for myself, so it's kind of—yeah. I have to be the best at what I'm doing.

A: So, your supervisor could be the warmest person in the world and so non-judgmental and you would still maybe beat yourself up sometimes if you didn't do a good enough job for yourself.

P1: Yes.

One of the *properties of attuning to internal expectations* is *reliving family of origin expectations*. There is a process that extends from *reliving family of origin expectations* to **interpreting desired and dreaded images**. Participants Six, Three, and Five talked about this process. In the first example, Participant Six discussed how the values and morals instilled from his dad carried over to create an internal desire to appear *hard-working* in supervision:

P6: I grew up primarily with my dad who is a hard-working, Midwest, conservative guy. And so hard work was a big value in my house and you get what you work— or what you work for is what you get. And own up to your mistakes. Work hard, do the job right, kind of thing. So I would say that's kind of the biggest value that's carried over. And a big thing for me is that I like to— I'm a perfectionist in some regards in that way and that I really try to do things really well. And when they're not— when they don't go as well as I would have hoped for, that can be stressful or I don't know what I'd call it. But in terms of how that translates now into supervision is that it's the same kind of thing where I like to work really hard. I like to get notes in on time. I like to be really prompt. Kind of that worker bee kind of mentality. And that I really don't want to be seen as somebody who's slacking in any way. So really trying to stay on top of things all the time is important.

A: Uh-huh. So some of those desired and dreaded images that you might want your supervisor to see you as might be ones that carried over from values that were instilled in you with your dad.

P6: A lot of family of origin values, morals, whatever it is they do, it impacts kind of your later years whether you really are aware of it or not. And that's how I am in everything. That kind of hard worker mentality, but it definitely shows in my internship as well.

Participant Three discussed how her experiences in childhood were related to the *desire to appear competent* and the specific property of *appearing at least as good as peers*. In this interaction, we hint at a story she disclosed in the first interview about comparing herself with her PEER:

P3: I think personally, and I've actually talked about this in my own personal counseling, I think that the way I was brought up was sort of to emphasize, 'oh you're better than other people,' which is terrible but I kind of feel like that's what I was told kind of growing up, in so many words. And so I have these two siblings who were really talented and I think that I just— now in the world and I don't always do better than others or I'm average or below average and that has been a hard thing to come to terms with. So I think it's kind of the way that I was raised.... My sister had the same thing at one point. She said something like either me and my brother and her, either we are kind of full of

ourselves and think we're really awesome or we think we're horrible and it's like there's not a lot of in between. It's kind of one or the other. There's not a lot of forgiveness of not being great. But then it's like we can get a lot of self-satisfaction and self-worth out of doing well. You know?

A: Yeah. That makes sense. I'm just thinking of that example that you told me last time we talked around being in a triadic supervision with another person and it felt like she was the favorite child and you were the stinky child, I think was the word you used. That seems like there's sort of a parallel there of wanting to make sure that you're going to be [seen as] the best in the moment.

P3: Mm-hmm.

A: Yeah.

The following disclosure highlights how P5's *family of origin* experiences influenced her *desires to appear competent*:

A: Because you still have that desire to appear competent in his [your supervisor's] eyes.

P5: Definitely yes.

A: What are the factors that influence that desire for you?

P5: I think a lot of it is like family of origin... I mean I come from very high achieving family, so I have internalized a lot of these just like the bar that we set as a family and all of that I think a lot of it is coming from within me.

*Reliving family of origin expectations* also influenced how P1 **managed impressions** in supervision; she engaged in *non-disclosure* behavior by avoiding asking for help:

A: Are you an oldest child, [P1]?

P1: Yes, I am. The oldest of five children.

A: Oh, you are? That was just a guess [laughter].

P2: Yes. And I am very parentified. So— I know this is off topic, but my siblings would often come to me before they'd go to my parents.

A: It's not off topic. I'm curious. Do you think that that experience of being the oldest and being parentified and being the person who everyone went to for help influences how you are in situations where you're in supervision and you're the one supposed to be asking for help?

P1: Yeah, I would say so. In supervision definitely. I think for me— yeah, in supervision actually, I know it's a time where I can ask for help, but I don't necessarily ask for help. I'm more receptive towards feedback. And I notice within supervision I'm always looking for criticisms of myself, which my supervisor never does and he will never do. It's like, 'Okay, I want you to point out something I did wrong so I can fix it.' But it's nothing I've ever done wrong, per se. I don't know. I'm weird [laughter] but definitely, yeah, I think— yeah. [inaudible] I set that for myself.

A: You feel those patterns from the past kind of picking up in situations where [you're in supervision]

P1: Definitely.

A: Yeah and I guess what I'm hearing is the one big way that that shows up is that you wait for a while, you hold things close and you don't speak up sometimes and part of that's just habit like because that's the way you're used to living your life and walking through the world. And do you think some of that's also motivated by this thing that we're calling impression management of like, 'I don't want him [supervisor] to see me this way or that way'?

P1: Yes.

*Reliving family of origin expectations* was the origin of another process, which for P2 led to

**interpreting the desired image** of *emotionally stable*, then leading to *weighing internal shame*.

Ultimately, the process resulted in ***uncontrolled disclosure***:

P2: ...My parents.... I'm a very sensitive person and I always have been. My parents shamed me sometimes for that... for crying... so ummm... one time in supervision I had an intake [that I did in the room] with my supervisor and it was so sad, her story was so sad and I was holding back tears the whole time [the client was in the room] and then as soon as she [the client] left I just like couldn't hold back anymore and I cried a little bit but it was actually a good experience... she [the supervisor] was really sweet about it and said you know it wasn't bad, but for me it was hard. It was hard to do that. It felt really almost shameful I guess to cry in front of her.

A: Uh huh and that feeling was really sort of a holdover about what it felt like to cry in the past with your parents.

P2: Yes.

A: And that might be part of what you're protecting sometimes when you try not to be emotional in front of your supervisor. Shame from the past?

P2: Yeah, definitely yeah.

Participant Two discussed the process of *reliving family of origin expectations* leading directly to *weighing internal shame* when deciding about **weighing the risk versus utility** of disclosures in supervision:

A: And feel free not to share if you don't want to but you have a guess as to where that [sense of shame] comes from for you?

P2: Yeah, I have a pretty good guess... my dad is pretty... I don't know like just very... nothing is ever good enough kind of thing... so I'm guessing it kind of comes from that.

A: Yeah so even if your supervisor is not telling you directly that nothing is ever good enough it can feel that way because of the past?

P2: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I mean that makes sense of course things that we grow up with are what's normal

A: Yeah and the supervisor's in kind of a parental position with you in some ways right

P2: Yeah definitely. Authoritative...guiding and all of that.

Another process that begins with **attuning to desirable behavior** starts specifically with *comparing self to others* and extends to **interpreting desired and dreaded images**. Participants

Two and Three describe this process:

A: Where do you think those images [of desirable behavior] came from?

P2: I guess watching other people that I look up to and seeing like the things that make them professional... or somebody that could be a good counselor. That's what I feel like is ideal, I guess.

A: So, it's true comparison of yourself to others?

P2: Yeah.

P3: The other intern that's there only does an hour [of supervision] and she just seems like she's totally not difficult at all. I think she doesn't seem to be a super great counselor, but she's just kind of laid-back and chill and I feel like I'm not being that sometimes.

A: She's not needy.

P3: Yeah, and I really don't want to be needy. Yeah. No.

The final process originating from the **category of attuning to desirable behavior** is a complicated progression in which Participant Four's SOCIAL IDENTITY of gender interacted with his attunement to *site expectations*. His socialization as a man led to **interpreting desired and dreaded images** of not showing vulnerability (*emotional stability*), and his *attunement of the site expectations* led to the assessment that vulnerability is also not valued, though he had an *internal expectation* gained from *comparing self to respected others* that *vulnerability* is a property of competence. These conflicting messages of attunement and social location together influenced his **impression desire** to *balance images*.

A: Yeah. And then it's even more complicated when the culture of the site values competence, and your socialization [as a man] has valued competence and has not valued weakness.

P4: Right. Yeah.

A: And then the site socialization has not valued weakness necessarily. But the profession of counseling values, I mean, showing vulnerability. And so, how do you juxtapose?

How do you get yourself situated there to show the right amount of vulnerability [laughter]?

P4: Yeah. Yeah. Exactly.

**Interpreting desired and dreaded images leading to managing impressions.** The second major process involved **interpreting desired and dreaded images** leading to **managing impressions**. I will begin by exemplifying the general process of **interpreting desired and dreaded images** leading to **managing impressions** and follow up with how the specific desired and dreaded images influence the process. Participant Five demonstrates how her **interpretation of desired images** led to the behavior of *non-disclosure*:

P5: I do still kind of grapple with... this has been a very tough semester for me just like personal life stuff. [Describes what happened that included something traumatic]... basically it was a ten day panic attack. Probably the worst I've ever felt in my mind and body. It was really scary. Living minute by minute like trying to get by. I definitely felt torn. You know, I was at internship seeing ten clients a week somehow. And also going like completely insane. But I didn't share the experience with my supervisor. And I still think about that and I think it would have been fine given our relationship and maybe even helpful, but I didn't want him to see me as someone who maybe couldn't do the work or maybe needed to take time off or wasn't as strong and resilient as he thought I was. That was just interesting to me. And yet, a big part of me during that time was like wishing that he knew because I felt like I was coming off as so weird. You know. So off. But I didn't share it. So that's interesting.

The **desired image** of *open to feedback* led Participant One to the **managing impressions** through the behavior of *non-disclosure*. This participant shared how she often acts as if she does not know something that she knows (which she named as “playing dumb” previously in our conversation):

P1: ...Even though I had been in a profession a short time, it's a lot of what he's saying is kind of like, oh, I know about this already, like I— but I don't want to be perceived as a know-it-all and you can't teach me anything.

A: So, you want to be open to his feedback, but sometimes that means playing dumb when you do actually know something.

P1: Yeah.

Participant Six talked about how the *desire to balance images* led to **managing impressions**, *controlled disclosure* specifically. He discussed not wanting to bring “the personal side” into

supervision too much, yet he was also aware that if he hides all of himself that could jeopardize the image of being appropriately *vulnerable*.

P6: ...To bring in that personal side into supervision, I try not to do too much. But [I also try] not hide it completely, because not bringing that in [to] supervision would kind of give off the impression that like, 'I don't want to do this. I'm not cut out for this.'

The **desired image** of *self-sufficient* led to **managing impressions** in this example for P3:

P3: But I almost don't want to put her in a place where she's having to work hard to supervise me or having to change something to accommodate me. I'm just trying to get as un-difficult as possible [laughter]... I don't want to be a burden, no. For some reason, it already feels like I'm a burden. I try to— sometimes we do two-hour supervision, which I think would be really helpful. And I always feel kind of annoying taking time out of her day to do two hours versus one hour. So yeah, even though it's part of her job, for some reason it feels like she's volunteering her time to talk to me.

A: Mm-hmm. Yeah. So it goes back to that sort of dreaded image of being needy. And there are times where you would rather not get your needs met in order to not appear needy?

P3: Yeah.

The final process that originates in the **category** of **interpreting desired and dreaded images** starts with the *desire to appear competent* and *at least as good as peers* then to the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of PEERS, finally ending up with *maintaining pride/status*.

Participant Six described the way this played out for him:

P6: We're [my peers and I] all trying to, in theory, kind of get to the same place, getting through this program, getting licensed, getting a good job, that kind of thing. And to appear that you are behind in any way can definitely be a stressful thing. And you don't want to come in and share stuff that you're struggling with and then have everybody be like, 'Oh. That's not an issue for me,' and somehow internalizing it like, 'Oh. There's something wrong with me, 'or, 'I'm not doing something right because other people aren't experiencing this.'

**Processes beginning with weighing risk versus utility.** Although **weighing risk versus utility** solidified in round-two analysis as a major category of the experience of impression management, it also was the primary process by which participants made decisions about their impression management behavior. The data indicate that it is a ubiquitous experience for



participants to desire to appear in favorable ways to their supervisors, yet they all (to various degrees) took risks to make disclosures about mistakes, opinions, and vulnerabilities that risked exposing a dreaded image of the self. The processes of **weighing risk versus utility** provides insight into how participants made those moment-by-moment decisions. All of the processes originating within this **category** are organized by the four major *sub-categories*: *assessing safety with the supervisor*, *assessing internal readiness for risk*, *assessing potential losses*, and *assessing utility*. There are processes even within and among these *sub-categories*, which will also be described.

**Processes starting from assessing safety with supervisor.** Participants discussed the process of *assessing safety with supervisor* leading to behavior intended to **manage impressions**. Whether or not a supervisee felt psychologically safe in the relationship made a difference in regard to the risks they took to show or hide undesirable images of self. Participant Seven described the process of *assessing safety with the supervisor* by watching the supervisor's behavior, making a prediction that she would react supportively to a disclosure, which ultimately led to *vulnerable disclosure*.

P7: [I notice] the way of being of the supervisor in meetings and talking to counselors-in-training just in the office and what not. And kind of watching, assessing, and then I think, with my supervisor, she appeared to be really caring and supportive. So, it made it easy to make the decision to say, 'I'm having a hard time with this. I don't understand. Please help.'

The flip side of this process involved assessing a lack of *safety with the supervisor* as well as **attuning to overcoming stereotypes** resulting in **managing impressions** through *controlled disclosure*. Participant Three offered an example of this process:

A: And then also, you didn't trust that she [supervisor] wouldn't judge you for bringing a vulnerability. That feels...

P3: ...Really put in the box. To have someone be like, 'You're now this way. I see you as this counselor that has this problem because you showed this one tape.' I do not like that.

Then, it makes me feel like I have to— every tape I show from then on has to be filled with feeling reflections and the most feelings-y thing of all time because that will contradict what she's already— I guess that's kind of going with the assumptions thing. It's like that will contradict this assumption that she's made about me, that I feel like I need to break.

A: Yeah. Right. It's like now, I have to be extra [laughter] on top of all of that.

P3: Yeah. Now, I want to be the most fluffy! I can't be that [not attending to feelings]— I can't be the person at fault now [laughter].

Participant Four imagined a scenario in which *assessing safety with supervisor* could lead to *controlled disclosure* when safety is not present:

P7: I can imagine being with supervisors who have a different presence and maybe don't make a person feel quite so comfortable. And I can still imagine addressing my questions. I just might veil them in a slightly less transparent manner and have it go towards the academic side or the procedural side or whatever...

Continuing with this same vein, P3 compared two different supervisors—one where she did not feel safe and the other where she did. She described the process of *assessing safety with supervisor* leading to *vulnerable disclosure*. This quote also contains hints of the process of *noticing supervisor responses to vulnerability* leading back to *assessing safety with supervisor*.

P3: Also, the person definitely has a lot to do with it. My supervisor right now is super maternal, so I feel relatively safe just because she's so supportive. [I feel more comfortable] like sharing with her my vulnerabilities. Whereas with other people, I think I would feel not as safe. Whenever I kind of do that and I go there, she's always very much like, 'No. It's totally okay for you to be open here.' She's very verbally validating. Almost too much sometimes. But she's never shamed me or anything, verbally, or done anything that makes me feel like it's not okay to be upset.

Additional quotes that demonstrate the process of *supervisor normalizing vulnerability* leading to *assessing safety with supervisor* are below:

A: So how did you know whether it was safe to talk to your supervisor about that vulnerability?

P1: Based off a conversation he had with another supervisor. So, it was a situation where I was having some countertransference with a client. And he [supervisor] wasn't present, so I sought out supervision with another supervisor— I found one, and I was able to talk to her about some of the things that I was experiencing. And so then, a couple of weeks later he had heard about it, and so he said that made him feel good, and obviously I trust them enough to— if I'm having an issue, I can come talk to him. And so, I was able to

share with him the countertransference that I was experiencing. He didn't ask me to go into details, but I shared with him anyway what was going on.

A: So, it sounds like he gave you some positive feedback upon hearing that you talked about that with somebody else.

P1: Yes.

A: So, you picked up on that cue from him that it was okay to share that, because he didn't judge you, or it was okay.

P1: Yeah, yeah.

In the following example, Participant Six demonstrates how *supervisor normalizing vulnerability* leads to *vulnerable disclosure*. He then goes on to talk about how with a different supervisor, *vulnerable disclosure* led to *weighing internal shame* because that supervisor did not *normalize vulnerable disclosure*.

P6: Yeah, normalizing's [that it's okay to be vulnerable] a big part of it too. Where if you were to, say, share your insecurities and if she was like, 'That's weird, that hasn't happened to me,' like, 'Oh great', but she's like, 'Yeah, that happens. That's a super normal thing to experience in your development'.

A: Yeah, and it sounds like with your old supervisor it wasn't necessarily that she was shaming but more that she wasn't automatically that validating and so it left more space for you to experience shame in yourself.

P6: Yeah, she was more of a life coach. She more listened because she was a really good listener and then when you share your vulnerable areas and then kind of sit in that silence, that empty space, that just leaves more, you more interpret and bring the shame back kind of thing. Like I said, with this supervisor, she is more engaged. As soon as I share something, she's like, 'Yeah, yeah', and doesn't really sit in it much.

A: Yeah. Yeah. It sounds like for you reassurance that it's okay to be vulnerable verbally [is important in order to take the risk]. Actually, saying, 'Thank you. You're good. You're on the right track. I'm glad that you showed this.'

P3: 'Thanks for showing this tape that was really hard for you to show.' Yeah. Stuff like that.

In the following example, supervisor seeking feedback led to *assessing safety with the supervisor*, finally ending in *vulnerable disclosure*:

A: Okay. And how do you know when it's safe to tell your supervisor that they made a mistake or that he's not meeting your needs?

P1: Well, that's a ongoing conversation that we have. And so, my supervisor, he will often say, 'This is your supervision. If you find this helpful, great. If not, let me know, and then we can tweak it, so I can meet your needs.' And so far, I'm finding that very—I find it good in the sense of—he's been doing counseling longer than I have, so I'm more

receptive to take what he's saying. So I feel, for me, even if he were to make a mistake, he's very good at, I guess, just, 'Okay, I made a mistake and..' just reframing a mistake in a way to make sense, I guess I would say, yeah. So it's kind of like, 'Oh, I'm sorry.' And he'll say, 'I was—' which is not an excuse. He'll say like, 'Oh, I was thinking this way, but now that you're saying that, okay, now I can go on a different train of thought,' so to speak.

A: So he accommodates when he does make a mistake; he changes his behavior?

P1: Yes.

A: So that gives you a signal that it's safe to tell him and give him feedback because he listens to you?

P1: Mm-hmm.

*Noticing supervisor responses to vulnerability* also led to **vulnerable disclosure**. Participant One discussed this process, including how her DEVELOPMENT integrated into this process:

P1: At my level of counseling, I feel like, 'Okay, I should have some kind of competency,' but I really do like the fact that my supervisor reiterates that I just started out in this field; I'm not expected to be perfect. If I were to hold myself up to that standard then, that would be an issue, a problem. He knows I'm going to make mistakes, and I have made plenty of mistakes, and he has been very patient with me making those mistakes.

A: Okay. And so it feels like now you can show him the mistakes because you're not going to— he's not going to react in a way that's going to feel unsafe for you?

P1: Yes.

*Supervisor self-disclosure* arose clearly as a causal factor leading to **vulnerable disclosure**.

When I asked participants the second-round question about how they knew when it was safe to disclose a vulnerability, they often responded by saying they felt they were safe when their supervisor disclosed vulnerabilities. The following quotes demonstrate this process:

P3: She also does a lot of self-disclosure, so she'll be like, 'I—' she talks about herself and her experiences with emotions and situations that aren't ideal as well. So, it makes me feel much more comfortable sharing with her.

P3: And I think a lot of it for me is dependent on whether or not they have opened up about something that they're vulnerable about. And I think for me I'm a lot better at showing sides of myself that I don't love if people disclose to me sides of themselves that they don't love or times that things happened that weren't ideal. That just really, really helps me.

P5: I think that for me it's partly because the person I'm working with, my supervisor you know, something we talked about last time that we chatted [P5 and the researcher] was

that my supervisor didn't put a lot of herself into our sessions... like I didn't know a lot about her life or who she was or all of that. We weren't necessarily connecting person-to-person, but like colleague-to-colleague. And I feel like with my supervisor now, like there is always this 5 to 10 minutes just chat about our lives and his partner is pregnant and we're connecting about having kids and it just feels more comfortable and human and I think with that in the picture I have felt more comfortable being fully human and I bring a lot more tapes to our supervision and I'll be like, look I'm really struggling with this client I'm just coming up against a wall and I have no idea what to do... there's still a little bit of fear there that I'll be exposed as this person who really does have no idea what I'm doing in the session or that he won't want me to be an intern there anymore... you know coming up with worst-case scenarios... but I think that for me...at least with him that what has enabled me to put myself out there in that way is that he reveals his imperfections, not only as a person, but also as a clinician... what he struggled with... mistakes that he's made and what he's learned from them... I think all of that just gives me information you know... I know that he's seeing me as a whole person and not just as a person who is confused with a client and therefore, I don't know anything.

A: And the other thing I'm hearing you saying pretty clearly is that when your supervisor shows her humanness or her authenticity more, that leaves space for you to do the same.  
 P6: Yeah, yeah, definitely. I think in the place where I'm at, authenticity is something that they really strive for. It's funny because like I said to you earlier, my two supervisors that I had the first two semesters compared to this one, they could not be more different. One of them's older, very calm, mindfulness, Zen kind of stuff. Whereas the other one, she's younger and more peppy. Like, 'I'm going to challenge you. Let's work on this! I'm excited! Let's do this.' And those are their authentic selves. Not that my past supervisor never discouraged me from being authentic, but I think with this supervisor, it's okay to be authentic because she really does a good job at validating the uncomfortable areas that an emerging counselor experiences. And that she's sort of like, 'I had those experiences,' and, 'Here's the areas where I struggled.' I think empathy would be a good one, that it's like, I was in your shoes, I know what it's like, it's scary to be authentic but it's fine. I'm going to be authentic and I hope you're authentic too.

On the other hand, Participant Three talked about the experience of lack of *supervisor self-*

*disclosure* leading to lack of willingness to do **vulnerable disclosure** with her supervisor:

P3: I felt like she didn't share any vulnerabilities with us, so the idea of sharing vulnerability with her was not great. I didn't want to do it.

The following quote shows the process of *supervisor self-disclosure* led back to **assessing safety with supervisor**, ultimately ending up with **vulnerable disclosure**.

P2: Um how do you know when it's safe to show your supervisor vulnerability? Uhhh... I mean, when she shows a little bit of vulnerability, I think. That tells me that it's a safe place and we can be open with each other in that way...I think that's actually something

that helped our relationship. She gave us, all the interns at my place, she gave us a seminar and during the seminar it was about termination and it was... she was telling a really sweet story about a client she had terminated with and they didn't have any parents I think so she attended their graduation ceremony and when she was telling that story she cried and that's when I felt like...Ohhh, she is really... she's not like 'on' all the time. She feels things just like me. Which, you know, it feels silly to say that but that's when I started to feel safe sharing emotions with her.

A: So you're saying that when you saw the humanness of your supervisor it felt more comfortable to show that to her as well.

P2: Exactly.

A: Is part of that too... like the norms were created in the room for you to be more vulnerable by her being more vulnerable?

P2: Yeah, yeah. Like, we didn't talk about it... but, yeah it felt like, like I said, this is a safe place. She's showing her emotions so that means it's okay.

*Supervisor managing power* is another experience that led back into the process of **assessing safety with the supervisor**. The following quotes show how this progression played out for several participants:

P7: I'm trying to imagine supervisors who I might feel uncomfortable with, what their personalities might be like or what their attributes might be that would discourage me from being authentic. And when I image that, I, of course, imagine people that are more closed off, cold, maybe punitive in how they deal with differences in opinion. Or they might perceive things rigidly as fact-based binaries, where I might find it a spectrum.

P6: She's very like, 'This is your call. You need to do what's best for you in this situation,' kind of thing, which is nice to hear... It's like, 'We don't make that decision. This is you. You have some power here.' So to be able to get the advice or the suggestions when you need them but also to have them really help you feel more confident in your decision-making has been a pretty important area for me, personally, in supervision. And when a supervisor can attune to your need to grow personally and match that, I think is helpful [for creating a safe relationship].

In the following example, Participant Four shares the process of *supervisor managing power* leading to **assessing safety with the supervisor**, also mediated by the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of SOCIAL IDENTITIES (gender). There is also a hint of lack of *trusting that the supervisor can provide help*:

P4: My experience with my doc supervisor is a little different. It's kind of interesting to think about because he actually brings thing—with my other supervisors, they asked me, 'What do you want to talk about today?' And with him he's like, 'Hey, I've got a few

things on the list. Du, du, du.' He has a list and it's curious because I'm the first person he's ever supervised. I don't know what that's about, but it is a different experience with him. And so with him, I sort of maybe have a couple of things that I go in to talk about. But I also know he's going to talk about things and I don't like that as much. He's on this kick right now where he's really focusing on how I address risk in the room and I'm just like, 'I'm doing fine. Stop bringing it up.' But for whatever reason, he keeps bringing it up. And it's totally annoying for me, and I don't like it [laughter]. And I sort of muscle it out and it's fine. We do it. Whereas [with] the other supervisor, it's just kind of what I want to bring.

A: It sounds like how much trust they demonstrate in you.

P4: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's a good—yep. Yeah. I mean, I definitely feel significantly more trust in my primary supervisor in part because she trusts me to bring up what I think I need to bring up. Whereas with the other guy, with my doc supervisor—here's another guy. I feel a little bit like I'm going to clash. [inaudible] maybe or there's something there. It's like, 'Okay, what is [doc supervisor's name] going to—what has he got for me today?'

A: There's a hierarchy that he's trying to establish over you.

P4: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. It definitely feels that way. Yeah, and it's not like—I respect what he's doing, but there's more of a power dynamic there because he does it that way.

*Supervisor managing power* also led to **managing impressions**, specifically *non-disclosure* for

Participant Three:

P3: I think a lot of it was the power dynamic and sort of the sense that I got from that supervisor that she wanted us to know that she knew more than us, kind of. That it was... for her—it was important to her to feel very like the expert. And I felt like I couldn't argue with that. I felt like I really wasn't allowed to have my own opinion because it seemed so important to her that she—I don't know—be right about it.... She just came off as very—she came off as very defensive to feedback, to me. So, any time I would give her...I never felt like I could give her feedback.

The final process initiating from *assessing safety with supervisor* starts with *supervisor initiating vulnerable topics*. In the following example, when P1's supervisor did not broach discussions about culture, she took the cue not to talk about these topics, which led to *non-disclosure*.

A: Sure, yeah. Has he ever said something to you like, 'Hey, we're different in terms of race and in terms of gender, in terms of age and let's talk about those differences.'?

P1: I want to say yes, but I'm going to have to say like a hard, cold, no.

A: Yeah, and because he's never brought it up, does that make you less likely to bring it up with him?

P1: Yeah, I would say so. Yeah, I would say that and that's a lot—I would say majority of my conversations like, I wait for other people to bring it up. Depending on the

situation and the context of the conversation, I wait for other people to bring it up, but once they bring it up, it's like, 'Oh, let's talk about this. Yeah, let's get into this.'

A: Yeah, so it's like you're waiting for a cue from him that this is a topic that's okay to talk about. It's not that you don't want to talk about it, it's just that you're waiting for him to give you that signal.

P1: Yes.

A: And it seems like in your supervision with him there are some things that you guys just don't talk about that much maybe because he hasn't really given the signal they're on the table to talk about?

P1: Yes.

Participant Five discussed how her supervisor *bringing up the vulnerable topic* of whether he was meeting her needs (supervisor seeking feedback) allowed her to feel safer in supervision:

P5: But I brought it up to him a couple weeks ago [insecurities about whether I'm using the supervision time correctly] and kind of towards the end of the session I was like 'am I like doing supervision right?' Like... I was just feeling like... is the stuff I'm bringing in the right stuff...?' and he laughed and you know, was like, 'yes 100% this is exactly where I would expect you to be second semester of internship.' And then he was like 'you know, after every supervision we have I wonder if I am bringing enough to you, like am I meeting your needs?' I just thought that was interesting... it was still a professional way, but he was talking about his own insecurities around being a supervisor. It was cool to talk about, because I think people don't generally, explicitly talk about the roles that we're holding in the relationship.

A: Yeah and sounds like contributes to you feeling safer to be yourself and be congruent with him.

P5: Yeah, exactly.

Participant Three also discussed the process of *supervisor (not) initiating vulnerable topics* (i.e. supervisor seeking feedback) leading to *assessing safety with supervisor* and in her case ultimately *non-disclosure*:

P3: But in terms of feeling safe— I almost feel like they should ask me how they're doing. That would make me feel safe and they don't ever do that. I don't know if I've ever had a supervisor be like, 'I want to talk about how supervision is feeling for you right now. What else can I be doing?' I kind of feel no one does that and that would be nice because it's sort of hard to give feedback just out of the blue. I think at that point I would feel comfortable saying something.

A: If it was invited, you would speak up but you're not sure if it's your role to say something just off the cuff.

P3: And I guess, in terms of the feedback part, it just is really sticking with me that I wish that they would just ask for feedback, and why don't they? I feel kind of annoyed about



that because with clients you do that all the time, you're like, 'How is this relationship feeling to you?' And I don't think I've ever had a professor or a supervisor do that, so that's sort of a bummer.

A: It's like you'll follow their lead. They're the leader here, and if they want to open up that conversation you'll go there, but you're not going to just bring it up.

P3: Yeah. Yeah. It'd be really hard to do that.

In another example of a similar process, Participant Three discussed worrying about hurting her supervisor's feelings because she assessed that her supervisor may avoid vulnerable topics that could potentially hurt feelings. This exemplifies the process of *supervisor (not) initiating vulnerable topics* leading to *non-disclosure*.

P3: My supervisor currently— sometimes I feel like she's not that helpful. [I don't tell her that because] I worry about hurting her feelings sometimes because I think she worries about hurting my feelings. So, she pulls her punches kind of. I feel maybe.

*Processes that originated from assessing internal readiness for risk.* Internal safety was defined in round-two analysis as a crucial factor that indicated whether supervisees would take the risk to expose an undesirable image of self. The following quotes demonstrate the general process of *assessing internal readiness for risk* leading to *managing impressions*. In the first quote, Participant Seven confirms my summary of his process describing an *internal sense of safety* leading to *vulnerable disclosure*. He also notices in his peers that they might not take the same risks because of less internal safety:

A: So for you, it sounds like when you're in those experiences [individual or group supervision] and you have something that might feel embarrassing to show, your lens of, 'is it safe to show it in here?' is just kind of about what's going on in the room. It's not really about all the stuff that's happened in the past in which you've been humiliated or whatever, it's like, 'Of course I'm going to take the risk, because this is my chance to learn, from my peers or from my supervisor and just be here.' And for someone else, that same exact environment might feel unsafe for various other reasons. And in feeling unsafe, you've noticed that someone else might react in a way that feels more defensive, feels less vulnerable, less authentically seeking support, and maybe more like pushing back on the hierarchy or against the peers.

P7: Yeah, absolutely.

In the next quote, P2 confirms my paraphrase that *assessing internal readiness for risk* leads to **managing impressions**:

A: Ok, so certainly how safe, how sort of psychologically safe you are in the moment impacts how much vulnerability you are going to show.

P2: Yeah. Yeah.

*Weighing internal shame leading to managing impressions.* The next cluster of processes are all related to *weighing internal shame*, which is one of the properties of *assessing internal readiness for risk*. The main process involved *weighing internal shame* leading to **interpreting desired and dreaded images** and **managing impressions**. The presence of shame did not always indicate that a supervisee would engage in **managing impressions**, but when supervisees did intentionally manage their impressions by avoiding disclosure of mistakes and vulnerabilities, shame was almost always present. I will begin with two quotes from P7, who discussed a lack of *internal shame* leading to *vulnerable disclosure*:

P7: I recognize my own humanity. And I think I do a pretty good job of recognizing my deficits without shame for them so that I can just accept them and try to improve. And that's pretty huge. I mean, there's definitely people out there carrying around that shame. And you can see how much harder the process of personal growth is for them. Understandably so. I think that's what's behind it [ability to take risks to be vulnerable] for me.

A: So lack of shame for your deficits.

P7: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Helps it feel okay to expose that and ask for help around them and to be authentic with that.

P7: Yeah, yeah. I think so.

P7: My experience of worrying about other people's impressions [and managing behavior intentionally] is limited. I can think of some times that it's happened, for sure. Almost any new group of people or things like that. I usually get past them [managing impressions behaviors] pretty fast...I don't know if you'll get to where you're trying to tease out attributes of, 'Why is this person's process like this and this is like this?' but my attributes are, as I said, not a lot of negative experiences with people. And also just this general outlook that comes from the abundance mindset versus the scarcity mindset. And so that is more collaborative in nature and I tend to, I think, assume and embody the assumptions that we will all get further if I'm not fearful and scared, but willing to engage. I just kind of have that assumption that the world is also going to benefit the most from helping me.

So, I just don't run around with that fear. That fear-based scarcity mindset of, 'I don't look good enough.' Or, 'I have to look better than the people sitting next to me so that I can accomplish X, Y, and Z in the future.' Those just aren't things I carry with me. And I do think that's significant in terms of how the process of interacting with a supervisor and being one down position are carried out by me.

On the other hand, many participants shared examples where the presence of *internal shame* led to **managing impressions**, specifically *controlled disclosure* and *non-disclosure*.

The first example shows how P2 *assessed utility* of *vulnerable disclosure*, yet *weighing internal shame* still caused her distress in supervision, which ultimately led to *controlled disclosure* over TIME as she encountered barriers to being vulnerable.

P2: Umm...I think I'd like to say it's easier to be vulnerable [over time]... that's my goal but...[laughing] it's not really getting easier for me..

A: Do you have a guess as to why?

P2: Umm... I think probably because of the things we talked about [the sense of shame] the stuff that I need to work through on my own so... yeah.... but I've just started going to therapy for that... for this.... that's a step in the right direction I feel like... but yeah it is not easy for me to be vulnerable, that is for sure.

A: So as you move along it kind of feels like that whack-a-mole thing... where as you move on it feels like you work through one [barrier to vulnerability] then a new one comes up.... is that part of the experience?

P2: Yeah and I think about how important it is, you know, instead of becoming more vulnerable I'm realizing how important it is to be more vulnerable... and that I have to [be vulnerable] so the fact that it's not easier for me is an issue.

A: It's like another thing to shame yourself about it sounds like.

P2: Yeah.

A: It's another expectation on top of all of the other expectations... before it was an expectation to be competent and now it's an expectation to be competent AND vulnerable and that feels hard.

P2: Yes

A: And it seems like you're a person who has pretty high expectations for yourself in general

P2: Yes I am for sure

The next disclosures illuminate how *weighing internal shame* led to *non-disclosure*:

P3: I had this girl who I saw last semester and then I emailed— she no-showed me and I emailed her and I was like— I just said, 'Hey, you didn't show up. Is everything okay? Would you like to reschedule?' And she emailed back and said like, 'Hey, can we reschedule? I'd like to reschedule after Thanksgiving.' And for some reason I just kind of missed that like it just sort of slipped under my radar and I— maybe I read it but I forgot

about it and I just recently refound it and I was like, 'I never responded to that girl.' And she was like, 'Oh, can we reschedule for after Thanksgiving,' and I didn't respond to her and I haven't seen her since then and I was like, 'Oh, no.' And I haven't told— actually, you're the first person I told because I feel really bad about it because I didn't really— I don't know, I just didn't really want to make it seem like I [inaudible]. I don't know. Stuff like that just doesn't feel good. So I don't know. Maybe I should still work it out, but I wasn't totally sure what to do. But it would be harder— it would be much harder for me to admit something like that.

A: So then what happened after you were like, 'Oh, I feel so bad about this. I don't want to bring it up to my supervisor'? What happened next?

P3: I [laughter] I covered it up. Essentially, in my mind, I was like, 'Okay. This girl could have gotten in touch with me if she wanted to schedule again. They're grown-ups.' I sort of try to be like, 'Okay. This is not that big of a deal. If she really needed to see me, she would contact me.' And it would be weird now for me to be like— 'Hey, I just remembered that you sent this to me, and I totally didn't respond.' I don't know. I was just like, 'Maybe we'll just call this one a wash [laughter] and be like, 'Okay. Everyone makes mistakes. Okay. This girl will survive.' So I kind of rationalized my way out of feeling bad [laughter] about it even though I still [feel?] bad about it.

A: Yeah. And so it sounds like it's not that you don't feel safe enough to tell her [that you made a mistake]. It's more just like you beat yourself up about it enough and you don't really want to hear about it again. Is that part of it? It's like you already feel bad and having another person witness that shame doesn't necessarily feel helpful to you.

P3: Yeah. I think it's just shame. I think it's just like I just want to keep that one inside. I don't necessarily need to rehash that one. I don't feel like it's a huge deal really. I feel bad about it.

A: Yeah. And can you tell me about how you make the decision about what you hold back?

P4: Yeah. I think there's a specific situation that I can hold back. And it's really the only one that really comes to mind. And you know, I spend a lot of time working with college students, or college-age students. I mean, they're all kind of in that age range for the most part. One of my personal challenges that I work on a lot in therapy is the line between these critical kind of brief moments of psychoeducation versus inadvertently slipping over into just lecture, right? There are times people need to know. Like, 'Hey. This is a trauma response. And this is what happens.' But then, being careful not to be pulled into an expert role. Which is hard for me because I've been an expert for a long time in different fields. And I've spent a lot of time in that role. And so that's a— that is a personal thing that I work on— I'm aware of, and I work on a lot. And I think that is a situation where I am a little bit more careful about what I'm showing because some of it is my personal reactions to seeing myself on tape. There are times where I think I'm— I kind of slip into that. And I just really dislike— I dislike it. It's like, 'You didn't mean to, but you're kind of coming across as just this pompous know-it-all.' I see it. I get it. I'm going to work on it. I don't even need to show this. I know the deal. And it's really painful. And I got this one. And so I think it's a little bit of a combination of feeling a little bit of shame, and also kind of like, 'Goddamn. I did it again. Dammit.' Like, 'I know this. I don't need to show this pretty rough, vulnerable moment of myself because I

know it.’ And so that's the main specific situation. But there are other— I feel like there are other moments where maybe I'm aware of what I'm doing, but I'm not quite so embarrassed by my behavior. And I'm willing to say, ‘Okay. Give me some help on how to manage this particular situation.’

A: Yeah. So, there's this process, it sounds like, where you learned about what the expectations were, and you're holding yourself to those expectations. And then there's been some barrier in terms of meeting them and it feels like you don't want to express that out loud to your supervisor, because you already feel like you're not doing well enough and you don't want him to know that too.

P1: Exactly.

A: That seems true? So it feels like you want to protect yourself from another layer of judgment, because you're judging yourself first.

P1: Mm-hmm.

Participant Six *weighed internal shame*, made a *vulnerable disclosure*, and then *assessed safety with the supervisor* by noticing his supervisor's response to vulnerability:

A: And so when is it not worth appearing like a dreaded image? When do you make a different decision sometimes, that says, ‘I can't show my real self here’

P6: Yeah. That's a great question because I definitely have had that happen a few times. I think one of the biggest, probably most common events where that happens is where I have a client who I— and even right now, I don't like admitting this kind of thing, but it's when I have a client that I really don't care for very much or that really just kind of rubs me the wrong way.... For me, coming into supervision and talking about how I don't really care for a client seems— and I guess, this is me kind of creating my own problem about this, is that you're somehow like a bad counselor. You're like unethical or not a caring counselor if you admit that there are certain clients that you don't like. And I did do that [avoid telling supervisor] for a while but then— and then was once I actually did that [disclosed that I didn't like a client] where my supervisor responded like, ‘Yeah there have been clients I haven't liked either.’ That it's an okay thing. It's something to experience. So I would say, yeah, not coming from that place of unconditional positive regard, which is kind of like an expectation of counselors, to be a person again who just doesn't really like another person....that's something that's hard to show. And at the same time, in my experience, at least once I do it, it's been responded to with respect, and that's just kind of part of the business.

A: So part of what you're describing is almost like a sensation of shame?

P6: Yeah. Yeah, I think one of my initial feelings around it was that I'm not as good a counselor as other counselors because I bring it to the table— I show that I don't like.... whereas other people don't talk about their clients that way. That they're like, ‘Oh, this.’ They like all their clients. They're not annoyed by their clients. They must be doing better or differently than I am. So there is some shame around it. But I think it's more of the shame as an internal sensation rather than something that is kind of put upon you by others. At least, in my experience.

A: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense. And it's almost like you think you should know better. You already have decided that there is a more appropriate way to respond to your client. And so hearing it again from someone else might feel worse because you're already putting that expectation on yourself.

P6: Yeah, Yeah.

Participant Four described the process of *weighing internal shame* leading to **controlled disclosure** because he wants to avoid an **uncontrolled disclosure**. There is also information about the process of *sense of control* (another property of **assessing internal safety**) leading to **controlled disclosure** in **impression management**:

P4: And the way that I've allowed—I think enabled myself to be vulnerable, especially with him [doctoral student supervisor] is to just—is to own it— how do I put this? I'm thinking about this because I showed a tape a couple of weeks ago that I was not proud of. And it was... I sort of had this attitude of just 'I don't know what I'm doing in this situation.' I've kind of owned the fact like I need help with this one situation. This is not necessarily my best work, but this thing happened to me and let me just go after it. I think It's harder for me when I show something where I'm maybe not aware and suddenly realized in the moment that I'm not doing great or my supervisor doesn't think I'm doing great. I think it's like when I have control over it, and I can say, 'This is a place where it's just, I know it's not great. And I need help with it, because it's not great. And I'm just going to own that.' That's sort of what lets me do that as opposed to the way it just sort of arises naturally and I'm just like, 'Oh shit, I felt this was a decent tape and I was focused on something else.' That's, that's where it's most hard, I think.

A: The feeling that goes along with that is a little bit of embarrassment or even shame?

P4: Oh, yeah.

A: Yeah.

P4: Oh, yeah. Yeah, definitely. Especially if I didn't if I didn't see it.

The experience of *weighing internal shame* also led participants to reinforce **interpretations of desired and dreaded images**. Participants Five and Two described this process:

A: And the other thing I've heard on the flip side and tell me if this resonates with you is that people say that the experience of shame internally is something that influences that desire to protect their image, is that true for you?

P5: 100%.

A: Can you tell me about that experience?

P5: Yeah I mean... how do I flush that out? Umm... I think that's at the root of any kind of experience in a social / professional setting where there's a crack in this kind of personality or image that we've worked so hard to put forth... so yeah... I think that for

me the same kind of feeling floods in... It's just thoughts of like I was saying before now he's going to doubt that I can be a good clinician... like all of my self-critical parts or the parts of me that are afraid that I am actually a phony are going to be validated... yeah... that's primarily it.

A: And so it sounds like it doesn't really matter how much safety there is in the relationship, it's like you could trust him [supervisor] completely and still there's that feeling inside of you that feels terrified of bringing that [incompetent work] in.

P5: Yeah. Definitely. I think that's true for any relationship. Even, I was thinking about with my partner yesterday... it's a very trusting, loving, good relationship and he knows a lot of things about me... and it's kind of a silly example but he was looking something up on Amazon and saw my Save for Later list and I was like 'oh shit that's like one thing you can't look at it's so embarrassing...' like, how much pretend online shopping I do and I just save these things.... I was like 'Nooooo... so exposed!' So it's like, any relationship, there are going to be these things... like no matter how safe it is, these things we want to keep close to us because it's shameful or vulnerable or whatever.

A: Is it [shame] also part of what makes you want to manage the impression sometimes of trying to appear competent... trying to avoid the sensation of shame?

P2: Yes

A: So, it does feel pretty intertwined with that feeling of shame when you show incompetence it's like I don't want impression management to fail because when it fails I'm going to feel shameful

P2: Uh huh.

In the following example, *weighing internal shame* led to the specific **desired image** of *emotionally stable*:

P3: ...In terms of shame, when I cry, I still have that feeling of I want to apologize. I want to be like, 'I'm so sorry. I'm so emotional,' which I'm trying to stop doing that because that's annoying when people do that. But something in me is like, 'You shouldn't be crying. I guess I worry that I [will appear like I] won't be able to handle being a counselor if I'm crying...crying all the time. So that's kind of a shame thing for me is being like— if I'm crying in front of my supervisor that she'll think that I'm not emotionally hearty enough to be a counselor. So that's kind of stressful.

A: there's this part of you that feels sometimes a little bit of self-doubt around what it looks like to be a counselor. And even though you might know intellectually that it's okay to be vulnerable, there's sort of that sensation inside of your body that says, 'This might not be professional enough,' or something like that.

P3: Yeah, yeah.

*Weighing internal shame* interacted with the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of PEERS, which then led back to *weighing internal shame* and **interpreting desired and dreaded images**.

Participants Five and Three discussed this process:

P5: And then I do a lot of like, there are two other interns there, so when I am in that space I'll go into like... 'well I bet they know so much more than me... they are so much more competent and my supervisor probably sees that and he's wondering what I'm even doing here...' you know, it's that whole thought process spiral.

A: Yeah. Yeah. And that [desire to appear better than others] gets activated for you when you feel as if you're not as good as others or not better than others, that feels like, 'Oh, gosh. Something's wrong.' It sounds like there's shame in there for you.

P3: Yeah. I would say so.

Beyond shame, other *properties* of **assessing internal readiness for risk** under the **category of weighing risk versus utility** led to desired images and managing impressions.

These included: *sense of self-efficacy, connection to past safety, ego strength, and sense of control*.

*Sense of self efficacy* led to **vulnerable disclosure** for P7 in the following example. He discussed being able to bring up a vulnerability (providing feedback to his supervisor) because he trusted himself that he would be able to bring it up effectively. When he states he is "not likely to poke the bear" he is referring to thinking that he will not upset his supervisor when he brings up the feedback:

P7: At times, when we've had a difference of opinion, I've just, I think, talked it through. How did I know that it was okay to do that? I think it's more like I just assume it is because I'm also not super personally confrontational. So, let's say she was having a bad day and was in a bad mood. I don't know that that would overly affect my decision to say anything or not because I'm not likely to poke the bear more, so to speak.

A: Yeah. So it sounds like part of what you're saying is that you just have trust that you're going to be able to say it in a way that she can hear it, and then she's going to be able to hear it in a way that doesn't hurt the relationship at all.

P7: Yeah.



On the other hand, P3 described the opposite experience in which her lack of *self-efficacy* about bringing up feedback to her supervisor led to **managing impressions** through *non-disclosure*:

P3: ...I don't think I've ever really been able to do that [bring up a concern about how the supervisor wasn't meeting her needs]. Because I had that one supervisor who was really unsupportive, I felt, and I never was able to tell her that she was unsupportive. I think I tried to stand up for myself at one point as a way of doing that and it just didn't—I think it just came across as me being resistant [and she concluded that she couldn't bring up supervisor feedback again].

*Connection to past safety* was a factor for participants feeling safe in the moment with their supervisors. This was related to participants **attuning** to *relived family of origin expectations* and intertwined with *weighing internal shame*, all leading to **managing impressions**. Participant

Two described this process:

P2: ...My parents.... I'm a very sensitive person and I always have been. My parents shamed me sometimes for that... for crying... so ummm... one time in supervision I had an intake [that I did in the room] with my supervisor and it was so sad, her story was so sad and I was holding back tears the whole time [the client was in the room] and then as soon as she [the client] left I just like couldn't hold back anymore and I cried a little bit but it was actually a good experience... she [the supervisor] was really sweet about it and said you know it wasn't bad, but for me it was hard. It was hard to do that. It felt really almost shameful I guess to cry in front of her.

A: Uh huh and that feeling was really sort of a holdover about what it felt like to cry in the past with your parents.

P2: Yes.

A: And that might be part of what you're protecting sometimes when you try not to be emotional in front of your supervisor. Shame from the past?

P2: Yeah, definitely yeah.

P2: My dad is pretty... I don't know like just very... nothing is ever good enough kind of thing... so I'm guessing it [anxiety about impressions] kind of comes from that.

A: Yeah so even if your supervisor is not telling you directly that nothing is ever good enough it can feel that way because of the past?

P2: Yeah, yeah. Yeah I mean that makes sense of course things that we grow up with are what's normal

A: Yeah and the supervisor's in kind of a parental position with you in some ways right

P2: Yeah definitely. Authoritative...guiding and all of that.

Participant Seven described his experience of *safety in the past* leading to lack of **managing impressions** in supervision. He compares his experience to others who may have lack of *connection to past safety*:

P7: Yeah. I can say that the desire to appear competent is there, but I actually very rarely act on it, and I've been very vulnerable with my peers as well. And maybe it's for similar reasons that I just described, in terms of I've always been competent. I've always been recognized for achievement and success. So, I just haven't been put in those academic type of situations where I felt embarrassment or shame. So that's not an experience that I've had. And, by this point in life, I'm pretty much like, 'Man, if I haven't had it until now, it's not likely to happen. It could happen, but just not likely.'

A: Okay. I'm really curious about this piece that you said before of like, 'I haven't been terribly humiliated in a sense of a core wound by an authority figure or in a position of power,' kind of in a supervision setting or something like that. And it's just reminding me a little bit of this— as I was asking you questions about, 'How do you know when it's safe,' and you're answering kind of like, 'I don't know. I just sort of assume it might be and I go in there and think to myself, it hasn't gone horribly yet. It could, but it probably won't.' There is a sense of— I'm pausing because I don't have the right word, but there's a sense of a lack of fear about it, sorting of hitting on an old wound or something like that. Would you say that's true?

P7: Yeah, I have to imagine that that really affects a person's willingness to do it [expose a vulnerability]. I think about things like that in terms of... I think about difficult and painful experiences in terms of frequency and severity. And you can have very few but very severe and have a real averseness to being vulnerable, you could have a lot that weren't very severe and develop an averseness, or some other thing. But I've had not a lot, so not a lot of frequency, and not a lot of severity. And I think we are constructing our perceptions of the probability of distribution of risk all the time and there is no way it's not related to what has actually happened in your history, whether that is accurate or not so yeah, I think it flavors it big time.

*Ego strength* is the next *property of assessing internal readiness for risk* that influenced **managing impressions**. In the following examples, P4, P2 and P3 show how *ego strength* influenced **managing impressions**. In the first quote, Participant Four demonstrates how high *ego strength* of another intern at his site led to **vulnerable disclosure**, whereas his own lower *ego strength* led to **controlled disclosure**.

P4: Yeah. I mean, it's funny because I have a colleague that I—one of my cohort members at the counseling center on campus, we have talked about our supervision experiences a decent amount, and I swear every single tape she shows— she walked out

of supervision just feeling terrible. Because she picks these— she was like, ‘I need help with this stuff. And I'm going to just show my worst tape every single time.’ I'm like, ‘Why do you do that to yourself? Don't show your worst tape every time. Titrate a little bit. Give yourself a break from that a little bit, like. Show something that you're kind of happy with every once in a while.’ And on the one hand, I think that speaks to sort of being able to manage the real difficult emotion and difficult experience, the shame, and just the embarrassment of bad tape after bad tape.

Participants Two and Three also discussed how having low *ego strength* influenced *non-disclosure*.

A: When is it not worth risking appearing like a dreaded image to her [supervisor] ...are there ever times where you're like ‘nope, I'm not going there... I'm not going to risk that [exposing that vulnerability]’?

P2: Ummm.. yeah and I know I have felt that way several times... I think yeah there was a time I cannot remember what we were talking about, but I was like, no... I'm not going to do this today... I think I was just feeling super emotional that day... it was like I'm just going to lose it if she gives me criticism... so I think I just... luckily... I didn't have any huge concerns that day with my clients, so I just made it a very surface supervision.

A: When we feel more confident in who we are in our work, we're sort of more willing to show the worst pieces because it's like, ‘I'm not so scared that I'm going to show this to you and it's going to break my ego in half,’ or something like.

P3: Right. That it will validate some deep fear inside myself that— or whatever. Yeah. True.

P5 discussed how her *ego strength* was influenced by the SITUATIONAL FACTORS of TIME, her SOCIAL IDENTITY of age, and PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES:

P5: You know, it's funny cause I was thinking back to my first job as a 23-year-old and just how I interacted with my boss... granted it's a little bit different than a supervisor / supervisee relationship, but not... I think it's still... you can still relate it to that. But I was very much in protection mode and would have this whole list of questions going on my word document but I wouldn't ask them because I didn't want to seem like I didn't know what was going on.. So yeah, I imagine it would have been the same had I gone through this program at age 23. And you know now at age 33, I feel like umm I've just had different life experiences, I think going through so many different yoga trainings and also being a facilitator of trainings and having a more I guess like realistic, wholistic image of what it means to be a human being and I think what matters has changed a lot in the past decade. So yeah, I think that while I still do have the thoughts that come in with the feeling of shame and all that, they generally pass through a lot quicker than they did in my 20s and I think that my like self-concept is more firm. And less susceptible to being broken or changed based on what other people think or what I assume they think of

me. And yeah just generally I think I have become much less judgmental toward others and I think I have been able to on some level turn that in on myself, too.

A: So, in some ways there's less at stake for exposing vulnerability because there is more ego strength there for you.

P5: Definitely. Yeah. I think I've been through life experiences at this point where I know I am a resilient person and I know I'm not going to be destroyed... like even if... let's say, worst case scenario my supervisor, you know, does think I'm a phony and I lose the internship you know that would really suck, but I wouldn't think that I was a terrible stupid person because of it.

A: Yeah, your whole self-worth is not riding on your supervisor's impression of you.

P5: Yep, exactly.

The final process in *assessing internal readiness for risk* is influenced by the *property* of *sense of control* (perceptions that one has the ability to demonstrate what they wish to demonstrate to their supervisors). *Sense of control* led to a *controlled disclosure* of vulnerability. Participants were more willing to show a mistake or vulnerability if they felt in control of that process. If there was risk of losing control while disclosing a vulnerability, supervisees discussed choosing not to take the risk.

A: You know, even that example that you gave about wanting to show your mistakes first before she points them out ...it's like part of that goes along with the image of being self-aware... which is an important image for a counselor to appear self-aware, if you don't know what your weaknesses are then you're not self-aware and if she points out your weakness to you without you knowing it then you're going to appear not self-aware and that's shameful.

P2: Yeah, absolutely.

A: Will you tell me more about your decision-making process about telling her when you made a mistake?

P2: Yeah, well maybe I am... I always want to be the one to tell her. I don't want her to tell me that I've made a mistake. So maybe that's part of it. Yeah. I want to own up to it first because it would be a really terrible feeling if she told me that I did something really wrong.

A: So, there's an element of control that feels safer to you. So I want to be the one to tell her... 'I've made a mistake.'

P2: Yes, I think that was the biggest thing when I first started was, there were so many mistakes that I was making and that's normal but it was just so disheartening when I kept hearing things like that [that you made a mistake] from her... and so I guess... now, it's like ok I'm going to catch them first because I don't want to feel that way [disheartened].

A: Because what would happen if she caught them first?

P2: Um... and I didn't know about it until she told me? I would be caught off guard and I might be more... show more vulnerability, I guess.

A: Ok, so trying to control by showing more mistakes is a way to avoid being seen as vulnerable with her.

P2: Yes! definitely.

A: Okay. And is part of what you're saying that you would bring it [a vulnerability] into supervision but only after it was kind of sorted out pretty well internally? Like you don't want to bring the raw emotion of it into supervision. That's where you go to your personal counselor. But once it's processed a little bit, then maybe you'd be willing to take the risk to bring it to your supervisor?

P1: Mm-hmm.

A: Does that feel true?

P1: Yeah, that feels true.

A: Okay, so is part of what you're saying is that it's just too vulnerable or it's too raw to bring something like that to your supervisor?

P1: Yeah. I would say so.

A: Was part of the decision not to tell him [your supervisor] in the moment that thing we talked about earlier [the experiencing of a traumatic event] of just like feeling too raw, like it was almost impossible to be controlled around your vulnerability when you knew you were opening something up that was happening in the moment and you felt very little control?

P5: Yeah, I think you just hit the nail on the head. Totally.

A: Like maybe you could take the risk to tell him now... like this happened then, right, but that might not be useful. As useful as it would have been if you had told him in the moment, but it was almost like you couldn't do it in the moment just because it was... there wasn't any guarantee of being able to keep yourself together in the process of telling him and also being around him while you weren't feeling well.

P5: Yep, definitely, that's it.

*Processes that originated with assessing potential losses.* The third *sub-category* of **weighing risk versus utility** is *assessing potential losses*. Specifically, supervisees were worried about losing *pride* (an internal sense of status) and losing a *desired outcome* (a positive evaluation, job opportunity, or desired goal). These were both motivators for **interpreting desired and dreaded images** and **managing impressions**.

The following are examples of *maintaining status/pride* leading to **managing impressions**:

P2: I don't really feel like there's a whole lot at stake [when appearing as a dreaded image] other than my pride. And I feel like this [counseling] is something I'm good at... that's huge to me and like I can do this so if I risk being vulnerable... Yeah. So how much does my fear that my pride is going to be hurt influence how vulnerable I am with her? Yeah definitely like 99%.

A: Okay so that's what's at stake? Is the sense that you might hurt your ego by showing her something?

P2: Yeah! She's leaving, too, at the end of April so... she's not going to be... I don't think somebody I can use as a reference or help me in any way other than just giving me really good feedback. So I don't think there's a whole lot of stake there. Just my own feelings of inferiority at stake.

P5: He [supervisor] is the one who personally hired me as an intern so I feel like I have to prove to him that he made the right choice...

P5: So far, he's given me really positive feedback and I like that he thinks that I have good clinical skills and that I belong here and maybe that would all go to shit if I show him this.

On the other hand, P1 talked about being able to show more vulnerability because she had less at stake since she felt like she already proved herself at her site:

P1: I feel like I can be a little bit more open, and it's probably because I've been working at the agency. So, I passed my three-month— oh, I forget what they call it, but you know when you have to three-month—

A: Oh, like a probationary period. Sure.

P1: Yeah, which I did forget I was on [laughter]. And so, I was like, 'Oh, okay. So, I've made it through three months. Obviously, they like me here. I have a voice. They like what I have to say.' So, I feel like I can relax just a little bit more.

A: You've proven yourself in some way.

P1: Yes.

A: And so it's like if you made a little bit of a mistake now, that's okay because he's already— it's like he knows that you're doing well big picture.

P1: Yes.

A: Yeah. So, it feels more comfortable just in general, being authentic with him.

P1: Mm-hmm.

The following examples show how *maintaining status/pride* led specifically the behavior of *controlled disclosure*. In the first quote, the participant's supervisor's SOCIAL IDENTITY of age, as well as his PRIOR LIFE EXPERAIENCES, were also a factor in this process:

P4: My former career.... [Describes former career that included a great deal of success and independence]... So I was fairly good.... really successful. And so, it's more a

question of now— not only was I really successful, but I was the expert. I didn't have a mentor. Not really. I mean, I had a few people that I looked up to, but the thing that I was creating, it was like I was the mentor, like I was— people were asking me. And so there definitely is a sense now. I mean, it's very hard to go back and be a novice, first off. I mean just in general, it's really hard to be in a position of not knowing totally what I'm doing and being new at something. And I think also, there is this— I've had 13 years, or a dozen years, or whatever it's been, of professionally saying, 'Okay, if I don't know how to do something, I'm it—' there isn't any way I can even ask. I'm just going to go figure it out until I get good enough that I'm now the one coaching other people. But I was able to do it without-...and I didn't have the luxury of a supervisor, really. And so now, to be... especially on campus at the counseling center on campus ...to have a really formalized supervision process, is definitely a— it's vulnerable. It also at times— I mean, I have to sort of fight this at times. It feels a little bit like a step-down, very much so. Like I went from being the boss to being like the intern. And my boss is someone who's a decade younger than me, and like all the pieces that go along with that, and has been in school for his entire adult life. And so it definitely takes a little bit of a conscious effort to say, "Okay, this is my supervision time. Oh, you know, it's time for me to show something." And again, I think the way I've sort of gotten around that is by saying, "I'm going to be a little bit of in control of this situation and show something that I know is bad," but like I'm going to own it. And it's sort of my thing, that I'm owning and I want to help on this thing.

P4: Yeah. And maybe that [peer intern's ability to always show vulnerability in supervision] also speaks to her self concept where it might be more comfortable for her to show a bad tape if she has that congruent concept of herself as not a great counselor sometimes. For me, it's like 'I have places where I'm struggling and I need help with but overall I'm okay. I do okay' and so sometimes I want to show where I'm doing okay because I feel like I'm doing okay.

A: Yeah. There's a level of the way that you see yourself, and the way that you've conceptualized yourself over time, and the shifting of that in this role as an intern, and a little bit conscious, like, 'I still need to maintain myself as a competent person who knows what they're doing most of the time. And one way to be competent is to intentionally show my weaknesses because that's what a competent counselor is.'

P2: Yeah. Oh yeah.

A: 'So I go down that path. But what I'm not going to do necessarily is show something that might have a blind spot, or that I might have done something wrong because that might sort of weaken this identification of the self as kind of a competent person who's self-aware.'

The desire to *maintain/protect an outcome* was another condition of **interpreting desired and dreaded images** and **managing impressions**. The following quotes show how

*maintaining/protecting a desired outcome* led to **desired images**. These situations also included the influencing SITUATIONAL FACTOR of HIERARCHY:

P3: Right now, actually, my supervisor told me that they might have a full-time position at my site and asked me if I would be interested in applying for it if they were to get the funding for it. And now, I feel like I'm like, 'Oh my god, I got to be super competent. Got to seem like I got a lot of good ideas. Got to do it really well.' So it stresses me out a lot more to share with her and cry in front of her and that sort of thing.

A: So, you needed them to give you a positive evaluation, so you needed to seem competent to them.

P2: Yeah. All of that. That feels definitely true.

The next two examples show how the property of the supervisor's status under the

SITUATIONAL FACTOR of HIERARCHY also influenced the desire to protect oneself from a potential loss:

P5: He [supervisor] holds a higher position within the counseling center than my previous supervisor did and I think that's a part of it.... he's the director and might one day be the person I reach out to for a job if a position opened so there's that added layer... and then I think another component is that he will be on the panel for my orals defense and he'll be the only one who's ever seen any of my clinical work... the rest of the people will be exposed to it for the first time so I feel like he could be an advocate and a support if he's seen that I do good work... so there is a lot riding on the relationship now and in the future...

P6: And I think underneath it all there is this desire to impress because they have a say in not only our grades but our completion of the program. They have some sway over our outcomes and actual job references... we do want to impress so that when the time comes they won't have any reason to hold us back. Or when we need a reference, yeah, you expect [inaudible] thought highly of you so here's a good reference. So there is that wanting to impress because of their stake in the game, really.

A: Absolutely. Yeah, that power dynamic where you have more at stake. Yeah.

P6: Yeah. Because I would say with the people that don't have as much decision [power] I find it a little easier to maybe not be on the ball as much versus my internship supervisor, my university supervisor was also the grant coordinator. These people have a little more power, I guess would be the word here. And so I need to really— impression management is maybe a little more important with them than it is with others.

P4 discussed how not having a *desired outcome* to protect led to less **managing**

**impressions:**



P4: And then I think the last piece of it, the very last piece of it that comes up is I have a job, like, and I may have mentioned that before, but it's formal at this point, and I'm locked in so, I know my—and it's [name of the internship site]... So, I know that my colleagues [classmates] at the counseling center on campus, we talked about it a little bit. I think that they sometimes are more reticent to bring incompetent work because it's [supervision] like half a job interview and I just don't have that.

A: Yeah, the stakes are lower [for you].

P4: Yeah, the stakes are lower.

*Maintaining/protecting a desired outcome* led to the specific impression management

behavior of *non-disclosure* for P3 and P1:

P3: So yeah. It was more just like— and I think that this is around the time that the job thing was coming up. And I didn't want to just— admitting a mistake when you're trying to be impressive didn't feel useful [laughter].

A: Can you tell me about the decision process for you, as you were trying to decide, 'Should I tell him or not tell him this thing [not meeting expectations] happened?'

P1: Okay... normally what we do is we go over clients in supervision, and I usually get the chance to talk about the client that is most salient for me. And so I need to tell him I'm really having difficulty meeting this client [disclosing a vulnerability that she hasn't been able to meet the expectation of meeting with this client weekly], but I still haven't been putting in any effort, and then it was kind of like, I don't want to be assigned any new clients [supervisor has the power to assign new clients if one drops off schedule], and yeah. So I just pretty much weighed it out in my mind. Like I went back and forth. And then I was like, well I just won't choose to focus on this client until I have relevant information to tell him [avoid disclosure]

A: Okay, so you thought about the costs and benefits of talking about it out loud? And then decided, 'I'll just wait'?

P1: Yeah.

*Processes that originated in assessing utility.* At times, supervisees took the risk to appear as a dreaded image of self, even when it was uncomfortable. The primary experience that influenced the enactment of **managing impressions** was *assessing utility* of revealing vulnerability. When supervisees were connected to the usefulness (be that learning, helping clients, or the importance of authenticity), they often took the risk. The following quotes demonstrate how *assessing utility* led to *vulnerable disclosure*:

P6: But the way I think about it is, you're not going into just complain or just show your weakness. It's like, 'Here's something that I need. This could be built on, so help me build on that.'

A: There's some usefulness or utility for that vulnerability.

P6: Yeah. It's for a good purpose, I guess, would be the short way, is it is for your own benefit, your own development as a counselor to be vulnerable, just as the same way it is to be a client.

P3: I just think that it's a relationship in which I should probably be honest about how I'm feeling and that that will contribute to supervision. And so, in this profession, it just seems so important to not cover up those insecurities and those sides of yourself because they're what we're working with every day, and they're clearly going to be triggered in times that I don't want them to be. I mean, usually I'm not super happy about it when I do it [expose a vulnerability], but like I can rationalize it with like, 'There's a reason for this. There's a utility in my vulnerability right now. It will [pay back] eventually.'

A: When it feels like you being vulnerable actually helps you get your needs met later for being a better counselor.

P3: Yeah, yeah. And I'm really working this semester on understanding my emotions during sessions. So it's like, if I'm trying to work on that, then I should probably try to understand my emotions when in supervision and be able to be as honest as I can.

A: So, it sounds like for you when it feels useful to be vulnerable you'll do it even when it doesn't feel good?

P2: Yeah exactly

P4: Yeah. I don't need to put it [a mistake or vulnerability] up on the screen again to have somebody tell me what I already know. Yeah. Definitely. And so, yeah, I mean... It is a little bit of a fine line where— yeah, showing somebody something vulnerable where it's like, 'I know this. I can deal with it,' is one thing. And showing somebody something vulnerable where I'm able to really lean into it and say, 'I didn't know what I was doing here.' Yeah. I think that there is a distinction there for me. I mean, I'm thinking, specifically, about a situation from two weeks ago where I had just— I felt like I was kind of pulled into just a really frustrating experience with a client. And wasn't sure how we got there, and how to get out of it. And I was able to sort of just lean into that a little bit more and say, 'Help. I legitimately got stuck.' So yeah. I think that's— yeah. We've said it enough. But there is a difference there, yeah.

Participant Four hinted in the last quote about how lack of *utility* led to *non-disclosure* of a vulnerability. Participant Two described this process, as well:

A: Some people have shared with me that sometimes it doesn't feel useful to appear vulnerable to their supervisor... it's like ... 'I know I did the mistake I saw myself do the mistake I just don't want to hear from someone else... it's not going to be helpful... I see it... I got it... I'm still working on it I'm annoyed with myself for... for making the same

mistake over and over again and I'm just not going to show it cause I don't want to hear it'... has that ever happened to you?

P2: Yeah [laughter] Every. Single. Time. Yeah. Exactly. It's like I don't need somebody else to say it to me too because I already got it.

The following quote from P2 demonstrates the interaction of *assessing utility* and the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of TIME leading to *vulnerable disclosure*:

P2: I mean because I'm graduating soon and know that I'm going to be working as a counselor soon and I want to be ready... so that knowledge... that is a huge influence on the questions that I ask and my vulnerability in session in supervision

The *property of connection to learning and helping clients* falls under the *sub-category* of *assessing utility*. *Connection to learning and helping clients* led to risk-taking of *vulnerable disclosure* for multiple participants:

P2: If it's something that I feel very lost and I don't think I can figure out on my own and I don't want to hurt my client then of course I will risk being vulnerable. I think that's more important.

A: So occasionally it's really worth going there [risk appearing as a dreaded image] with your supervisor even when it doesn't feel good?

P2: Yeah, you're right. Yeah.

A: Can you remember a time where you really didn't want to appear vulnerable to your supervisor but you did anyway because you needed help with a client?

P2: Yes let me think for a second I'm sure... yeah... I had a client who I really cared about and she had an issue that I think was beyond me and beyond my capabilities right now but I really wanted to try a different method of intervention and so that's when I was able to be a bit more vulnerable with her [supervisor]. I really didn't want to because I was not in a good mood that day but...yeah... [I did it anyway]

P3: So, I showed a tape today that I was really kind of... didn't want to show and I could have showed another one that was— I still needed help with the other client, but it wasn't quite as like, 'Look.' And I guess I was just like— again, it was sort of just like, 'Okay, I just need to do it. This is what they're asking of us. This is the point of this.' I just sort of have to remind myself that even if it feels uncomfortable, it is the point and it's the thing that will help me grow and learn the most out of anything...mostly just kind of like, 'Okay. Yeah, this doesn't look great.' But also, I truly need to help this client. I think that everyone will understand why it's difficult for me, why this person's difficult for me.

P4: And so for me, there's just, I feel like there's a bit more of just an attitude of like, 'This is my time to just— as kind of painful as it can sometimes be, just kind of lay it all out there and say, 'I want to get better, help me.'

A: Yeah. Yeah. So that connection to learning is really sort of the antidote of saving face sometimes.

P4: I mean, absolutely. That's absolutely it. And it's funny to even put it that way because I often think about that with some of the clients that I have about trying to help them stay curious through these moments of shame, and I've talked about it kind of in that exact language. If you're curious, it's hard to be ashamed about something. And so I have kind of applied that to my own learning to a degree, or totally

A: And so what makes it worth it to you to appear incompetent sometimes?

P5: Because I know that's how I'm going to grow and learn... if I always go in there seeming like I'm on everything and like I know what's going on I'm not serving myself as a counselor in training but I'm also not serving my clients. And I think actually now that I say it out loud I think at the end of the day it's like my clients experience is more important than me seeming good. You know? So especially like people... when I bring people into supervision that I've had up to 20 sessions with them at this point and there are a couple of them who I just feel like we've plateaued or really big things are being unearthed and I feel like it's a little bit out of my scope of competence in terms of the issues they're bringing up and I'd rather feel vulnerable for however many minutes and be like look I really don't know how to do this than fail my client.

P5: Ultimately, I think every time if something feels important enough, I've risked that image being threatened to put the thing out there.

A: I'm wondering, just knowing you a little bit and knowing some of your past positions where you've had supervisors or people you know, mentoring you, that you've had a lot of experience of being in a mentee role and it being useful. Like you have memories of that

P5: Yeah, absolutely. I think even in dance from an early age I have always had mentors and yeah, I think that I've developed a lot as a mentee and looking back I can see the ways in which I really could have taken advantage of my mentors more if I wasn't so afraid to come off as not being perfect and that yeah I definitely see that kind of working its way into my relationship with my supervisor now. And even when I went to school you know prior to grad school I definitely wanted to put forth this image of being a really good student and like really like not overachieving but like super high achieving. I graduated from undergrad with a 4.0 and like it feels good to be seen in that way and to feel confident in all of that.... But I think I missed out on a lot of other kind of layers or textures of the academic experience, you know, as a student and mentee so I went into this program you know 10 years later like you know, I'm just going to go into it to learn... not to be seen as a good student. And I've really carried that through with my professors and with my supervisors, and I think I've gotten a lot more out of it because of that.

P6: But I think it's something that I've tried to do more is to be more authentic because I think that's where the best improvement's going to come from. Because if you're kind of afraid and hide your weaker areas, areas that you could improve on, then it's not going to be as effective.

Interestingly, another dynamic emerged from the data where *connection to learning and helping clients* led to **managing impressions**, specifically *non-disclosure* of an opinion or vulnerability. Participants Two, Three, and Four described the process of not disclosing an opinion or reaction to their supervisor (*non-disclosure*) because of a desire to learn. In the first example, Participant Three discussed how she did not bring up feedback to her supervisor about how she would enjoy more structure because she saw an opportunity to learn flexibility. This example also includes hints of the **desired image** of appearing *grateful*.

P3: With my supervisor, I would like it if she was a little more structured because she's not and I have to make the structure of our meetings. But it's like I don't know. I'm kind of just like—I sort of take it almost as like a learning flexibility and learning how to be humble [laughter], to not speak up. So yeah. It feels like it's part of the deal kind of doing it is being the humble one who's the learner and who like doesn't really know anything. And a lot of that is just taking a back seat and letting someone else help you.

In the next example, Participant Three discussed how she *assessed her supervisor's response to vulnerability* (she perceived her supervisor as pulling punches when she was vulnerable), then she thought about how much she could *trust that the supervisor can provide help*, which in turn caused her to limit disclosure of vulnerability, all with a *connection to learning* in mind.

P3: Sometimes I worry that my supervisor, like I said, is pulling her punches and isn't actually giving me for real feedback because I'm so sensitive that I'm like, 'Oh, she's trying to coddle me or something.' And then that makes me feel a little bit fraudulent because then I'm like, 'Can I trust you? I don't know because I wonder if you're just sort of padding this to help me because I'm being so— because I cry sometimes in the session... in supervision.' So that's definitely a part of my process where I'm like, 'Okay.' Sometimes, I'm like, 'I can't—' sometimes I literally go in there and I'm like, 'I need to not— I need to act put together today so that she feels like she can give me actual feedback.' So that's really more like what it is than me presenting this great side of me. It's like me presenting the sensitive side of me and then her feeling like she can't like be real with me, so that's [inaudible] and I don't know— and honestly I don't know if that's true or not, I think you would say that's not true, but then I would still think like, but you're still... She's still saying that. I feel like you are just saying that to make me feel better because I talked to her before about [inaudible] help me build my confidence rather than like something else. So that does make me feel like— I feel like sometimes... I can't really feel that good about my counseling when she gives me a compliment because I'm like— I feel like I'm just too sensitive that you wouldn't be real with me.

A: It sounds in your story, it's like, yeah, 'I need to act put together so that I can get feedback, so I can become a better counselor or she's not going to be real.'...It's not an authentic expression of what's going on inside me, but it is what I'm supposed to be doing in this scenario and by doing that I'm sort of willing to appear like something in order to learn how to be a good counselor. And it sounds like for you it's like, I'm willing to appear professional even when that's inauthentic to my internal experience in order to get feedback so I can be a good counselor.

P3: Yeah, and I also have that experience too of doing something that my supervisor suggests even though I don't necessarily want to or think that it is something that I would want, even if it feels like, I don't really want to do that, I often will bring up medication to students even though it feels really uncomfortable for me and like sometimes I don't necessarily know if I want to move them in that direction because that's something my supervisor suggests. So it feels hard to be like, 'Yeah, that's your opinion and I don't want to do that.' Like I feel like I have to sort of take everything she says, it's like, 'Okay, I'll do that.' Because it's, again, it's sense of hierarchy [inaudible] like, 'Oh, you know more than me, I should just defer to you.'

Participant Four described intentionally telling his supervisor that he was incompetent to present the image of vulnerability in order to counteract the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of SOCIAL IDENTITY socialization and power differentials:

P4: Yeah. And, I mean, that was a really interesting conversation because I was really explicit about 'I don't know what I'm doing.'

A: It's almost like you used impression management for your learning [by intentionally presenting the image of vulnerability].

P4: Yeah.

A: You managed your impression to appear vulnerable on purpose because that needed to counteract your socialization as a man, as a White person, as a person who's a little older, as a person who has power. And you wanted her to see you as somebody who's willing to be open to learning from her.

P4: Yeah.

Related, Participant Four described an experience of **managing impressions** out of a desire to be accountable for his privileged SOCIAL IDENTITIES as older, White, and male:

P4: They [internship site] were really excited to bring a male on because it's almost exclusively women there, and they were really excited because let's stir some things up here. What does this bring? And so my gender identity was kind of front and center, and I think about that a lot. I had a dream the other night that I walked into the eating disorder center and all the patients are there. And I was like, 'Hey everybody.' And they all went, 'It's a man. Run!!!' And I was like, 'Wait, it's just me. It's me. Hang on.' So I'm really sensitive to that I think from a client/counselor perspective, I have not encountered any challenges or anything that's really stirred anything up at the eating disorder center. But

certainly, at the counseling center on campus, I have— I mean, and I think part of it, too, is we're a cohort of four there. So, there's four of us. And it's me and three younger women. And I've always just been kind of hyperconscious of dominating or taking over. And so, there are things that I do, especially in group supervision, where I really specifically sit back, and kind of let them speak first, and look to them, and ask for advice from them kind of consciously because it's just... it can be too easy to just roll with it. And so, yeah, I have done that. But as far as supervision goes, it's primarily showed up with my main supervisor, who is a woman and who is a little bit younger than me, but kind of just in this way of I was deliberately vulnerable with her and she was like, 'Okay. Now, we can work together.' She kind of said that almost explicitly like, 'Okay. I get it. Thank you. I wasn't sure what I could do for you. This helps.'

The next related process is *connection to the importance of vulnerability* leading to **vulnerable disclosure**. In the first example, Participant Six describes his process with the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of PEERS and connecting to the importance of vulnerability:

P6: There is a certain amount of impression management with them [peers]. But at the end of the day, they're people who are— we're the same in a lot of ways. And [I remind myself] to not forget that. Because when you start viewing them as potential job opponents or that they're adversarial in any way, [it] really takes away from the experience. So, to remember that they're there to support you just as you are to support them. And that you get each other through, and that it's okay to be vulnerable and to show that you aren't always perfect. Because chances are they aren't either and it could be a good opportunity to connect in that way... we're all there because we want to help people. That's really what brings us all together... And that if our goal is to help people, then competing with each other or trying to outdo each other is— deviates from that goal.

P6: And it is a helpful thing when you're able to be a little verbal with your insecurities and yeah, that go through the same thing. Like, 'Yeah, that sucks but I've gone through it. And it's fine. It doesn't make you a worse counselor. Just it makes you a real one that you have your struggles.' So that's something that I always try to remind myself is that we're [my peers and I] different counselors for different people. Our approaches are different. Our values are different. Our strong areas are different. Our weak areas are different. And that's okay. We all don't need to be this one-size-fits-all counselor. And we're going through it together so it's not a competition. I think that's kind of the big thing that— whether it's in academia or just the job market as it is, there is this kind of innate desire to be competitive. And maybe that can be attributed to our Western culture or that capitalism....

[silence]

A: I lost you right at capitalism [laughter].

P6: What? Sorry. You—

A: Oh, I lost you right at capitalism.

P6: Oh [laughter]. I think what I was just saying is that maybe it's kind of the bigger societal systemic effects to get to the top, kind of succeed like that. But the great thing

about the cohort model which we use is just that it is not a competition, that you're not out to be better than anybody else. That you're there to be a good counselor so that you can go out and help people.

Participant Seven was particularly connected to the *importance of vulnerability*. His examples show how this led to *vulnerable disclosure*:

P7: For me, it [commitment to being vulnerable in supervision] started with, I think, just a way of being that is willing to be vulnerable and believes in it for the sake of growth and mutual exploration of whatever the issue at hand is.

P7: So from a philosophical standpoint, when I look at— I, a) don't think I've got everything nailed and there's always room for growth no matter what the level of competency and, b), believe in modeling vulnerability and openness to receiving feedback. So I mean, the last time— when I presented a tape in October, I was embarrassed as all get out. I just wasn't proud of my session but I sort of knew this is my worst work and therefore it's where I need help, and just kind of spoke to my vulnerability, literally just told everybody I'm feeling super vulnerable and let's go. So that's what I've done with peers. It's not always what I want to do but there— I don't know. I think that's a valuable part of the process.

P7: ...And sort of the nature of being in the counseling profession. And even though I'm still new into it, it's just like every day you build on your understanding that everybody got problems [laughter]. We've all got our internal narrative, and we've all got those parts of us that we're hiding away. And man, I don't care how much power you have. If you're my supervisor or the department head or the college dean or whatever. You got your issues, and if you give me long enough with you, we will find them [laughter].

A: Absolutely. Yeah. So you're also saying there's connection to humanity in general. Just this connection to the fact that we're all imperfect. That's a condition of humanity.

P7: Absolutely is. And I guess I have a philosophical view of that that accepts the spectrum and accepts the gray and maybe even assumes that you can't really have the positive without the negative. You can't just truncate the distribution at zero and expect everything to be the same or everything to work out. So I don't even strive towards somehow making every single aspect and element of my life positive because I think it would result in a less rich experience and a distorted, limited view of what's really going on. So there's that [laughter].

P7: But I do think...my impression management— I can see how everything I've said about how I interact and the assumptions I have and the philosophies I hold, I can see how those relate back to self-concept. And I view myself as collaborative and things like that. And so it does make me wonder if I'm managing impressions more than I even understand by just being congruent with myself. I don't want to show up and look like I think I've got everything figured out and I'm only in it for me. That would be inconsistent with who I think I am as a person. And so I could imagine that my actions, decisions, and way of being are filtering through that lens. I mean, I guess I would assume that would be the same for everybody.... My first impression management is probably just to be



congruent with myself. And I assume that filters into everything else, including being a counselor-in-training and in supervision. But my impressions, or that management, I think, is formed in those bigger-picture things and just funnels naturally into supervision. And, I suppose, I can easily imagine it being the opposite of that for some people. If they build their self-concept, external locus of evaluation, they're trying to put themselves together, part of that is through this training, and I don't know. I'll stop. I could just go on and on about this stuff, Ariel.

A: So can I [laughter].

The last process extending from *assessing utility* is *trust that the supervisor can provide help* leading to **managing impressions**. Participant Three provides an example of (lack of) *trust that the supervisor can help* (i.e. make changes to supervision) leading to **non-disclosure**:

P3: [In response to why she doesn't bring up a need in supervision] I don't know how much she would change if I even talked to her. I think that potentially the things that I would want from her are the things that would be hard for her to do because she's a human too. She's not going to be amazing at everything...

Participant Four talked about (lack of) *trust that a supervisor can help* leading to **controlled disclosure**:

P4: Yeah. And then there's this staging of trust in the people who are in there to support you about whether they can and how much they can.

A: Right. So, it's like, 'I will show you some things and ask for help when I feel that you're going to help me with it and you would hold that space.' And if maybe, if you gauge them as less competent or having less to offer in some way you're not going to just put your whole self out on the table.

P4: No [I would not put my whole self on the table]. And I would say the less trust I have, the more I purposely I try and funnel the experience down to, 'Let's work on these maybe two things or one thing that I want to talk about right now.'

### After Impression Management

Decisions about **managing impressions** come after *weighing risk versus utility*, leaving space to consider what happens after. The following processes demonstrate the cycling participants describe after **managing impressions**, looping back to experiences of **attuning**, synthesizing **desired and dreaded images**, and **weighing the risks and utility** of abandoning or

enacting **impression management**. These process loops are continuous, and eventually lead to more **impression managing**.

Many participants talked about the process of a *vulnerable disclosure* (abandoning impression management) leading to *assessing safety with the supervisor* and *noticing supervisor responses to vulnerability*. Participants described feeling safer with their supervisors after they took risks:

A: And so, what happened after you chose to share that vulnerability?

P1: I think, for me, it deepened our relationship a little bit...I was feeling kind of judgmental against myself, against the client. I was projecting feelings pretty much everywhere... So that [talking about it with my supervisor] just deepened our relationship. And knowing that I can just come to my supervisor and just talk about anything.

P5: I did share it [a vulnerable disclosure about something that happened in her personal life] with one professor at school as it was happening and it was such a relief just to have it out there. Not that anything changed, but just to be seen and supported, and the few times I have shared with my supervisor just like little smaller things that are going on in my life he's met me with nothing but support and empathy. You know it just feels good for people to know what's going on in your life.

A: What's your internal experience like when you decide that it's worth taking a risk to share something that's more vulnerable?

P6: My internal experience, well, it's certainly uncomfortable I would say, is one that I—I mean, I can't really think of anybody that enjoys kind of steering into the skid... kind of thing. But I can say that I've always come out of it feeling that that was a good decision, that it was good because the response has never been critical or didn't make me feel worse about myself. It's like, 'This is good. This is fine. You're going to have those moments and let's figure out what you can do to improve.' So nervous going in and, I would say, relieved going out would be my internal experience.

P7: The times when I felt most vulnerable, I have felt very understood by her and— yeah. I mean, I don't even know what the feeling or emotion is that goes with her empathizing and crying with me due to my distress, but it's some combination of relief and being assured. I want to be able to state this in terms of positive emotional responses, but everything I can think of is more like it just decreases the negative emotions [laughter]. I don't know how to state in positive terms. I'm not exactly happy or excited or jubilant, but I am less anxious, less stressed, less sad, you know [laughter]?

A: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So—

P7: Let me get out my feelings wheel here [laughter].

A: [laughter]...So let me just make sure that I'm understanding you. So in a moment where you'd make a decision to share vulnerability with your supervisor and her response is this empathy and caring, and you feel understood by her, part of the process afterwards is that it alleviates the anxiety or alleviates discomfort that you were feeling as you came in with this thing before you had shared it.

P7: Yes. It encourages me...I do feel encouraged.

In this example, Participant Seven describes how his process of a *vulnerable disclosure* being received well by his supervisor led to continued *vulnerable disclosure* in the future:

P7: [After supervisor responds well to a vulnerability]...at the point where self-doubt comes up [again], and I'm certain it will [laughter], it will feel even easier than the last time to disclose that and try to figure out.

This example also includes the **desired image** of *being seen accurately*:

P7: [Taking a risk to disclose something] increases trust and increases feeling the confidence that I am understood and that I'm being received accurately. So I guess yes, it increases relational depth I've described.

*Vulnerable disclosure* also led to *assessing internal readiness for risk*:

P6: But again, I think it [a vulnerability] was good to bring it up because it was good to have a dialogue about it, really see where that's coming from and that it's okay. Again, normalizing that, yeah, sometimes you might— your own personal self might come into play. And then it's really important to process that ...and be aware of it but not let it interfere with your work, with your clients. It's kind of like the bottom line.

The following example also speaks to the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of DEVELOPMENT:

P7: When it's a really personal issue [that I took the risk to disclose], as far as development goes, it can be like a relief to just be understood and know that you're in the ballpark of what the process should look like and that is normal.

Participant Six talked about taking the risk to share a *vulnerable disclosure* led to more *safety with the supervisor*, decreased *shame*, as well as increased *connection to learning*:

P6: It [feeling incompetent with a client] was something that I was hesitant to talk about in supervision initially, but, again, was one of those vulnerable areas. Eventually, I did and the outcome was great. And then it allowed me to take a step back in that... kind of reevaluate what my role is as the counselor.

A: Yeah. That makes sense. And part of that was a little vulnerable, it sounds like, to bring up to your supervisor and talk about.

P6: Definitely, yeah. The feeling that I wasn't doing enough or that my clients [inaudible] actually a lack of progress but in my mind, lack of progress was somehow my fault and kind of the shame that it brought me was not an easy thing to bring up. But I think was handled well. And [honestly?], she wasn't my formal supervisor, she's the director of the behavioral health team at my internship site. And I was talking to her about this one day and I was talking to her about some—I was worried that a client that I had that had kind of expressed some suicidal ideas, that if she was to go out and complete suicide that it would be my fault. And I can't remember exactly what she said but she was like, 'Okay, Jesus.' Like, you give yourself that much power... And it was funny. I laughed. It was like, 'Okay. You called me on my crap here.' So I think to—the humor in it was kind of nice but at the same time it's like, 'Yeah, you definitely don't need to be putting this much pressure on yourself.' And to have that come from a supervisory person was helpful.... I think in that situation, my supervisor did a good job of attuning to me in that scenario. Really understanding where I was at. And to have such a simple kind of response, just simple, funny response; it was funny, but at the same time, it kind of struck the core of the issue was that I give myself way too much power. And that she was able to recognize that and be attuned to that.

In the following example, P6 talks about how his biggest learning as a counselor has come from taking risks to share potentially unfavorable images of the self. He goes through a process of reminding himself of *past safety* and remaining *connected to learning* when gearing himself up to take the risk again:

A: And is part of the process for you reminding yourself that you've done this [taken a risk to expose a vulnerability] before and it's worked out for you before?

P6: Yeah. Yeah. I would say that past experience is a helpful part of it. And kind of my biggest learning moments in the counseling field have been from my weakest moments where I botched something pretty bad [and talked about it with my supervisor] or I'd say something that didn't really feel right or whatever it is, that it offers just the most room for growth and I'm definitely starting to see a trend of that, so. Yeah. I do remind myself.

Finally, *vulnerable disclosure* led to a lack of *sense of control*:

P7: [After a vulnerable disclosure] I can also feel, not intimidated, but just like resigned a little bit, like, 'Here we are. There's no way out this—There's no way out of this at the moment but we're just going to have to sit in it and muck around for however long it takes.'.... [this feeling is] like the response to the stimulus of what I'm experiencing.

A: Vulnerability.

P7: Yeah.

The next few processes address what happens after participants chose to make a *controlled disclosure*. Participant Four described how making decisions to intentionally manage his image by showing *controlled vulnerability* led to *maintaining/protecting a desired outcome*:

P4: And it also speaks to maybe a little bit more of a calculated approach on my part, if I'm being really candid. And again, I don't know if I'm necessarily doing it to consciously to advance things, but I'm pretty sure that if I applied to the counseling center on campus for the postgraduate internship next year I would get it and she [another intern at the site who shows more vulnerability] wouldn't. And there may be a few reasons for that, but one of them is that the only tape anybody's ever seen of hers is a bad tape.

Making a *controlled disclosure* of vulnerability led into a cycle of either *vulnerable disclosure* or back to more *controlled disclosure*. The difference of when it would lead to *vulnerable disclosure* was mediated by the process of **weighing risk versus utility**. Participant Seven describes the process of taking smaller risks with his supervisor in the beginning, assessing their reaction, noticing that it went well, and deciding to take more vulnerable risks after.

P7: I think being vulnerable... in the beginning... it's kind of like wading into the deeper water. You don't necessarily just dive in, you stick a foot in and see how it goes... And then, I don't remember what the first time was or anything, but by the time a person gets six months into it or something like that and you just had a session and it felt like a train wreck and you wonder if you'll ever be a counselor because it sure didn't feel like you were for the last hour, it was easier to come into that. And I think it was just sort of that spiral progression or the little bit at a time sort of thing. I also think, at least in my experience, the depth of the issues you're going to bring at any certain time are also indicative of where you're at in the development process, right? So the first week of supervision, you might have an issue, but it's not going to be necessarily as big as what it might be six months later.

A: I'm hearing you saying... sometimes you dip a toe in, especially in the beginning when you're sort of testing the waters of that relationship. And as you gain information from your supervisor that it was safe, then you might take a bigger risk next time.

P7: Yeah. Yup. And I think it will change when I get done if I have a consultation group. I'm going to go through this process that I think you and I are discussing all over again. New supervisor, all that. But yeah.

A: So the process of evaluating safety and putting a toe in and trying it out.

P7: Yes. Yeah.

A: And there's a little bit of a feeling out process to make sure that your supervisor can handle you bringing in your vulnerabilities or your mistakes or whatever. And then as you find out that she can handle that it's less on your mind and you are willing at times to appear incompetent for the sake of learning. And you're more in a cycle of showing vulnerability... equals creating even more trust, equals bringing in more vulnerability. Does that seem true?

P7: Yeah. Yeah. It does.

In the following example, P3 describes how showing a *controlled disclosure* leads to *maintaining status/pride*. This process was facilitated by **attuning to desirable behavior**; showing vulnerability is an image of competence and showing vulnerability in a controlled way allowed her to *maintain pride*:

P3: Also, I got a weird sense of superiority [from showing a vulnerable tape] which— I mean, this is just my comparison self coming in or whatever, I'm like, 'Look at me like taking this risk in showing this terrible tape. No one else shows a tape this terrible, even though I know they all have them.'

For Participant Five, showing *controlled vulnerability* led to questions about whether she was missing out on learning. She questioned her *connection to learning and helping clients*:

A: And do you ever feel that there are consequences of making the choice to be pretty controlled when you choose to show something that's vulnerable?

P5: Yeah, I do wonder that. You know one of our professors says like if you ever have a session and you're like 'oh I'm glad no one is going to see that' like that's one you should show. And I get that... that makes sense. But yeah, part of me... I mean it would still be controlled because I would be making the choice to take a bigger risk because realistically my supervisor isn't going to have access to things I don't give him access to, except for like my notes and all that, I guess I'm just talking about tapes specifically. I have been thinking about that in the last few weeks. About bringing in a session that I felt I just completely bombed and how that would probably be a really generative supervision session... but it's like guuuuh do I really...? ... And yet, I feel like some of these sessions with this particular client because of various personalization issues and whatever always go this way. Maybe it's time to bring that into supervision.... Thus far I've chosen not to [bring it in], but I've been considering bringing in a session with this person and not even marking it or whatever but just like him and I going through it...It's scary! because it seems inconsistent with the rest of my work. But it's consistent with my work with this one client. And like, obviously that should be discussed.

In the following example, *non-disclosure* of a vulnerability/mistake led to *maintaining status/pride*:

A: So, what happened after? What do you think the impact of not sharing was for you?

P5: Yeah it was kind of a two-sided coin. On the one hand now I've moved through it and we're still in this rhythm and he as far as I know doesn't know that I was really struggling, so there's satisfaction of knowing that and of maintaining this consistent perception of who I am as a person and how I am acting as a clinician.

On the other hand, *non-disclosure* also led to *shame* and worry about **impression desires**. In the following example, P3 decided to not take the risk to share a mistake with her supervisor. After this happened, she spent time feeling shame about the mistake, even though the supervisor's likely response would have been to tell P3 that it was not a big deal. The consequence of *non-disclosure* was that she did not get help to deal with the mistake and let it go:

A: And potentially, your supervisor would likely say something very similar (that it is not that big of a deal), right?

P3: I mean, I feel she would. She's really pretty chill in that way. I think she would just be like, 'Oh, yeah. That happens. It's fine.' And it wasn't a huge crisis client or anything, and I reached out. And she could've reached out after Thanksgiving and been like, 'Hey, it's after Thanksgiving. I'd like to schedule.' But for some reason, I didn't—I don't know. I didn't want to tell her [the supervisor]. Some of the logistical stuff is kind of embarrassing to get wrong.

The next example demonstrating *non-disclosure* leading to *shame* and **interpreting desired and dreaded images** involved P1 hiding a mistake from her supervisor and then worrying that she would be “found out:”

P1: So, I go through it [the experience after a non-disclosure and shame] every week with supervision, but it's more related to the billing... Like, 'Okay. I know I didn't meet my hours last week because I wasn't able to see clients because I had a couple of cancellations.' [And she chooses to not talk about this with the supervisor] I know he knows I'm capable of meeting my hours. It's just sometimes I just get to the point where I'm like, 'Okay. I can't stress myself out over clients.' But I do go through that every week like, 'I wonder if he's going to say something to me about not meeting my hours.'

A: Okay. So, there's like a little bit of an experience of anxiety there. Like I'm going to be found out that I haven't been totally forthright about this.

P1: Yes.

Finally, the last process extending after **managing impressions** involved *uncontrolled disclosure* leading to *internal shame*. Examples from P2 and P3 demonstrate this process:

P3: ...And then afterwards [after an expression of uncontrolled vulnerability] I'll be like, 'God. That was embarrassing. Guess I should not have done that.'

A: It's like even sometimes when someone shows genuine empathy, it can feel like pity or can feel bad.

P3: Again, it just brings out that feeling of me that I'm not cut out for this job or something. I'm too emotional. I'm too reactive or something like that. I just have a feeling that people are just kind of smirking going, 'Oh, she can't handle this.' They're probably not thinking that, but it does make me nervous.

A: Yeah. That's that sense of shame inside of you

P3: Yeah

A: Yeah. It's like you would rather show controlled vulnerability.

P3: Yeah. I would rather be like, 'This thing kind of sucks, and I'm kind of dealing with negative emotions' than have this crazy meltdown in front of her that makes her feel like she needs to buy me a gift card for a massage. So yeah. That's tough.

P2: ...One time in supervision I had an intake with my supervisor and it was so sad, her story was so sad and I was holding back tears the whole time and then as soon as she left I just like couldn't hold back anymore and I cried a little bit but it was actually a good experience... she was really sweet about it and said you know it wasn't bad, but for me it was hard. It was hard to do that. It felt really almost shameful I guess to cry in front of her.

**Processes Related to Situational Factors.** All of the SITUATIONAL FACTORS played roles in the process of impression management. These included HIERARCHY, SOCIAL IDENTITIES, PEERS, TIME, supervisee DEVELOPMENT, PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES, and AWARENESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT.

*Hierarchy.* The SITUATIONAL FACTOR of HIERARCHY was a precipitating factor in the process of impression management. The mere presence of the hierarchy dynamic influenced participant's **interpretation of desired and dreaded images**, which then led to **managing impressions**. Participant One describes how consciousness about the HIERARCHY led to *non-disclosure*.

P1: Sometimes it [consciousness about the supervision hierarchy] is on my mind. Even though he promotes this egalitarian relationship, for me, I still see the power differential in him being my supervisor. So he has the final say-so, so to speak. Yeah.

A: Yeah. Yeah. He's got the final say. Right. And do you think that influences your decisions sometimes to not tell him stuff if you've made a mistake?



P1: Yeah, I would say so.

Participant Six discussed how HIERARCHY exists on multiple planes—he engages in *managing impressions* with his supervisor as well as his clients (this is a topic for another study):

P6: But I think for me at least is, having that supervisor be in that kind of expert role, is one of the reasons why I like to be presentable. Kind of treating it like a meeting with a boss of sorts and that you want to be on—you want to kind of put your best foot forward kind of thing. It's kind of similar to how I've encountered some of my own clients...how they see me, the counselor as this expert who's going to teach them things. And I think that I've had certain clients that do try to present themselves in a different way because of that. And I think there's a similar theme with me and my supervisors where my supervisor's an expert. She's kind of my superior in terms of the counseling profession... I like to kind of emulate that wisdom if that's the word.

The following quote demonstrates how Participant Three experiences the **desired image** of *open to feedback* leading to *non-disclosure*, all influenced by the HIERARCHY of the situation:

P3: And yeah, just feeling very much like, 'Oh, it's my place to learn from you, and you are the one that knows everything. I know nothing.' Kind of this humble thing. My supervisor's constantly giving me CBT suggestions, and I don't like CBT, but I feel too like I have to defer to her. I don't necessarily do that, but I don't tell her, 'I'm not going to do that.' I'm just like, 'Hmm, yeah. Okay. Interesting.' And I would never—it probably would actually help if I was like, 'So I'm not really that interested in CBT. It doesn't really feel very genuine to me,' and then she would just stop suggesting CBT stuff. But I could never have don't that.

A: Because you want to appear grateful or humble or—?

P3: Yeah. I definitely don't want to seem like I'm—I don't know. I would imagine that if I were a pretty seasoned counselor and I had a second-year [counseling student] coming to me and questioning what I was telling them I would be pretty irritated. So I don't want to be irritating or imprudent, I think that's what it's called.

A: Imprudent, yeah.

P3: That's a word, right? That's the word I was trying to think of?

A: That is the word.

P3: I don't want to be imprudent. Yeah. That would be a big affair.

P3: Yeah. I mean I think that that [discomfort and unwillingness to tell supervisor that they aren't meeting my needs in supervision] speaks to the power hierarchy thing of being like, 'That's not—I can't do that. They're my boss essentially. I can't tell them how to do their job.' And also there's just this sense of like they have way more experience than I do. Who am I to know how they're supposed to help me [laughter]? They're the ones who should know this. Yeah that's how it feels.

A: I think I get what you mean. You feel like it would be overstepping your boundaries.  
 P3: Yeah. It would feel like an overstep. I think I would feel uncomfortable telling them how to do their job. I think it is pretty related to— it's like you can complain about them to your coworkers or your peers or whatever but to actually talk to them about it would feel awkward unless it was a really huge issue or unless they asked.

The following example shows how HIERARCHY interacted with the SOCIAL IDENTITY of race to lead to **impression management** behavior of *non-disclosure*:

P1: So, for example, I have a Black family [client] and like I said, me and my coworker, we're Black and so I know the Black family, this Black family. They really are— you know, the boundaries sometimes can become blurred because we identify with race and cultural experiences. So I talked a little bit about this to my supervisor, but he definitely— he talked about it in a different perspective in terms of families get attached to their counselors when they really like them, counselors get attached to their families, and for me it was on the lines of 'no, this is different.' I think this is going to be tough for me to say goodbye to them because they're not going to work with anybody else for the simple fact that they have a Black clinician and a Black assistant to the clinician.

A: Yeah. And he was just missing that piece completely or he was attributing it to something else.

P1: Yeah, he missed that completely I would say.

A: And what stopped you from saying, 'Hey, dude, you're missing it completely'?

P3: Just because I didn't want to rock the boat I would say. Yeah, I didn't want to revisit it and say, 'Hey, did you know about it? FYI, this is what I really mean.'

***Social identities.*** SOCIAL IDENTITIES played a part in supervisee processes of managing impressions. Marginalized social identities led participants to think about **interpreting desired and dreaded images.** The following example shows how P1's race impacted her **desired images** and then influenced **managing impressions**:

P1: ...My race [impacts my desire to appear competent] because I'm a Black woman. I do feel like I have to work twice as hard to prove myself. And so I know that's what the majority [of impression desires] comes from and then just my upbringing.

A: Okay. Can you tell me more about the experience of what you're saying around it comes from being a Black woman? Can you help me understand more about that experience for you?

P1: Well, just for me when I meet people and I tell them like, 'Oh, I graduated with my masters.' They're very surprised, very shocked. That kind of thing. And then I am a single mother so, they're like, 'Oh, you graduated from—you got your master's? And I'm like, 'Yes, I have my master's.' So I still [haven't] proven my worth, my education, so I feel like I have to be pristine... a certain way... when I step foot outside my house.

A: ...Do you think that that fits into that category that I named as overcoming assumptions, assumptions that people might have of you?

P1: Yes.

A: Yeah. Like when you walk in a room people might assume things about you just by the color of your skin or by the way that you look, and then you have to overcome that by showing them how competent you are?

P1: Yes.

She also discussed how her marginalized SOCIAL IDENTITY as a Muslim woman impacted her experience of **weighing risk versus utility** and ultimately led to *non-disclosure*:

P1: And so me and my supervisor, we had a conversation about religious beliefs, but I don't think we discussed my religion. I kind of was like, 'Yeah, I don't think I want to bring this up,' my own religious beliefs and how they.... I guess—I don't want to say go up against, but I guess how they are— what's the word I'm looking for? I guess just brushing up against the client's belief system, I would say.

A: How your own beliefs brush up against the client's belief system? Is that what you're saying?

P1: Yeah.

A: Yeah. And what stops you from talking about that [your religious identity] with your supervisor?

P1: I would just say being perceived as other. That's what I call it. Being looked at as— am I a radical Islamic person acting like White people are horrible, that kind of thing? I think of Black militant and having to do a lot of education around, 'No, my religion is very peaceful.' There are extremists, and they're in every other religion...extremists. I'm just pretty much easy going. I'm not devout Muslim. I don't make my prayers five times a day. I know it becomes a Q and A session where I'm doing a lot of the education, and I don't too much care for it.

A: Sure, so it's a few pieces. One is that you don't want to spend your supervision time educating your supervisor about your religious identity. And then, another piece is that you don't want to be misunderstood by your supervisor or that piece around overcoming that assumption already that someone might have about what it means to be Muslim. And then the other piece, it sounds like, is that he hasn't brought it up, right? Is that part of it, too?

P1: Yeah.

A: And what would that be like if he did bring it up for you?

P1: I think it would be very uncomfortable. I think it would be comfortable for him, but I think it would be severely uncomfortable for me.

A: Yeah, what would be uncomfortable for you?

P1: ...wondering if he is being genuine or authentic. I'd be questioning.

A: Yeah. Okay, so it sounds like there are some pieces of your identity that you hold close and don't talk about in supervision. And part of that is kind of protection, and part of that just seems to make sense because you don't want to spend your supervision time talking about some stuff that might not be as relevant for your clients.

P1: Yeah.

I asked P1 to imagine a scenario in which a client said something that activated her SOCIAL IDENTITY of being Muslim. She walked me through her process of *non-disclosure* with her supervisor. She reported that she would choose instead to go seek support from her personal counselor. At the end of this quote she discusses the courage it would take to eventually bring it to her supervisor. The mediating factor in this example is *sense of control*. She would only want to make a *controlled disclosure* to her supervisor about this vulnerable topic after she sorted her personal reactions about it with her own counselor:

A: Let's just imagine in a scenario in which you had a client—say a client said something that was Islamophobic, and it touched you in a way. What would you do with that? Would you just hold that yourself? Would you bring that to supervision? How would you deal with that?

P1: To be honest, I probably wouldn't bring it up to supervision because I feel like it's very common for people to be Islamophobic. I would probably bring that to a personal counselor, like my own therapist, and talk about it there.

A: Okay. So, there are these places—it's kind of like a line you've drawn where it's like, 'This is personal. I'm not necessarily going to bring this personal thing into my supervision.'

P1: Mm-hmm.

A: Okay. And what do you think would happen after that for you? So, let's just play out this tape for a second. So, someone says something that touches you personally, and then you go to your personal counselor about it, and you don't bring it up in supervision. Then what happens?

P1: I would probably be left to deal with it on my own but hopefully, because like I said, I trust my supervisors. Hopefully, I would get to a point where I could talk about it in supervision [because it had been processed through with a personal counselor], about what's going on because I'm going to have to continue seeing a client. And unfortunately, I don't want to sit there in my personal counseling time discussing my counter-transference with that particular client. So hopefully I could find—muster up some courage or strength to talk about it. But I'm not 100% sure.

Supervisor SOCIAL IDENTITIES were also part of the SITUATION. Participant One described how her supervisor's privileged social identities led to *non-disclosure* behavior, and continued to reinforce the HIERARCHY already in place:

P1: Yeah, I do play dumb sometimes and I think it's because of his privilege, I will say it's because of his privilege, like his gender, his race, and his educational status [as an older, White, male].

Participant Seven, on the other hand, does not experience his SOCIAL IDENTITIES as marginalized, which influenced his experience of the supervisor and ability to do *vulnerable disclosure*:

A: Sometimes people come into supervision feeling as if they need to prove something extra. Like, 'Someone might think I'm incompetent already because I am this thing or that thing.' And you've said really clearly, 'I don't come into supervision thinking I'm going to be perceived as incompetent already. I come in and I show her what I got, and she thinks I am competent for the most part, because I am for the most part. And then sometimes I'm not and I show her that too.' And your experience in there feels different than some that I've heard, and that's helpful too, so that we can see this— it's on a spectrum, all of this stuff. So does that feel true for you? For you, you're not entering into supervision feeling as if you need to overcome some assumption?

P7: Right. Yep.

P7: ...I come from a place of, I think, a lot of privilege and a lot of my multicultural attributes working in my favor, so—going all the way back, I'm a White male, middle class, in a society that seems to...descendant of European immigrants, came over, bootstrapped it, made it. The system is built for people like me. And so, if I go all the way back, I've always just pretty very easily fit in the system. And I don't know if I learned how or if it's just a sociocultural influence or what, but I haven't clashed with the system or the powers that be within the system. I have very few times, but I was so self-assured that they [others who he clashed with] were just way off base that it [the experience of clashing] wasn't even hard for me....So, no. I haven't had power struggles or a lot of slaps on the face or issues with people holding power over me. I can remember very few, and they were very short. Now, I'm a middle-aged, White, educated, middle-class guy. So, yeah. I haven't had a lot of those flavors or experiences that maybe other people have had.

Age was another SOCIAL IDENTITY that influenced supervisee experience of **interpreting desired and dreaded images** and **managing impressions**. Participant Six discussed his experience of being younger in the cohort leading to the **desired image** of appearing *at least as good as his peers*:

P6: It's a funny thing for me because I'm one of the younger people in my cohort and there is kind of this desire in me to not seem like the baby of the group and then kind of try to present myself as older than I am to really kind of be more of an equal with those older more experienced people. Yeah, it's because to be put in that young green student

with older more experienced people, there is that difference in— I don't really call it power dynamic, but just kind of overall wisdom that I like to have... that kind of wisdom.

On the other hand, P5 talked about how her age as well as her PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES influenced *ego strength*:

P5: You know, it's funny cause I was thinking back to my first job as a 23-year-old and just how I interacted with my boss... granted it's a little bit different than a supervisor / supervisee relationship, but not... I think it's still... you can still relate it to that. But I was very much in protection mode and would have this whole list of questions going on my word document but I wouldn't ask them because I didn't want to seem like I didn't know what was going on.. So yeah, I imagine it would have been the same had I gone through this program at age 23. And you know now at age 33, I feel like umm I've just had different life experiences, I think going through so many different yoga trainings and also being a facilitator of trainings and having a more I guess like realistic, wholistic image of what it means to be a human being and I think what matters has changed a lot in the past decade. So yeah, I think that while I still do have the thoughts that come in with the feeling of shame and all that, they generally pass through a lot quicker than they did in my 20s and I think that my like self-concept is more firm. And less susceptible to being broken or changed based on what other people think or what I assume they think of me. And yeah just generally I think I have become much less judgmental toward others and I think I have been able to on some level turn that in on myself, too.

A: So, in some ways there's less at stake for exposing vulnerability because there is more ego strength there for you.

P5: Definitely. Yeah. I think I've been through life experiences at this point where I know I am a resilient person and I know I'm not going to be destroyed... like even if... let's say, worst case scenario my supervisor, you know, does think I'm a phony and I lose the internship you know that would really suck, but I wouldn't think that I was a terrible stupid person because of it.

A: Yeah, your whole self-worth is not riding on your supervisor's impression of you.

P5: Yep, exactly.

Age and PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES led to the desire to *maintain status/pride* for P4:

P4: I feel a lot more vulnerable [anxious about my image]... Especially with the doc student [supervisor], because he's a decade younger than I am, and he's done it certainly for a couple years or longer than me, but he's 10 years younger than I am, and I'm married with kids, and he's not, and I've got a lot more life experience. And so I have this stuff [consciousness about appearing competent] in the back of my mind, certainly more, as we meet.

Finally, age for P7 interacted with his experience of HIERARCHY:

P7: I'm older than my supervisor. I mean, in many ways, I can tell that I have just as much or more experience in life than she does, and so, I mean, I perceive her as being in

a position of power over me, and I respect that. I also feel like some of my situation does level it [hierarchy] out a little bit. And in times when we do sometimes get off supervision topic and into personal life, the roles, in fact, change really fast. So, yeah. I guess that all that to say, I can at least, in some ways, perceive myself as an equal, if not also having an opportunity to mentor, and so that eases, or counterbalances, other power dynamics that might put me in a subordinate role.

*Peers.* The presence of PEERS influenced the situation of supervision. This changed from a *sub-category* of *navigating hierarchy with peers* in round-one. The presence of PEERS added nuance to **interpreting desired and dreaded images** and **managing impressions**. In the first quote, Participant Three discussed how she got anxious about comparison with her PEERS leading to **desired images** of *appearing competent*, especially more competent than others:

P3: I think that I get really anxious about comparison, especially with peers. I just had to show a tape that I was not happy about in group supervision, and it was very nerve-wracking.

Participant Six described not wanting to appear as if he is behind his PEERS, as well. PEERS being present led to the impression desire of competence (i.e. “on top of my game”). He also described the vulnerability involved in showing work among PEERS:

P6: Today I was actually in my internship lab with my peers. I'm presenting a case and that is something I've been thinking about all week. I want to present—I want to come in seeming like I'm on top of my game here. And I don't know. Some of the others might experience that too, but I think that some people do and I know I have experienced that at some point, some anxiety about not being in the same plane, as somehow being behind in a certain way. I can think of an example, a couple of weeks ago where one of my peers, she was pretty vulnerable and talking about that she had potentially a client that was on the autism spectrum and frankly, she didn't know how to work with this person because she didn't have any training. She didn't really know much about it and wondering if she was at a full level of competency to do that. And I could tell as soon as she said it she was like, ‘I need instant’, not gratification—I need instant normalizing. I need you guys to support me here,’ because she really didn't want to give off the impression that she was being unethical or being not good enough, that kind of thing. And yeah, so I think in terms of the peer thing— is that we are all— kind of the ways that we get there are different. But we're all trying to, in theory, kind of get to the same place, getting through this program, getting licensed, getting a good job, that kind of thing. And to appear that you are behind in any way can definitely be a stressful thing. And you don't want to come in and share stuff that you're struggling with and then have everybody be like, ‘Oh. That's not an issue for me,’ and somehow internalizing it like, ‘Oh. There's something wrong

with me, 'or, 'I'm not doing something right because other people aren't experiencing this.'

*Time.* The situational factor of TIME was salient for participants, especially related to **managing impressions**. The following quotes add to what participants already shared in round-one interviews about this process:

P5: I've noticed this semester a change in being more comfortable revealing the dreaded image or you know what I would say is being more congruent.

P6: So, compared to where I started in supervision to where I am now, I would say I've kind of taken that 'professional trying to impress' approach back a little bit and coming in more like, 'I'm actually floundering right now.'

TIME also interacted with **attuning to desirable behaviors**. Participant Four described the process of changing expectations of desirable behavior over TIME. This was mediated by his SOCIAL IDENTITY of being a man—desirable behavior for being a counselor is sometimes at odds with socially valued masculine traits. Over TIME, P4 learned that showing vulnerability was desirable in the counseling profession.

P4: Like for me, I think a year ago, I was a lot— I mean, obviously, I was I think a lot less open with some of this stuff [explicit with his supervisors about his fears and internal experiences]. But there did come a shift where it was like, 'Okay, a competent counselor, a competent therapist is someone who is not— this is kind of what one does, is sort of lay this stuff out there and say, 'I need help on these things and I want to get better.'" And so there was a little bit of a shift to that. I mean, that's sort of what, in some ways, has motivated me to go back to my [own] therapy, is like, 'There's some things that I still need to work through because I want to be really good and I want to carry this. I don't want to be carrying these things around. And so there is a— I'm struggling to put it into words a little bit. But there was, I think, a bit of a shift where it was like, 'In order to be not just good, but also maybe seen as good, this is what one does. This is what a competent counselor does. A competent counselor is not afraid to look at his own work and lay it out a little bit.' It doesn't mean I show them [supervisors] all, but— because I think there's still some things that I probably hold back a little bit. But for the most part, I'm able to be more active with [disclosing] this stuff [vulnerabilities].

P4: I really specifically remember there was this experience that I had where I know— socially I know another guy is a first-year counseling grad student right now, and I haven't interacted with him very much over the last year. But he and I just sat down. So he's a year behind me, and he and I sat down and talked maybe a month ago. And he's



older than me. I'm 42. He's 46, and he was talking about how he went into one of the professor's office and just broke down and wept. And it was like 'this is so hard,' and I was totally kind of jealous. I was like, 'You did that?' Yeah, I don't know. There was a weird twinge of you're being more vulnerable than I am [laughter]. That was kind of a funny little reaction to that, and I think exacerbated— it made me, I don't know. I'm babbling around a little bit because I can't quite put my finger on it, but it definitely. I was sort of taken aback and just his vulnerability made me consider my own, and it was like, 'Does that mean you're more— what does it mean that you're more vulnerable than me? Wait a minute. Am I tearing up?' There was this kind of ridiculous moment of comparison there, and I caught myself. It's like, 'Dude, just settle down. Let's not get hysterical here.' But it was a comical moment of recognizing just that weird paradox of being good means being vulnerable but maybe vulnerable in the right way.

Participant Four also illuminates the progression over TIME as he **attuned to desirable behavior** and realized that the “CACREP machine” did not value independence the way his prior academic experience did. He struggled with *sense of control* related to both **desirable behavior** and *assessing internal readiness for risk*.

P4: I was in a doc program that I didn't finish five years ago. I left in 2013. It was in human and organization development. Okay. So, the whole point of [name of university] is mid-career professionals who want to take charge of their own learning and go figure it out. [Describes the way they did courses, which is very independent] And it was great. It played right into what this really— the independence that was happening professionally for me at the time. And so, I just really— I was in some ways thriving with it and also getting really rewarded by just being a very independent person, a very independent learner, and coming back to a very traditional master's program, which is not a doctoral program, a master's program. Like [at the last institution], I just ended up taking a master's and leaving because for a— what I was realizing is that ultimately I wanted to come back and do this. And plus, it was insanely expensive and it was like I need to stop. So, I took the master's and I walked. But recognizing that coming back and going to a very traditional master's program that valued just kind of marching through the bureaucracy of the machine, the CACREP accredited machine, and then being vulnerable and not know— it just was so different. And so, it wasn't just my professional life that had played into it. It was also my academic career. And I was at [name of institution] for four years. It was a long time to be encouraged to go be an independent learner, and then to come back and be like, 'Well, you're not— that's not the encouragement right now. The encouragement is to do our thing.' And so, yeah, I mean, that's a part of this, too... It was just an independent learning is a nice spin on issues with control. But yeah, so I mean, the last couple years has entirely been about sort of giving up that controlling and— sorry, I have a frog in my throat. And also then kind of being rewarded for it, but also doing it in a way that advances what I'm doing and not in the way that makes me look stupid and incompetent. That's a tight rope to walk. That's a tight rope.

*Development.* Supervisee DEVELOPMENT is related to TIME, yet had to do with a maturing of developmental level through the program. Supervisees discussed how as they shifted from practicum to internship their behaviors related to **managing impressions** shifted. Participant Three discussed how as TIME has gone by and she matured in her DEVELOPMENT, she is now more capable of knowing what competence looks like in her own counseling work:

P3: I mean, I was just listening to tape today while I was writing notes up and feeling like it wasn't too bad. I don't know. It seems, partially, just kind of instinct. Like, 'Okay. That went pretty well.' I think that that's something that I've only just been able to start to develop. I don't think that I had that a year ago. I would have had no way to see if I was doing okay. But now, I think I've maybe seen enough that I sort of know what [bad work looks like]. Yeah. I mean, a lot of it is feedback from people too.

*Awareness of Impression Management.* The last SITUATIONAL FACTOR that influenced impression management was AWARENESS of the construct of impression management. During first-round interviews, many participants were not aware of the construct of impression management. During second-round interviews, a few participants discussed how being more aware of the idea of impression management led them to notice their **interpreted desired and dreaded images** and behavior related to **managing impressions**. For P1 and P3, AWARENESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT increased, though did not necessarily impact their behavior:

P3: I've been thinking about it, because sometimes I'll go into supervision and be kind of concerned about how my supervisor's perceiving me. And then I think about your study and I'm like, 'Hmm, interesting this is coming up.' So I've noticed it happening much more than I did originally. I never really thought about the concept of trying to seem a certain way. And now I'm noticing it a lot more [laughter].

A: More aware of it.

P3: Yeah, for sure.

A: Since we talked last a couple months ago, did you have any other thoughts that came to mind about impression management that you wanted to share with me now before I dive into asking you my own questions?

P1: To be honest, yes and no. It's not like been at the forefront of my mind, it's like been in the back of my mind when I go into supervision now, like am I trying to appear competent and confident or is this just how I am [laughter]? Yeah, so it's like kind of been like [inaudible] back of my mind, but that's pretty much it.

A: Sure, cool. So it's been more in your awareness than before?

P1: Yeah

Participant Two talked about how more AWARENESS led to **weighing risk versus utility**, and may have helped her feel safer with her supervisor:

P2: ...Since you and I last talked, the relationship... I don't know, I just thought about it more. I feel like our supervisor/supervisee relationship has gotten better since our conversation... because I was saying it out loud to you made me realize that I don't know, that I was doing it, er, I don't know, trying to give her a good impression. I guess, it [more awareness] made me feel like I could be a little bit more real with her. Maybe that's why it got better.

A: There was a little bit more self-awareness around that? Because the conversation we had?

P2: Exactly.

Participant Six discussed his AWARENESS of **managing impressions** changing depending on the supervisor, fluctuating between conscious and unconscious impression management:

P6: There are certain supervisors that I've had where before I do meet with them if it's sending an email or going to talk to them in their office then some of it [managing impressions] is a conscious thing that okay, I'm going to do these things or not do these things when I'm talking with them and then sometimes there is more of an unconscious thing that it's just for me, talking with an older more experienced person that I'm just going to be more professional, to be a little more impressionable. So I would say with all supervisors, just that relationship you're in, that there is a certain amount of it that is unconscious. With certain supervisors, it is more conscious.

In sum, the SITUATIONAL FACTORS that influence the process of impression management include HIERARCHY, SOCIAL IDENTITIES, PEERS, TIME, supervisee DEVELOPMENT, PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES, and AWARENESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT.

### Conclusion of Chapter IV

Chapter IV described round-two analysis, including an updated conceptualization of the experiences followed by evolving processes of impression management in supervision. The main categories were **attuning to desirable behavior, interpreting desired and dreaded images, weighing risk versus utility, managing impressions**, and SITUATIONAL FACTORS. Through focused and axial coding, as well as situational mapping, I identified relationships, causes and conditions between and among **categories**. The major processes began with **attuning to desirable behavior**, then on to developing **impression desires**, followed by **weighing risk versus utility** leading to **managing impressions**. SITUATIONAL FACTORS were present for all participants and influenced each part of the process. Chapter V will provide a synthesis of round-one (Chapter III) and round-two (Chapter IV) analyses that leads to a grounded theory for the experience and process of impression management in supervision.

## CHAPTER V

### **Saving Face: A Grounded Theory of Impression Management in Clinical Supervision**

Eight supervisees shared their experiences of impression management in clinical supervision. They each expressed desires to appear certain ways to their supervisors. For these participants, desired and dreaded images of the self eventually led to one of five impression management behavioral outcomes: non-disclosure, fabricated disclosure, controlled disclosure, vulnerable disclosure, and/or uncontrolled disclosure of their vulnerabilities, mistakes, or deficits. This grounded theory captures the experiences and processes these supervisees went through when making decisions about when, how, why, and to whom they intentionally managed their behaviors in order to portray a desired image of the self. See **Figure 4** for a conceptual map of the grounded theory for the experience and process of impression management. Each **category** was supported by *sub-categories*, *properties*, dimensions. **Categories** necessarily included voices from each participant, while prevalence of experiences that made up *properties*

and dimensions at times included as few as one or two participant voices.

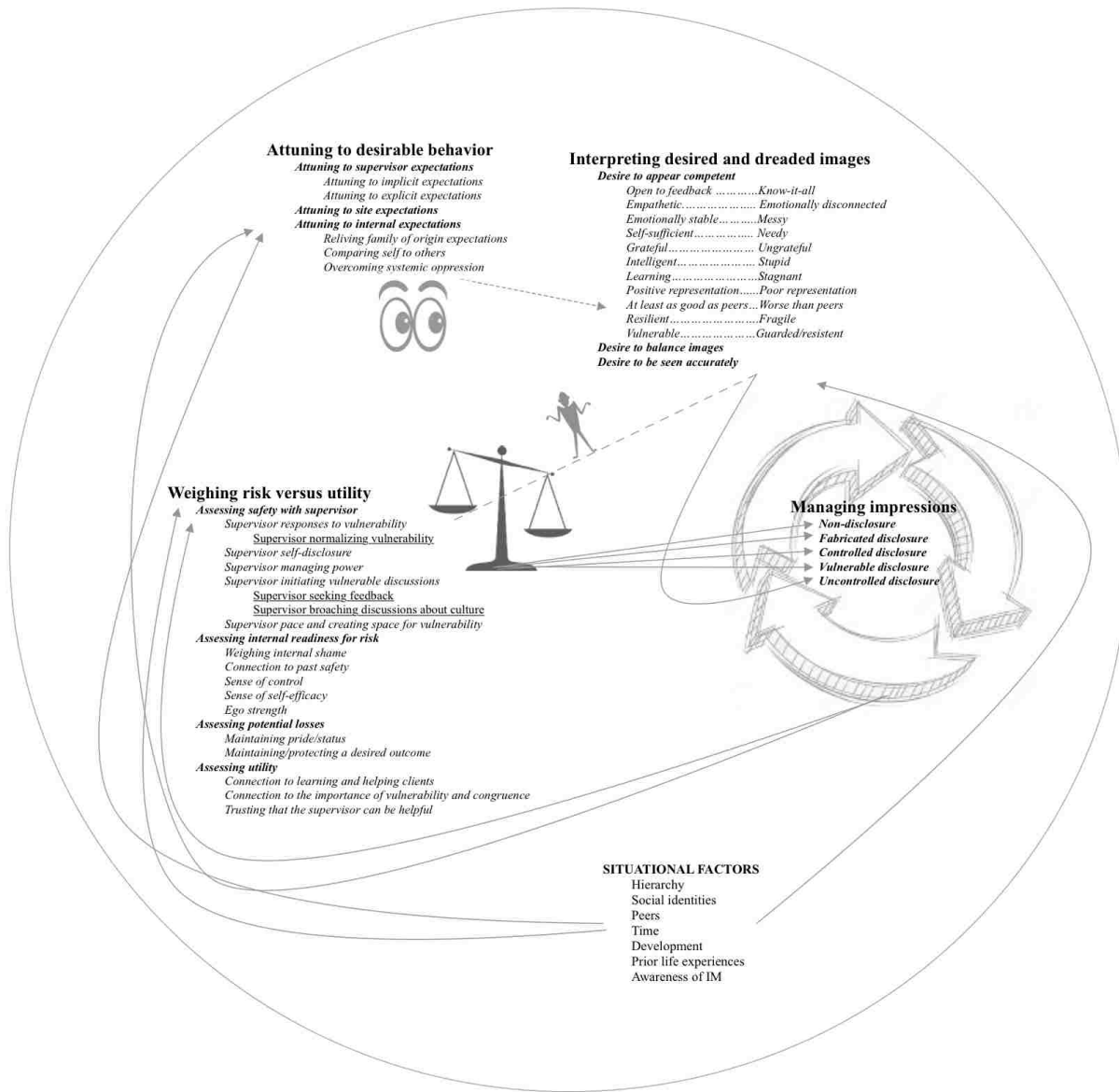


Figure 4: Final concept map of the experience and process of impression management in supervision

The process of impression management in clinical supervision for the participants in this study begins with the experience of **attuning to desirable behavior**. All participants had **impression desires** of *appearing competent* to their supervisors. In order to enact behavior intended to appear competent, they first need to know how competence looks and acts in any

given supervisory context. To do this, supervisees gather evidence for the definitions of desirable behavior by *attuning to supervisor expectations*, *attuning to site expectations*, and *attuning to internal expectations* of desirable behavior. When *attuning to supervisor expectations*, supervisees *attune to implicit and explicit expectations*. They pick up on cues from their supervisors about what behavior is considered appropriate, desirable, and rewardable. *Explicit* cues, such as a supervisor providing feedback about a supervisee seeming resistant to feedback, caused participants to then form more specific desired and dreaded images:

P3: I was sort of given the feedback that I seem resistant and so that is something that I'm trying really hard... to like not seem resistant and to seem like... I don't know... like I can handle what they're telling me and that I can like take it in and not...like wanna be combative about it...

*Implicit* cues, such as a supervisor's eyes lighting up when Participant Four brought in a vulnerable question, gave the message that the behavior of presenting struggles was desirable:

P4: ...My supervisor at [name of site], his eyes light up when I bring up something I'm struggling with. It's pretty easy to tell, he loves it. He loves it when we dive into that stuff.

Cues gained from *attuning to site expectations* add to information about what is desirable in the supervision context. Each internship site has different norms for behaving; supervisees were adept at attuning to what is expected of them in each site context. These expectations contributed to interpreting certain **desired and dreaded images**. For example, Participant Eight picked up on the cues about the culture at her internship site, where being calm and stoic was perceived as important:

A: It feels like the culture of the organization supports certain images over other images and you feel like you need to get into those images...

P8: Yes. I feel like it is reinforced constantly that you can be this calm, stoic person... it doesn't matter what's happening, it doesn't matter if there's a police officer in the hall, like you still gotta be calm.

Participant Four demonstrates how his two internship sites support different images of competence:

P4: It's different at these two different sites. I mean and that's really interesting. I hadn't really thought about that that much until now, but that is really true. I mean at the [name of first site], we see these folks every day, all day long for months and in a couple cases, years. It's so hard, and we all mess up, and it's like, 'Well, see you tomorrow [laughter]. That was a really rough session. We'll see you tomorrow. We'll do it again.' Whereas with [name of second site] it does feel a lot more... There's eight sessions, and it does feel—if you're lucky, I think the average across the counseling center is four sessions. And so I think that there is a little bit more of an emphasis—or a lot more of an emphasis—on just trying to be helpful to folks kind of in the moment, and there is less of a culture of... I don't think I would even put it this way if I didn't have the other experience, but in comparison, there is less of a culture of risk-taking and vulnerability and being open to not knowing. I mean that is sort of in some ways the mantra at [name of first site]. We have to be open to not knowing because this is so complicated, and you're working at a really deep level, and sometimes you don't know. And whereas at [name of second site], it is more 'let's get into the nuts and bolts of what did you say, when? Was that a turning point in the session that moment?' And it's important because it's session number three and you might have two more with the person. So there is less of a curiosity about not knowing in comparison to the other place. So I feel really lucky to have both experiences, and frankly, I think that the experience at the [name of first site] is significantly influencing my ability to be open at the other place too.

A: Yeah. So there is this piece around the culture of the site is going to really influence what's expected of you in supervision.

P4: Right. Very much so. Very much so. Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting.

The final element of **attuning to desirable behavior** comes from the supervisee's internal experiences. Each participant enters supervision *attuning to internal expectations*. *Internal expectations* of desirable supervisee behavior come from *reliving family of origin expectations, comparing self to others, and overcoming systemic oppression*. These properties inform the internal values and desirable images supervisees deem important in their role.

Participant Six provided a clear example of how *reliving family of origin expectations* led to **impression desires** in supervision:

P6: I grew up primarily with my dad who is a hard-working, Midwest, conservative guy. And so hard work was a big value in my house and you get what you work—or what you work for is what you get. And own up to your mistakes. Work hard, do the job right, kind of thing. So I would say that's kind of the biggest value that's carried over. And a big



thing for me is that I like to— I'm a perfectionist in some regards in that way and that I really try to do things really well. And when they're not— when they don't go as well as I would have hoped for, that can be stressful or I don't know what I'd call it. But in terms of how that translates now into supervision is that it's the same kind of thing where I like to work really hard. I like to get notes in on time. I like to be really prompt. Kind of that worker bee kind of mentality. And that I really don't want to be seen as somebody who's slacking in any way. So really trying to stay on top of things all the time is important.

A: Uh-huh. So some of those desired and dreaded images that you might want your supervisor to see you as might be ones that carried over from values that were instilled in you with your dad.

P6: A lot of family of origin values, morals, whatever it is they do, it impacts kind of your later years whether you really are aware of it or not. And that's how I am in everything. That kind of hard worker mentality, but it definitely shows in my internship as well.

Participant Two helps demonstrate how she defined her internal expectations of herself from watching and *comparing self to others*:

A: Where do you think those images [of desirable behavior] came from?

P2: I guess watching other people that I look up to and seeing like the things that make them professional... or somebody that could be a good counselor. That's what I feel like is ideal, I guess.

A: So, it's true comparison of yourself to others?

P2: Yeah.

The following quote from P1 describes the experiences of *overcoming systemic oppression* as they related to her internal expectations of herself in supervision. For Participant One, the desire to appear competent was motivated in part by cultural stereotyping and marginalization because of her SOCIAL IDENTITIES. She was aware of how someone might assume that a young Black woman would not be capable of doing the work she does:

A: And are there times that identifying as a Black woman.... you feel like you need to appear certain ways because of that in the supervision situation?

P1: Yes, I would say that like 100%... I think that's where my [desire to show] competence comes into play.

P1: ...My race [impacts my desire to appear competent] because I'm a Black woman. I do feel like I have to work twice as hard to prove myself. And so, I know that's what the majority [of impression desires] comes from and then just my upbringing.

A: Okay. Can you tell me more about the experience of what you're saying around it comes from being a Black woman? Can you help me understand more about that experience for you?

P1: Well, just for me when I meet people and I tell them like, 'Oh, I graduated with my masters.' They're very surprised, very shocked. That kind of thing. And then I am a single mother so, they're like, 'Oh, you graduated from—you got your master's? And I'm like, 'Yes, I have my master's.' So, I still [haven't] proven my worth, my education, so I feel like I have to be pristine... a certain way... when I step foot outside my house.

A: ...Do you think that that fits into that category that I named as overcoming assumptions, assumptions that people might have of you?

P1: Yes.

A: Yeah. Like when you walk in a room people might assume things about you just by the color of your skin or by the way that you look, and then you have to overcome that by showing them how competent you are?

P1: Yes.

All of these definitions of desirable behavior come together to influence the next step in the process: **interpreting desired and dreaded images.**

Specific **desired and dreaded images** are formed by **attuning to desirable behavior.**

The most ubiquitous desire these supervisees spoke of was the *desire to appear competent.*

Images of competence, which are created by *attuning to supervisor expectations, attuning to site expectations,* and *attuning to internal expectations* include the desire to appear *open to feedback, empathetic and able to sit with emotions, emotionally stable, self-sufficient, grateful, learning and progressing, a positive representation of an intern, at least as good as peers, resilient,* and (appropriately) *vulnerable.* Supervisees not only want to appear as these properties of competence, they also desire to avoid appearing as the opposite images. For example, it was common for supervisees to report wanting to appear *open to feedback* and avoid appearing as a know-it-all. Participant Three demonstrates this tension:

P3: So, there's obviously the being closed off to feedback that I would like to avoid, which is just the opposite of what I want to be seen as.

Additionally, supervisees experience anxiety related to *balancing images*. Some **impression desires** are in direct competition with each other. For example, supervisees wanted to appear competent, but not so competent that they portrayed being closed to feedback:

P1: ...I am informed about some stuff... like for example I love neuroscience... I love trauma... so I've done my homework and research on that you know just as far as reading the literature and so it's kind of like sometimes when I'm in supervision and they're talking about stuff it's like 'oh I already know what you're going to say... I already know about this' and at the same time I'm thinking to myself 'you need to be quiet because even though you know this you need to listen because you don't know it all [don't want to appear as if I think I know it all]...' so it's like I'm straddled between when do I need to give insight and when do I need to be quiet.

Differing images of competence left supervisees in a tight space attempting to balance images.

For example, Participant Five discussed wanting to make sure she did not seem too “messy” (i.e. appearing as if her emotional experiences were out of control), while at the same time not seeming too competent:

P5: ...But yeah, I think the main thing that comes up for me is not wanting to seem like a mess but also not wanting to seem too competent...

Some supervisees discussed the **impression desire** to be *seen accurately*. Participant Seven, who often talked about how important congruence is within his value system, shared that his main impression management awareness in supervision is to make sure he is coming across as who he thinks he is:

P7: My first impression [desire] is probably just to be congruent with myself. And I assume that filters into everything else, including being a counselor-in-training and in supervision. But my impressions, or that management, I think, is formed in those bigger-picture things [ideas of what ideal self looks like] and just funnels naturally into supervision.

Participants whose experiences of SOCIAL IDENTITIES were salient in the supervision context, particularly P1 and P8 who both identified as Black women, also discussed the *desire to be seen*

*accurately* given that identity-related stereotyping is part of their experiences in general, and in the supervision context:

P8: Yeah, I think that's [racial and cultural stereotypes] always in the back of my mind, like.... Like I am not being treated.... explicitly, but... always worried about not being perceived as smart, especially to the other interns. The other one in my program is a White male. So, the privilege is different and what people assume I'm capable of is different.... when I walk in the room.

In sum, **interpreting desired and dreaded images** began with **attuning to desirable behavior**.

These desires and anxieties were negotiated through experiences of the *desire to appear competent, desire to balance images*, and *desire to be seen accurately*.

Even with well-constructed **interpretations of desired images**, not all supervisees choose to engage in **managing impressions** all the time. Each made decisions, moment-by-moment, based on the outcome of **weighing risk versus utility** of vulnerable disclosure. In order to choose to take the risk to show potentially undesirable images of the self, supervisees needed to feel secure enough (both externally with their supervisor and internally within themselves) and be connected to the utility and/or importance of vulnerability. The experience of **weighing risk versus utility** is further clarified by the sub-categories of *assessing safety with the supervisor, assessing internal readiness for risk, assessing potential losses*, and *assessing utility*. The following quote demonstrates the general process of **weighing risk versus utility**:

A: Where it's like, 'Yes. I will risk something. If learning for me is more important than saving face.' There's a sort of decision tree, where it's like, 'Do I want to learn something here? Or do I want to save face here?'

P4: I think that gets to the heart of the situation I'm just talking about because showing this episode in a session where I do the thing that I hate that I do, and I know I'm doing it. I'm not learning anything there. But I may be losing face. As opposed to, 'I'm going to show you this thing where I'm legitimately bumbling around, but I want to learn. And I want to learn something.' So that I think gets to the heart of that. Yeah.

*Assessing safety with the supervisor* is defined by developing a sense of security with the supervisor (or not) over TIME. Participants described the process of dipping a toe into the

waters of vulnerability with their supervisors, all the while noticing how the supervisor responds.

This makes up the property of *noticing responses to vulnerability*. Participant Seven described his supervisor's helpful reaction after he disclosed a vulnerability:

P7: What I noticed was just tone of voice, body posturing, facial expressions that were very open, not aggressive, but warm and supportive and then, a fair amount of reflection and empathy. Followed by a... tentative offering of something that might help me after... that is what I have experienced with my supervisor.

Responses to vulnerability were further clarified into the dimensions of normalizing vulnerability on one end of the spectrum to judgmental responses to vulnerability on the other.

When supervisors normalize vulnerability, they provide reassurance to the supervisee that vulnerability and potential mistakes are not only acceptable but expected as part of the role of being a novice counselor:

P6: Yeah, normalizing's [that it's okay to be vulnerable] a big part of it too. Where if you were to, say, share your insecurities and if she was like, 'That's weird, that hasn't happened to me'... like, 'Oh great.' But [instead] she's like, 'Yeah, that happens. That's a super normal thing to experience in your development.'

Participant Two demonstrates the experience of feeling judged after exposing a vulnerability. When supervisors responded in ways that felt judgmental, supervisees reported feeling less safe to make future disclosures:

P2: I think... she does judge me for sure. I don't trust her a whole lot not to be judgmental.

A: Ok, so you feel judged when you're with her.

P2: Yes, definitely.

A: What kind of cues does she give you that are judgmental?

P2: ...In the beginning of the year it was the first time we were discussing a case and I guess I didn't really know how to talk about clients yet so I said something like 'some of what they are talking about seems like it might be Autism.' And she immediately jumped at me and said, 'you can't just jump right to diagnosis!' and that really sticks out. Super judgmental. And, I don't know. I guess the cue was a verbal cue. And sometimes she makes faces.

The most common variable that emerged as a condition for a supervisee choosing to expose a potentially dreaded image of the self is whether or not the supervisor also takes risks to disclose their vulnerabilities. *Supervisor self-disclosure*, defined as supervisors taking risks to share their own mistakes, vulnerabilities, and humanity, makes up the next property of *assessing safety with the supervisor*.

P3: And I think a lot of it for me is dependent on whether or not they have opened up about something that they're vulnerable about. And I think for me I'm a lot better at showing sides of myself that I don't love if people disclose to me sides of themselves that they don't love or times that things happened that weren't ideal. That just really, really helps me.

P2: Um how do you know when it's safe to show your supervisor vulnerability? Uhhh... I mean, when she shows a little bit of vulnerability, I think. That tells me that it's a safe place and we can be open with each other in that way...

It is not enough for supervisors to talk about how vulnerability is normal and expected in supervision; supervisors needed to walk the talk. Participant Three, who had a challenging supervisory experience during her practicum, talked about how she would not take the risk to share vulnerabilities if her supervisor did not do so, as well:

P3: I felt like she didn't share any vulnerabilities with us, so the idea of sharing vulnerability with her was not great. I didn't want to do it.

The other properties of *assessing safety with the supervisor* include the *supervisor initiating vulnerable discussions*, *supervisor managing power*, and *supervisor pace and creating space for vulnerability*.

Because of the influence of HIERARCHY, supervisees look to supervisors to set the norms for what topics are appropriate in supervision. Participant three discussed the challenges around providing unsolicited feedback to a supervisor:

P3: Yeah. I mean I think that that speaks to the power hierarchy thing of being like, 'That's not—I can't do that. They're my boss essentially. I can't tell them how to do their job.' And also, there's just this sense of like they have way more experience than I do.

Who am I to know how they're supposed to help me [laughter]? They're the ones who should know this. Yeah, that's how it feels.

Supervisees said that they were unlikely to broach a vulnerable topic in supervision if their supervisor did not do so first. Two specific dimensions of *initiating vulnerable discussions* include supervisor seeking feedback and supervisor broaching discussions about culture.

Participant One illuminated the experience of a supervisor not broaching discussions about culture:

A: Has he ever said something to you like, 'Hey, we're different in terms of race and in terms of gender, in terms of age and let's talk about those differences.'?

P1: I want to say yes, but I'm going to have to say like a hard, cold, no.

A: Yeah, and because he's never brought it up, does that make you less likely to bring it up with him?

P1: Yeah, I would say so. Yeah, I would say that and that's a lot—I would say majority of my conversations like, I wait for other people to bring it up. Depending on the situation and the context of the conversation, I wait for other people to bring it up, but once they bring it up, it's like, 'Oh, let's talk about this. Yeah, let's get into this.'

A: Yeah, so it's like you're waiting for a cue from him that this is a topic that's okay to talk about. It's not that you don't want to talk about it, it's just that you're waiting for him to give you that signal.

P1: Yes.

A: And it seems like in your supervision with him there are some things that you guys just don't talk about that much maybe because he hasn't really given the signal they're on the table to talk about?

P1: Yes.

Participant Three exemplified how her supervisor never asked for feedback:

P3: And I guess, in terms of the feedback part, it just is really sticking with me that I wish that they would just ask for feedback, and why don't they? I feel kind of annoyed about that because with clients you do that all the time, you're like, 'How is this relationship feeling to you?' And I don't think I've ever had a professor or a supervisor do that, so that's sort of a bummer.

A: It's like you'll follow their lead. They're the leader here, and if they want to open up that conversation you'll go there, but you're not going to just bring it up.

P3: Yeah. Yeah. It'd be really hard to do that.

How the *supervisor manages power* of the HIERARCHY in the supervision situation also makes a difference for participant experiences of managing impressions. Supervisors who were

perceived as more authoritative and interested in maintaining explicit hierarchical power over supervisees increased **desired and dreaded images**, leading to increased **impression management**.

P3: I think a lot of it was the power dynamic and sort of the sense that I got from that supervisor that she wanted us to know that she knew more than us, kind of. That it was... for her—it was important to her to feel very like the expert. And I felt like I couldn't argue with that. I felt like I really wasn't allowed to have my own opinion because it seemed so important to her that she—I don't know—be right about it.... She just came off as very—she came off as very defensive to feedback, to me. So, any time I would give her...I never felt like I could give her feedback.

On the other hand, when supervisors yielded their power by giving the supervisee space to make mistakes and have their own opinions, supervisees felt more capable of being vulnerable with supervisors:

P6: She's very like, 'This is your call. You need to do what's best for you in this situation,' kind of thing, which is nice to hear... It's like, 'We don't make that decision. This is you. You have some power here.' So, to be able to get the advice or the suggestions when you need them but also to have them really help you feel more confident in your decision-making has been a pretty important area for me, personally, in supervision. And when a supervisor can attune to your need to grow personally and match that, I think is helpful [for creating a safe relationship].

When supervisors were rushed and did not provide time for vulnerable sharing, supervisees interpreted cues to avoid disclosures. The property of *supervisor pace and creating space for vulnerability* influences the way participants share about their experiences. Participant Eight discussed this experience of having more time at her practicum site with her supervisor, as opposed to her current site, which was more rushed:

P8: Like even in my practicum site, like nothing was rushed, they [the counselors who worked there] took their time. And I had a lot closer bond with my supervisor there. Even though we were never really able to talk about cultural things, I feel like I brought more of myself into the room because I was more honest about 'oh yeah, I feel incompetent today, this really tripped me up.'



The five properties that make up *assessing safety with the supervisor* include *noticing supervisor responses to vulnerability, supervisor self-disclosure, supervisor initiating vulnerable discussions, supervisor managing power, and supervisor pace and creating space for vulnerability*. Ultimately, how safe participants feel with their supervisors influences their capacity to expose potentially undesirable images of the self.

When **weighing risk versus utility**, it is not sufficient to feel safe with a supervisor. In order to take the risk to share something potentially vulnerable, supervisees need to also feel safe internally. This makes up the second sub-category of **weighing risk versus utility: assessing internal readiness for risk**. The presence of *shame* about a deficit plays an important role in decision-making of willingness to expose a dreaded image to a supervisor. Participants spoke of varying levels of shame about their deficits—on the one end of the spectrum, P7 discussed feeling very little shame internally:

P7: I recognize my own humanity. And I think I do a pretty good job of recognizing my deficits without shame for them so that I can just accept them and try to improve. And that's pretty huge. I mean, there's definitely people out there carrying around that shame. And you can see how much harder the process of personal growth is for them.

Understandably so. I think that's what's behind it for me.

A: So, lack of shame for your deficits.

P7: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Helps it feel okay to expose that and ask for help around them and to be authentic with that.

P7: Yeah, yeah. I think so.

All other participants in this study talked about common sensations of shame internally; they discussed how shame sometimes led to choosing not to disclose vulnerabilities.

P3: And I would say the more times that I withhold [disclosures] are when I'm embarrassed about something...

Participant Five talked about the thoughts and sensations involved in the experience of internal shame. This experience was also influenced by the presence of PEERS:

A: And the other thing I've heard on the flip side and tell me if this resonates with you is that people say that the experience of shame internally is something that influences that desire to protect their image, is that true for you?

P5: 100%.

A: Can you tell me about that experience?

P5: Yeah, I mean... how do I flush that out? Umm... I think that's at the root of any kind of experience in a social / professional setting where there's a crack in this kind of personality or image that we've worked so hard to put forth... so yeah... I think that for me the same kind of feeling floods in... It's just thoughts of like I was saying before 'now he's going to doubt that I can be a good clinician'... like all of my self-critical parts or the parts of me that are afraid that I am actually a phony are going to be validated... yeah... that's primarily it. And then I do a lot of like, there are two other interns there, so when I am in that space I'll go into like... 'well I bet they know so much more than me... they are so much more competent and my supervisor probably sees that and he's wondering what I'm even doing here...' you know, it's that whole thought process spiral.

Participant Two and others who discussed the experience of prevalent shame, connected this with *attuning to internal expectations* stemming from *family of origin expectations*.

P2: ...My parents.... I'm a very sensitive person and I always have been. My parents shamed me sometimes for that... for crying... so ummm... one time in supervision I had an intake [that I did in the room] with my supervisor and it was so sad, her [the client's] story was so sad and I was holding back tears the whole time [the client was in the room] and then as soon as she [the client] left I just like couldn't hold back anymore and I cried a little bit but it was actually a good experience... she [the supervisor] was really sweet about it and said you know it wasn't bad, but for me it was hard. It was hard to do that. It felt really almost shameful I guess to cry in front of her.

A: Uh huh and that feeling was really sort of a holdover about what it felt like to cry in the past with your parents.

P2: Yes.

A: And that might be part of what you're protecting sometimes when you try not to be emotional in front of your supervisor. Shame from the past?

P2: Yeah, definitely yeah.

The next property that supports *internal readiness for risk* is *connection to past safety*.

Supervisees with memories of being humiliated, shamed, misunderstood, etc. in supervision or other subordinate situations discussed difficulty with vulnerability in the present. The internal sensations of safety from the past influenced supervisee's experiences in their current supervision situation. The previous example from Participant Two exemplified how *family of origin* experiences impacted internal sensations in supervision. For Participant Three, a difficult

practicum supervisory experience created memories of lack of safety in the past, which made it difficult to take risks to express her needs in her current supervision:

P3: ...I don't think I've ever really been able to do that [bring up a concern about how the supervisor wasn't meeting her needs]. Because I had that one supervisor who was really unsupportive, I felt, and I never was able to tell her that she was unsupportive. I think I tried to stand up for myself at one point as a way of doing that and it just didn't—I think it just came across as me being resistant [therefore, she concluded that she couldn't do it again].

On the other hand, participants who were connected to how they had been safe in the past were able to take more risks in the present. Participant Six discussed how he reminds himself of his past safety when he is gearing up to make a vulnerable disclosure:

A: And is part of the process for you reminding yourself that you've done this [taken a risk to expose a vulnerability] before and it's worked out for you before?

P6: Yeah. Yeah. I would say that past experience is a helpful part of it. And kind of my biggest learning moments in the counseling field have been from my weakest moments where I botched something pretty bad [and talked about it with my supervisor] or I'd say something that didn't really feel right or whatever it is, that it offers just the most room for growth and I'm definitely starting to see a trend of that, so. Yeah. I do remind myself.

Participant Seven spoke to his general experiences of internal safety originating with his *family of origin* experiences:

P7: It [feelings of safety internally] started with parental influence. My dad, in particular, was super positive and supportive. And then environmental feedback that kind of continued that loop and continued helping me build that impression. And I think just a general positive and aspirational nature that recognizes...my humanity.

Three other factors that make up *internal readiness for risk* include *sense of control*, *self-efficacy*, and *ego strength*. *Sense of control* is defined by the internal sensation of feeling able to influence the process of exposing a vulnerability. When supervisees felt little control (for example, they felt “too raw” or unsure if they would fall apart emotionally if they chose to disclose a vulnerability) they were less likely to take risks to expose a potentially dreaded image of the self. Participant Five exemplified this process:

A: Was part of the decision not to tell him [your supervisor] in the moment that thing we talked about earlier [the experiencing of a traumatic event] of just like feeling too raw, like it was almost impossible to be controlled around your vulnerability when you knew you were opening something up that was happening in the moment and you felt very little control?

P5: Yeah, I think you just hit the nail on the head. Totally.

A: Like maybe you could take the risk to tell him now... like this happened then, right, but that might not be useful. As useful as it would have been if you had told him in the moment, but it was almost like you couldn't do it in the moment just because it was... there wasn't any guarantee of being able to keep yourself together in the process of telling him and also being around him while you weren't feeling well.

P5: Yep, definitely, that's it.

*Self-efficacy* includes the internal belief that if one does take a risk to expose a vulnerable image of the self, they would be able to do so in such a way that would be effective. Participant Seven demonstrates the experience of having a sense of self-efficacy that he can provide feedback in a way that would go over well with his supervisor:

P7: At times, when we've had a difference of opinion, I've just, I think, talked it through. How did I know that it was okay to do that? I think it's more like I just assume it is because I'm also not super personally confrontational. So, let's say she was having a bad day and was in a bad mood. I don't know that that would overly affect my decision to say anything or not because I'm not likely to poke the bear more, so to speak.

A: Yeah. So it sounds like part of what you're saying is that you just have trust that you're going to be able to say it in a way that she can hear it, and then she's going to be able to hear it in a way that doesn't hurt the relationship at all.

P7: Yeah.

Finally, *ego strength* involves an internal confidence that one would be able to handle the sensations of shame that might accompany a vulnerable disclosure. Participants who talked about having more *ego strength* were more willing to disclose vulnerabilities because they had the confidence that they could handle possible discomfort. Participant Four exemplified this property by talking about what he has noticed in himself as well as another intern at his site:

P4: Yeah. I mean, it's funny because I have a colleague that I— one of my cohort members at the counseling center on campus, we have talked about our supervision experiences a decent amount, and I swear every single time she shows— she walked out of supervision just feeling terrible. Because she picks these— she was like, 'I need help with this stuff. And I'm going to just show my worst tape every single time.' I'm like,

‘Why do you do that to yourself? Don't show your worst tape every time. Titrate a little bit. Give yourself a break from that a little bit, like. Show something that you're kind of happy with every once in a while.’ And on the one hand, I think that speaks to sort of being able to manage the real difficult emotion and difficult experience, the shame, and just the embarrassment of bad tape after bad tape.

The third sub-category of **weighing risk versus utility** involves *assessing potential losses*. A supervisee may have a great deal of *safety with the supervisor* and a great deal of *internal readiness for risk*, but it still may feel too risky to expose a potentially dreaded image of the self if the stakes feel too high. The two properties participants were concerned about losing included their *pride* and a *desired outcome*. *Maintaining pride/status* is a motivator for not taking the risk to expose a vulnerability. This occurred when others already thought highly of participants, or when they wanted to maintain a global image of the self as competent counselors.

P2: I don't really feel like there's a whole lot at stake [when appearing as a dreaded image] other than my pride. And I feel like this [counseling] is something I'm good at... that's huge to me and like I can do this so if I risk being vulnerable... Yeah. So how much does my fear that my pride is going to be hurt influence how vulnerable I am with her? Yeah definitely like 99%.

A: Okay so that's what's at stake? Is the sense that you might hurt your ego by showing her something?

P2: Yeah! She's leaving, too, at the end of April so... she's not going to be... I don't think somebody I can use as a reference or help me in any way other than just giving me really good feedback. So, I don't think there's a whole lot of stake there. Just my own feelings of inferiority at stake.

P5: He [supervisor] is the one who personally hired me as an intern, so I feel like I have to prove to him that he made the right choice...

The influence of PEERS also plays a role in supervisee perceptions of potential loss of pride or status:

P4: ... And some of that goes to my role in the cohort... like I am the person... I'm a lot more well-read than a lot of people in my cohort when it comes to theory I've been in and out of this world for a long time... people are used to seeing me... as... if you have a question about theory go ask [P4] so I have this reputation as someone who knows a lot about the theoretical perspective and so it can be very vulnerable to say well let's see how you put it into practice because sometimes I'm not great... there is that piece as well

Supervisees are aware of the stakes of appearing certain ways to their supervisors because of the HIERARCHY inherent in the supervision situation. Supervisors held evaluative power over supervisees, and in some cases are even their professors or potential future employers. If supervisees are worried about a desired outcome, such as a job, evaluation, or even the supervisor's ability to assign more clients to a caseload, it can influence a supervisee to manage their behavior in order to save face.

P3: Right now, actually, my supervisor told me that they might have a full-time position at my site and asked me if I would be interested in applying for it if they were to get the funding for it. And now, I feel like I'm like, 'Oh my god, I got to be super competent. Got to seem like I got a lot of good ideas. Got to do it really well.' So it stresses me out a lot more to share with her and cry in front of her and that sort of thing.

P6: And I think underneath it all there is this desire to impress because they have a say in not only our grades but our completion of the program. They have some sway over our outcomes and actual job references... we do want to impress so that when the time comes they won't have any reason to hold us back. Or when we need a reference, yeah, you expect [inaudible] thought highly of you so here's a good reference. So, there is that wanting to impress because of their stake in the game, really.

A: Absolutely. Yeah, that power dynamic where you have more at stake. Yeah.

P6: Yeah. Because I would say with the people that don't have as much decision [power] I find it a little easier to maybe not be on the ball as much versus my internship supervisor, my university supervisor was also the grant coordinator. These people have a little more power, I guess would be the word here. And so I need to really—impression management is maybe a little more important with them than it is with others.

So far, three sub-categories of *assessing safety with supervisor*, *assessing internal readiness for risk*, and *assessing potential losses* have emphasized how participants make decisions about risky disclosures of vulnerability in supervision. Yet still, supervisees often make vulnerable disclosures, even when risk is present. Participants move forward with risk because of possible *utility*, the other side of the scale that impacts decisions about managing impressions.

The fourth sub-category of **weighing risk versus utility** is defined as *assessing utility*. Supervisees are motivated to risk appearing as a dreaded image to their supervisors when they

are connected to the importance of *learning and helping their clients*. When the desire to learn and help others outweighed the benefits of saving face, supervisees took the risk:

A: And so, what makes it worth it to you to appear incompetent sometimes?

P5: Because I know that's how I'm going to grow and learn... if I always go in there seeming like I'm on everything and like I know what's going on I'm not serving myself as a counselor-in-training but I'm also not serving my clients. And I think actually now that I say it out loud, I think at the end of the day it's like my client's experience is more important than me seeming good. You know? So especially like, people... when I bring people into supervision that I've had up to 20 sessions with them at this point and there are a couple of them who I just feel like we've plateaued or really big things are being unearthed and I feel like it's a little bit out of my scope of competence in terms of the issues they're bringing up and I'd rather feel vulnerable for however many minutes and be like look I really don't know how to do this than fail my client.

A: ...So how do you decide when it's worth risking your pride or not?

P2: If it's something that I feel very lost and I don't think I can figure out on my own and I don't want to hurt my client then of course I will risk being vulnerable. I think that's more important.

The other property of *utility* is a *connection to the importance of vulnerability and congruence*. For some, this may be a personality structure—Participant Seven provides an example of his self-concept as that of a person whose internal experiences are congruent with his outward expressions. Participant Seven discussed how important it was to him to be honest and congruent about his internal experiences:

A: And...it, it seems like what you're saying is that you expect a certain amount of vulnerability in the role of being a supervisee. That's, that's part of what it means to you is to be in a position just like your clients are.... vulnerability.

P7: Yes. That's what I'm saying. Very nicely put. And, and also in terms of like counselor growth for me, that is one of the areas I attend to, which is sort of... if, you know, I expect myself to be, you know, 1) uh, in contact with my inner experience and 2) willing to abide by that even publicly, i.e. make myself vulnerable and, and present in the moment. Um, if that's, if that's what I say a fully functioning individual... those are attributes of that individual then and I'm asking my clients to go there. I'm also asking myself to go there.

Others, for example P4, came to recognize the importance of vulnerability over TIME during his DEVELOPMENT:

P4: For me recognizing and embracing this idea that I was stepping into this whole larger tradition of... you know... the healing tradition and counseling and therapy tradition I was part of this thing I think that was part of what helped me [embrace vulnerability]. I remember reading something about Yalom sometime, Irvin Yalom, this litany of counselors he had seen over the decades... he went to psychoanalysis for 7 years he saw a Gestalt person for a while he saw a cognitive-behavioral person for a while... it was just recognizing for me that the work never really ends and I am part of this thing that is bigger than I am... that was a profound recognition for me and it gave me a lot of a foundation... Okay, I'm part of this larger tradition and I want to be in it and I want to be good at it and I need to face this stuff that's really hard... that was also something that really helped me to get the really long view...

The final property of *assessing utility* includes *trusting that the supervisor can provide help*. When supervisees assess the supervisor as unhelpful after a vulnerable disclosure or when they assume the supervisor would not provide help, the utility of vulnerable disclosure often does not outweigh the risk. For example, P4 shared the following:

P4: Yeah. And then there's this staging of trust in the people who are in there to support you about whether they can and how much they can.

A: Right. So, it's like, 'I will show you some things and ask for help when I feel that you're going to help me with it and you would hold that space.' And if maybe, if you gauge them as less competent or having less to offer in some way you're not going to just put your whole self out on the table.

P4: No [I would not put my whole self on the table]. And I would say the less trust I have, the more I purposely I try and funnel the experience down to, 'Let's work on these maybe two things or one thing that I want to talk about right now.'

The outcome of **weighing risk and utility** in supervision is a behavioral decision: do supervisees choose to manage their behavior in order to portray a desirable image of the self?

There are five options for **managing impressions** (or not) in supervision. The first option, *non-disclosure*, involves the decision to avoid disclosing a vulnerability, mistake, or deficit.

Participant Five gave a striking example of non-disclosure, which included deciding not to share with her supervisor that she was experiencing something traumatic that may have been influencing her work:

P5: I do still kind of grapple with... this has been a very tough semester for me just like personal life stuff. [Describes what happened that included a traumatic experience]...



basically it was a ten day panic attack. Probably the worst I've ever felt in my mind and body. It was really scary. Living minute by minute like trying to get by. I definitely felt torn. You know, I was at internship seeing ten clients a week somehow. And also going like completely insane. But I didn't share the experience with my supervisor. And I still think about that and I think it would have been fine given our relationship and maybe even helpful, but I didn't want him to see me as someone who maybe couldn't do the work or maybe needed to take time off or wasn't as strong and resilient as he thought I was. That was just interesting to me. And yet, a big part of me during that time was like wishing that he knew because I felt like I was coming off as so weird. You know. So off. But I didn't share it. So that's interesting.

*Fabricated disclosure* includes the decision to lie to a supervisor about a vulnerability, mistake, or deficit. Participant Three took the risk to share an example of a *fabricated disclosure* that involved dodging a question related to how she conducted a suicide assessment:

P3: So I hadn't really seen anyone who was a suicidal... yeah, I hadn't seen anyone really who was suicidal. And then my first person who was suicidal I feel like I just did a really shitty job of asking everything I needed to ask and like I didn't.... I feel like I didn't ask about means or something....I didn't ask about one of the big things. And I was just like really horrified that I didn't. And I went in and I asked my supervisor, you know, I talked to my supervisor about it and she was like umm... she asked me if I asked that. And I was like....I think maybe I just evaded the question or like... I don't think I lied... but was like...or I pulled something.... I don't know... I just wasn't entirely truthful with her about the fact that I straight up forgot to ask about means. And I don't remember if it was means... I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was something that I felt really embarrassed that I had forgotten to ask and... that was a time that I withheld, because I just, I don't know, I didn't want her... It was right when I first started and I didn't want her to be like 'Oh my god this girl forgot to ask about means... like that's really bad.'

*Controlled disclosure*, which seems to be the most common experience for supervisees, involves choosing to disclose a vulnerability, mistake, or deficit in such a way so that the supervisee still feels in control of the image presented. The following quote from P4 demonstrates how he realized that vulnerability is a property of appearing competent, so he intentionally showed some *controlled vulnerability* in order to impress his supervisor:

P4: There was a shift in my thinking where I sort of recognized that [vulnerability] is a trait of the profession. And in some ways that plays into— 'I will impress these folks if I'm vulnerable.' I mean, I think there is a little bit of that in the back of my mind, but then there's the, 'I'm going to titrate it out a little bit [to not show too much vulnerability]'

Other ways participants control the expression of vulnerabilities include avoiding showing their complete emotional reactions, avoiding asking for all the help they needed, and choosing video or topics to discuss in supervision that are vulnerable, but not *too* vulnerable.

P5: I mean I'll show things that I'm grappling with, but I feel overall confident in the session. You know, yeah. That's that. I think the controlled vulnerability is a big piece.

P8: I'm a pretty emotional person and in supervision I try to damp that down a little bit.

A: Yeah. It's like you would rather show controlled vulnerability.

P3: Yeah. I would rather be like, 'This thing kind of sucks, and I'm kind of dealing with negative emotions' than have this crazy meltdown in front of her that makes her feel like she needs to buy me a gift card for a massage. So yeah. That's tough.

P3: ...I guess that I try to not ask all the questions that I think of but I wanna ask, so if I have questions about a client, I would just try to figure out some other way to answer it, like ask peers or like look something up or something. Before I went to my supervisor about it.

P7: So I have I think witnessed people not be completely authentic, not flat out lying and trying to fool everybody... but just trying to manage the message... the impression that comes up with their opportunity for growth in a way that I'm like, 'That doesn't seem like completely what's going on there.'

P5: It still feels... it will always feel a little bit nerve-wracking to bring those things [vulnerabilities and mistakes] into supervision.... and then I make sure to pad those sessions with like things I'm feeling confident about.

Most of the time, decisions to engage in *non-disclosure*, *fabricated disclosure*, and/or *controlled disclosure* are the outcome of supervisees deciding that *vulnerable disclosure* is not worth the risk of exposing a potentially undesirable image of the self. Sometimes, however, supervisees engaged in *non-disclosure* or *controlled disclosure* out of a *connection to learning and helping clients* influenced by the HIERARCHY of the supervisory relationship. This happened when supervisees disagreed with directions their supervisors provided, yet they did not disclose their opinions due to the desire to follow their supervisor's lead. For example, P3

discussed how she did not dissent to her supervisor who suggested she discuss medication with clients whom P3 did not want to influence in that direction:

P3: Yeah, and I also have that experience too of doing something that my supervisor suggests even though I don't necessarily want to or think that it is something that I would want, even if it feels like, I don't really want to do that, I often will bring up medication to students even though it feels really uncomfortable for me and like sometimes I don't necessarily know if I want to move them in that direction because that's something my supervisor suggests. So, it feels hard to be like, 'Yeah, that's your opinion and I don't want to do that.' Like I feel like I have to sort of take everything she says, it's like, 'Okay, I'll do that.' Because it's, again, it's sense of hierarchy [inaudible] like, 'Oh, you know more than me, I should just defer to you.'

Other times supervisees chose to follow their supervisor's lead and not disclose their dissent was when they were feeling resistant, yet still connected to how they might learn from a supervisor.

P6: ...I think in that moment [when receiving feedback that I felt resistant to] my response is just saying 'yes, definitely....' just kind of that 'yeah, that's super helpful' but not really meaning it as much. So, it's kind of like saving face. Trying to save face even when you're not happy to receive feedback... still making it seem like you are... yeah, essentially, it's just trying to sell yourself... to sell it the best that you can so that they can see that you're really wanting the feedback even though you may not be... you might not agree with it or it might be kind of more constructive so it might sting a little bit initially because I think that's the big thing that I've noticed because sometimes initial feedback stings and then the more time you just sit with it and think about it you're like okay this actually was useful I shouldn't have been so incongruent or defensive about it.

There were two cases in which impression management was not present for participants.

These included the intentional choice to make a *vulnerable disclosure* or when supervisees unintentionally made an *uncontrolled disclosure* (impression management failed). Examples of *vulnerable disclosure* include a supervisee making a decision to ask for help, disclose a mistake or opinion, or bring up a vulnerable topic. Participant Six shared an example where he took the risk:

P6: It [feeling incompetent with a client] was something that I was hesitant to talk about in supervision initially, but, again, was one of those vulnerable areas. Eventually, I did, and the outcome was great.

*Uncontrolled disclosures* happened when supervisees bypassed the process of **weighing risk versus utility** and accidentally showed a potentially undesirable image of the self:

P3: I don't know. It's kind of tricky because, for me, sometimes I feel like I can't really control it [showing a vulnerability]. I don't know. It's... thinking about the decision is hard because sometimes I feel like it just comes out, and I'm not a closed book, really. I'm relatively expressive, I think, in my emotions. So, I think a lot of the time it sort of just comes out without me really thinking about it.

The impact of **managing impressions** (or not), leads to positioning somewhere in the circular processes of impression management. When supervisees make *vulnerable disclosures* that are well-received by their supervisors, it decreases *shame*, increases *learning*, increases a *sense of self-efficacy* when **weighing risk versus utility**, and ultimately increases the likelihood that participants will risk *vulnerable disclosure* again. Participant Seven depicts an experience of how he believed he reinforces his decision-making to maintain a cycle of vulnerable sharing by continuing to take risks to be vulnerable:

P7: My experience of worrying about other people's impressions [and managing behavior intentionally] is limited. I can think of some times that it's happened, for sure. Almost any new group of people or things like that. I usually get past them [managing impressions behaviors] pretty fast...I don't know if you'll get to where you're trying to tease out attributes of, 'Why is this person's process like this and this is like this?' but my attributes are, as I said, not a lot of negative experiences with people. And also, just this general outlook that comes from the abundance mindset versus the scarcity mindset. And so that is more collaborative in nature and I tend to, I think, assume and embody the assumptions that we will all get further if I'm not fearful and scared, but willing to engage. I just kind of have that assumption that the world is also going to benefit the most from helping me. So, I just don't run around with that fear. That fear-based scarcity mindset of, 'I don't look good enough.' Or, 'I have to look better than the people sitting next to me so that I can accomplish X, Y, and Z in the future.' Those just aren't things I carry with me. And I do think that's significant in terms of how the process of interacting with a supervisor and being one down position are carried out by me.

P7: The times when I felt most vulnerable, I have felt very understood by her and— yeah. I mean, I don't even know what the feeling or emotion is that goes with her empathizing and crying with me due to my distress, but it's some combination of relief and being assured. I want to be able to state this in terms of positive emotional responses, but everything I can think of is more like it just decreases the negative emotions [laughter]. I

don't know how to state in positive terms. I'm not exactly happy or excited or jubilant, but I am less anxious, less stressed, less sad, you know [laughter]?

A: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So—

P7: Let me get out my feelings wheel here [laughter].

A: [laughter]...So let me just make sure that I'm understanding you. So in a moment where you'd make a decision to share vulnerability with your supervisor and her response is this empathy and caring, and you feel understood by her, part of the process afterwards is that it alleviates the anxiety or alleviates discomfort that you were feeling as you came in with this thing before you had shared it.

P7: Yes. It encourages me...I do feel encouraged.

Sometimes, however, *vulnerable disclosure* led to increased discomfort when a supervisor did not respond in a way that created more safety. This led back into a cycle of

**managing impressions** for Participant Three:

P3: ...Well then there would be times when I would dabble a toe in [to being vulnerable] and just feel like shit after I left and be like 'well, I'm not doing that again.'

Participant Six discussed seeing another supervisee in a peer supervision group do a *vulnerable disclosure* and then make an attempt afterwards to mitigate the feelings of potential shame that went along with being vulnerable in front of PEERS:

P6: I can think of an example, a couple of weeks ago, where one of my peers, she was pretty vulnerable and talking about that she had potentially a client that was on the autism spectrum and frankly, she didn't know how to work with this person because she didn't have any training. She didn't really know much about it and wondering if she was at a full level of competency to do that. And I could tell as soon as she said it she was like, 'I need instant', not gratification—I need instant normalizing. I need you guys to support me here,' because she really didn't want to give off the impression that she was being unethical or being not good enough, that kind of thing.

When supervisees chose options to not disclose or fabricate disclosures, they described the after-effects of increasing internal *shame*, increasing **interpreting desired and dreaded images** in the future, as well as a sense of relief for *maintaining a sense of pride and status*.

P1: So, I go through it [the experience after a non-disclosure and shame] every week with supervision, but it's more related to the billing... Like, 'Okay. I know I didn't meet my hours last week because I wasn't able to see clients because I had a couple of cancellations.' [And she chooses to not talk about this with the supervisor] I know he knows I'm capable of meeting my hours. It's just sometimes I just get to the point where

I'm like, 'Okay. I can't stress myself out over clients.' But I do go through that every week like, 'I wonder if he's going to say something to me about not meeting my hours.'

A: Okay. So, there's like a little bit of an experience of anxiety there. Like I'm going to be found out that I haven't been totally forthright about this.

P1: Yes.

A: So, what happened after? What do you think the impact of not sharing was for you?

P5: Yeah it was kind of a two-sided coin. On the one hand now I've moved through it and we're still in this rhythm and he as far as I know doesn't know that I was really struggling, so there's satisfaction of knowing that and of maintaining this consistent perception of who I am as a person and how I am acting as a clinician.

Experiences of *fabricated disclosures* were likely to lead back to choosing options for maintaining **impression management** in the future.

P8: I think I've gotten better at it. Portraying a certain image. Because it feels like nobody has quote unquote 'caught me' yet like, found out that I'm incompetent.

*Controlled disclosure* tended to lead to learning, increased trust with the supervisor, and a sustained process of *controlled disclosure* or more *vulnerable disclosure* in the future:

A: And there's a little bit of a feeling out process to make sure that your supervisor can handle you bringing in your vulnerabilities or your mistakes or whatever. And then as you find out that she can handle that it's less on your mind and you are willing at times to appear incompetent for the sake of learning. And you're more in a cycle of showing vulnerability... equals creating even more trust, equals bringing in more vulnerability.

Does that seem true?

P7: Yeah. Yeah. It does.

One participant described a potential loss of learning involved in controlled disclosure. For her, once the utility side of the scale outweighed the riskiness, she described being more likely to lessen control over her disclosures:

A: And do you ever feel that there are consequences of making the choice to be pretty controlled when you choose to show something that's vulnerable?

P5: Yeah, I do wonder that. You know one of our professors says like if you ever have a session and you're like 'oh I'm glad no one is going to see that' like that's one you should show. And I get that... that makes sense. But yeah, part of me... I mean it would still be controlled because I would be making the choice to take a bigger risk because realistically my supervisor isn't going to have access to things I don't give him access to, except for like my notes and all that, I guess I'm just talking about tapes specifically. I have been thinking about that in the last few weeks. About bringing in a session that I felt

I just completely bombed and how that would probably be a really generative supervision session... but it's like guuuuh do I really...? ... And yet, I feel like some of these sessions with this particular client because of various personalization issues and whatever always go this way. Maybe it's time to bring that into supervision.... Thus far I've chosen not to [bring it in], but I've been considering bringing in a session with this person and not even marking it or whatever but just like him and I going through it...It's scary! because it seems inconsistent with the rest of my work. But it's consistent with my work with this one client. And like, obviously that should be discussed.

**Uncontrolled disclosures** (impression management failing) led to increased *internal shame* in all instances that supervisees discussed this happening. Participant Three exemplifies this experience:

P3: ...And then afterwards [after an expression of uncontrolled vulnerability] I'll be like, 'God. That was embarrassing. Guess I should not have done that.'

A: It's like even sometimes when someone shows genuine empathy, it can feel like pity or can feel bad.

P3: Again, it just brings out that feeling of me that I'm not cut out for this job or something. I'm too emotional. I'm too reactive or something like that. I just have a feeling that people are just kind of smirking going, 'Oh, she can't handle this.' They're probably not thinking that, but it does make me nervous.

A: Yeah. That's that sense of shame inside of you

P3: Yeah

Finally, SITUATIONAL FACTORS influence the process of impression management in supervision. These included HIERARCHY, SOCIAL IDENTITIES, PEERS, TIME, DEVELOPMENT, PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES, and AWARENESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT.

HIERARCHY was present in all supervisee experiences and played a role in how supervisees were able to *assess safety with supervisors*, *assess internal readiness for risk*, and *assess potential losses*.

P1: Sometimes it [consciousness about the hierarchy] is on my mind. Even though he promotes this egalitarian relationship, for me, I still see the power differential in him being my supervisor. So he has the final say-so, so to speak. Yeah.

A: Yeah. Yeah. He's got the final say. Right. And do you think that influences your decisions sometimes to not tell him stuff if you've made a mistake?

P1: Yeah, I would say so.

P6: But I think for me at least is, having that supervisor be in that kind of expert role, is one of the reasons why I like to be presentable. Kind of treating it like a meeting with a boss of sorts and that you want to be on—you want to kind of put your best foot forward kind of thing. It's kind of similar to how I've encountered some of my own clients...how they see me, the counselor as this expert who's going to teach them things. And I think that I've had certain clients that do try to present themselves in a different way because of that. And I think there's a similar theme with me and my supervisors where my supervisor's an expert. She's kind of my superior in terms of the counseling profession... I like to kind of emulate that wisdom if that's the word.

Further, the presence of HIERARCHY triggered *reliving family of origin expectations* for some supervisees:

A: And feel free not to share if you don't want to but do you have a guess as to where that [sense of shame] comes from for you?

P2: Yeah, I have a pretty good guess... my dad is pretty... I don't know like just very... nothing is ever good enough kind of thing... so I'm guessing it kind of comes from that.

A: Yeah so even if your supervisor is not telling you directly that nothing is ever good enough it can feel that way because of the past?

P2: Yeah, yeah. Yeah I mean that makes sense of course things that we grow up with are what's normal

A: Yeah and the supervisor's in kind of a parental position with you in some ways right

P2: Yeah definitely. Authoritative...guiding and all of that.

SOCIAL IDENTITIES also play a role in how participants experience supervision and the kinds of decisions they make about disclosure. The impact of marginalized identities, specifically racial and religious identities, set the stage for **impression desires** of *overcoming systemic oppression*. For participants who faced cultural marginalization in their sociopolitical landscapes, the impression desires were felt as differently consequential:

P1: And so, me and my supervisor, we had a conversation about religious beliefs, but I don't think we discussed my religion. I kind of was like, 'Yeah, I don't think I want to bring this up,' my own religious beliefs and how they.... I guess—I don't want to say go up against, but I guess how they are— what's the word I'm looking for? I guess just brushing up against the client's belief system, I would say.

A: How your own beliefs brush up against the client's belief system? Is that what you're saying?

P1: Yeah.

A: Yeah. And what stops you from talking about that [your religious identity] with your supervisor?



P1: I would just say being perceived as other. That's what I call it. Being looked at as—am I a radical Islamic person acting like White people are horrible, that kind of thing? I think of Black militant and having to do a lot of education around, 'No, my religion is very peaceful.' There are extremists, and they're in every other religion...extremists. I'm just pretty much easy going. I'm not devout Muslim. I don't make my prayers five times a day. I know it becomes a Q and A session where I'm doing a lot of the education, and I don't too much care for it.

A: Sure, so it's a few pieces. One is that you don't want to spend your supervision time educating your supervisor about your religious identity. And then, another piece is that you don't want to be misunderstood by your supervisor or that piece around overcoming that assumption already that someone might have about what it means to be Muslim. And then the other piece, it sounds like, is that he hasn't brought it up, right? Is that part of it, too?

P1: Yeah.

A: And what would that be like if he did bring it up for you?

P1: I think it would be very uncomfortable. I think it would be comfortable for him, but I think it would be severely uncomfortable for me.

A: Yeah, what would be uncomfortable for you?

P1: ...wondering if he is being genuine or authentic. I'd be questioning.

A: Yeah. Okay, so it sounds like there are some pieces of your identity that you hold close and don't talk about in supervision. And part of that is kind of protection, and part of that just seems to make sense because you don't want to spend your supervision time talking about some stuff that might not be as relevant for your clients.

A supervisor's SOCIAL IDENTITIES are also perceived by supervisees and in some cases impacted **managing impressions**. For example, P1 noted her supervisor's privileged identities and made behavioral decisions to "play dumb" in order to avoid the impression of a know-it-all:

P1: Yeah, I do play dumb sometimes and I think it's because of his privilege, I will say it's because of his privilege, like his gender, his race, and his educational status [as an older, White, male].

When supervisees identified with more privileged identities, they were able to articulate how this impacted their experiences of impression management, as well:

P7: ...I come from a place of, I think, a lot of privilege and a lot of my multicultural attributes working in my favor, so—going all the way back, I'm a White male, middle class, in a society that seems to...descendant of European immigrants, came over, bootstrapped it, made it. The system is built for people like me. And so, if I go all the way back, I've always just pretty very easily fit in the system. And I don't know if I learned how or if it's just a sociocultural influence or what, but I haven't clashed with the system or the powers that be within the system. I have very few times, but I was so self-assured that they [others who he clashed with] were just way off base that it [the

experience of clashing] wasn't even hard for me....So, no. I haven't had power struggles or a lot of slaps on the face or issues with people holding power over me. I can remember very few, and they were very short. Now, I'm a middle-aged, White, educated, middle-class guy. So, yeah. I haven't had a lot of those flavors or experiences that maybe other people have had.

Age was another SOCIAL IDENTITY that influenced **impression desires**—younger supervisees felt as if they had more to prove. Participant Six had the **impression desire** of appearing *at least as good as peers*, whereas Participant Eight discussed needing to *overcome assumptions* about what someone might expect from a 23-year-old counselor in order to be *seen accurately*:

P6: It's a funny thing for me because I'm one of the younger people in my cohort and there is kind of this desire in me to not seem like the baby of the group and then kind of try to present myself as older than I am to really kind of be more of an equal with those older more experienced people. Yeah, it's because to be put in that young green student with older more experienced people, there is that difference in— I don't really call it power dynamic, but just kind of overall wisdom that I like to have... that kind of wisdom

P8: I am pretty young. I'm 23. So, I think I've heard some things where people have complained about people who went straight through undergrad to their master's program, that they don't have enough experience to counsel, I've heard that a few times.

On other hand, older age at times influenced increased *ego strength* to be vulnerable:

P5: You know it's funny cause I was thinking back to my first job as a 23-year-old and just how I interacted with my boss granted it's a little bit different than a supervisor / supervisee relationship, but not... I think it's still... you can still relate it to that. But I was very much in protection mode and would have this whole list of questions going on my word document but I wouldn't ask them because I didn't want to seem like I didn't know what was going on.. So yeah I imagine it would have been the same had I gone through this program at age 23. And you know now at age 33 I feel like umm I've just had different life experiences, I think going through so many different yoga trainings and also being a facilitator of trainings and having a more I guess like realistic, wholistic image of what it means to be a human being and I think what matters has changed a lot in the past decade. So yeah I think that while I still do have the thoughts that come in with the feeling of shame and all that, they generally pass through a lot quicker than they did in my 20s and I think that my like self-concept is more firm. And less susceptible to being broken or changed based on what other people think or what I assume they think of me. And yeah just generally I think I have become much less judgmental toward others and I think I have been able to on some level turn that in on myself, too.

A: So in some ways there's less at stake for exposing vulnerability because there is more ego strength there for you.

P5: Definitely. Yeah. I think I've been through life experiences at this point where I know I am a resilient person and I know I'm not going to be destroyed... like even if... let's say, worst case scenario my supervisor you know, does think I'm a phony and I lose the internship you know that would really suck, but I wouldn't think that I was a terrible stupid person because of it.

A: Yeah, your whole self-worth is not riding on your supervisor's impression of you.

P5: Yep, exactly.

However, P4's older age led to increased desires to *maintain pride/status*, especially with a supervisor who had less life experience (was ten years younger) and who was also a man. He described feeling competitive with this particular supervisor and feelings of anxiety about how he appeared in that situation:

P4: I feel a lot more vulnerable [anxious about my image]... Especially with the doc student [supervisor], because he's a decade younger than I am, and he's done it certainly for a couple years or longer than me, but he's 10 years younger than I am, and I'm married with kids, and he's not, and I've got a lot more life experience. And so I have this stuff [consciousness about appearing competent] in the back of my mind, certainly more, as we meet.

A supervisor's age was also felt as consequential for supervisees when the supervisor was older:

P6: ...Talking with an older more experienced person... I'm just going to be more professional, to be a little more impressionable.

Gender socialization played a role for some of the male-identified participants who discussed changing images of desirable behavior as they were socialized into some of the cultural norms of the counseling field. For example, vulnerability is often seen as a desirable behavior in counselor culture and less so in some versions of masculine identity. Participant Seven provided an example of how he was not able to be as congruent with his internal experiences in the beginning of his training because his socialization as a man did not allow for a complete embracing of his internal emotional experience:

P7: I don't have a problem being emotional. I think I... I handle that similarly to... so.... to how we handle it socially. Um, I'm not going to avoid being emotional, but when I get

really emotional it can be challenging to like really express... express that congruently, but, but that's not so much some cognitive avoidance as I feel like years, years of that being the behavioral norm.

Participant Four also discussed his gender socialization impacting how he **attuned to desirable behavior**. As a man, vulnerability has not been valued in his socialization, though he has come to realize that the profession of counseling does define vulnerable behavior as desirable:

P4: I really specifically remember there was this experience that I had where I know—socially I know another guy is a first-year counseling grad student right now, and I haven't interacted with him very much over the last year. But he and I just sat down. So he's a year behind me, and he and I sat down and talked maybe a month ago. And he's older than me. I'm 42. He's 46, and he was talking about how he went into one of the professor's office and just broke down and wept. And it was like 'this is so hard', and I was totally kind of jealous. I was like, 'You did that?' Yeah, I don't know. There was a weird twinge of you're being more vulnerable than I am [laughter]. That was kind of a funny little reaction to that, and I think exacerbated—it made me, I don't know. I'm babbling around a little bit because I can't quite put my finger on it, but it definitely. I was sort of taken aback and just his vulnerability made me consider my own, and it was like, 'Does that mean you're more— what does it mean that you're more vulnerable than me? Wait a minute. Am I tearing up?' There was this kind of ridiculous moment of comparison there, and I caught myself. It's like, 'Dude, just settle down. Let's not get hysterical here.' But it was a comical moment of recognizing just that weird paradox of being good means being vulnerable but maybe vulnerable in the right way.

The influence of PEERS in a supervision situation create dynamics of specific **desired and dreaded images**. Supervisees reported feeling heightened **interpreting of desired and dreaded images** with peers, where feelings of competition and being on display emerged:

P3: And to top it off the girl that I was with [in triadic supervision] was just totally the favorite. And, like, the supervisor would just... I think there was one time when I was vulnerable and crying or something. Like I was really upset. And we were both saying the same thing like, we were both overwhelmed and upset. And the supervisor turned to the girl that I was with and was like 'you have such a big heart and you're so compassionate and this stuff just gets to you' and I was like 'yeah, me too!' Like, I feel like [she thought that] I was not empathetic and I was 'cognitive' like she was telling me that all the time, that I was cognitive. And the girl that I was with was like this perfect, yoga... like oozing goodness... and I just felt like the bad stinky child. Ugh. Terrible.

P4:...I find myself going back and forth between wanting help and yeah probably like wanting to... there's an aspect of being on display... an aspect of asking for help and there are certain situations where it is more comfortable asking for help because I might see my

supervisor every week and she knows the breadth of the work but these folks were only going to see one [video] a semester... the aspect of being on display is much more prominent.

TIME is another situational factor that influences the experience and process of impression management in supervision. TIME seemed to solidify the process. For example, if supervisees took risks to show vulnerable images to supervisors and it went well, they became more comfortable taking risks in the future:

P6: So, compared to where I started in supervision to where I am now, I would say I've kind of taken that 'professional trying to impress' approach back a little bit and coming in more like, 'I'm actually floundering right now.'

TIME could also solidify the process of **managing impressions**, especially when *shame* did not lesson. When safety was not present with the supervisor or when there was not sufficient internal readiness for risk, TIME increased experiences of *shame*, even when the *connection to the importance of vulnerability increased*:

P2: Umm...I think I'd like to say it's easier to be vulnerable... that's my goal but...[laughing] it's not really getting easier for me..

A: Do you have a guess as to why?

P2: Umm... I think probably because of the things we talked about [the sense of shame] the stuff that I need to work through on my own so... yeah.... but I've just started going to therapy for that... for this... that's a step in the right direction I feel like... but yeah it is not easy for me to be vulnerable, that is for sure.

A: So, as you move along it kind of feels like that whack-a-mole thing... where as you move on it feels like you work through one [barrier to vulnerability] then a new one comes up.... is that part of the experience?

P2: Yeah and I think about how important it is, you know, instead of becoming more vulnerable I'm realizing how important it is to be more vulnerable... and that I have to [be vulnerable] so the fact that it's not easier for me is an issue.

A: It's like another thing to shame yourself about it sounds like.

P2: Yeah

A: It's another expectation on top of all of the other expectations... before it was an expectation to be competent and now it's an expectation to be competent AND vulnerable and that feels hard

P2: Yes

The situational factor of TIME was related to counselor DEVELOPMENT, which included a supervisee's stage of identity, skill, and professional progression. As counselors

continued in their DEVELOPMENT, they experienced their internal **desired and dreaded images** differently. Participant Seven sums this up:

P7: Well if I go back to the beginning of practicum, which is only 10 months ago, you know, it, it was, I suppose it was more difficult to be really authentic and transparent then and I would... I would ascribe that to 1) my abilities and also to just like, um, self-doubt and being uncertain as heck, I was uncertain of what my role was as a practicum student. Yeah, I'm like, what am I supposed to do here? You know, I don't even know, do, do I just let it [being a counselor] rip?

PRIOR LIFE EXPERIENCES also influence how a person perceives the supervision situation and impacts a supervisee's **interpretation of desired and dreaded images** as well as experiences of HIERARCHY:

P5: Where like coming from a ballet background where like everything was critical always it was hard to believe in positive feedback... so I think I've come a long way in accepting it. Trusting it.

The final situational factor that influences the experience and process of impression management in supervision is AWARENESS of the construct of impression management. Participants were not aware of the construct of impression management at the outset of this study. They reported that following first-round interviews they had more AWARENESS of **interpreting desired and dreaded images** and **impression management** behavior in supervision. This AWARENESS did not necessarily change a supervisee's process related to choosing to **manage impressions** when they **weighed risk versus utility** to conclude that **vulnerable disclosure** was not worth it:

P3: I've been thinking about it, because sometimes I'll go into supervision and be kind of concerned about how my supervisor's perceiving me. And then I think about your study and I'm like, 'Hmm, interesting this is coming up.' So I've noticed it happening much more than I did originally. I never really thought about the concept of trying to seem a certain way. And now I'm noticing it a lot more [laughter].

A: More aware of it.

P3: Yeah, for sure.

Participant Two discussed that the AWARENES led to more vulnerability with her supervisor:

P2: ...Since you and I last talked, the relationship... I don't know, I just thought about it more. I feel like our supervisor/supervisee relationship has gotten better since our conversation... because I was saying it out loud to you made me realize that I don't know, that I was doing it, er, I don't know, trying to give her a good impression. I guess, it [more awareness] made me feel like I could be a little bit more real with her. Maybe that's why it got better.

A: There was a little bit more self-awareness around that? Because the conversation we had?

P2: Yeah.

From **attuning to desirable behavior** to SITUATIONAL FACTORS, I have presented a grounded theory of the experience and process of conscious impression management in supervision. For these eight participants, the process starts with **attuning to desirable behavior** and ends with one of five behavioral choices for **managing impressions**. The factors that indicate which decision a supervisee makes are mediated by SITUATIONAL FACTORS and the processes of **attuning to desirable behavior** and **weighing risk versus utility**. A supervisee's moment-by-moment decision to expose or protect a dreaded image of the self is followed up with more **attuning** to the whether that behavior was desirable, and if enough **utility** was gained from the risk. Participants then assess if they in fact are safe and if disclosure was *useful*. When the utility of exposing a potentially dreaded image of the self outweighs the benefit of saving face, participants continue in the process of making *vulnerable disclosures*.

## **CHAPTER VI: TRUSTWORTHINESS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

This is the first theory of how the experience and process of impression management unfolds in clinical supervision for supervisees. Despite the importance of clinical supervision for counselor development, the phenomenon of how supervisees decide to present themselves to supervisors is largely unexplored in the research literature. The central question for this study was the following: What is the experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision? To answer this question, I used a qualitative approach to generate an original theory about how impression management unfolds for a group of eight supervisees. I worked to establish a trustworthy and rigorous study, yet certain limitations still occurred.

This chapter will include how I instituted trustworthiness in the research process. I will also offer a statement contextualizing myself as the co-constructor of this process. I will present limitations of the current study as well as implications for counselor educators, supervisors, and counselors-in-training. Finally, I will provide a brief outline of future research directions.

### **Establishing Trustworthiness**

The four areas that account for trustworthiness in a qualitative study include credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used five strategies for establishing these criterion areas, including member checks, prolonged engagement, inquiry auditing, generating rich, thick descriptions in the data, and clarifying my research lenses through reflexivity.

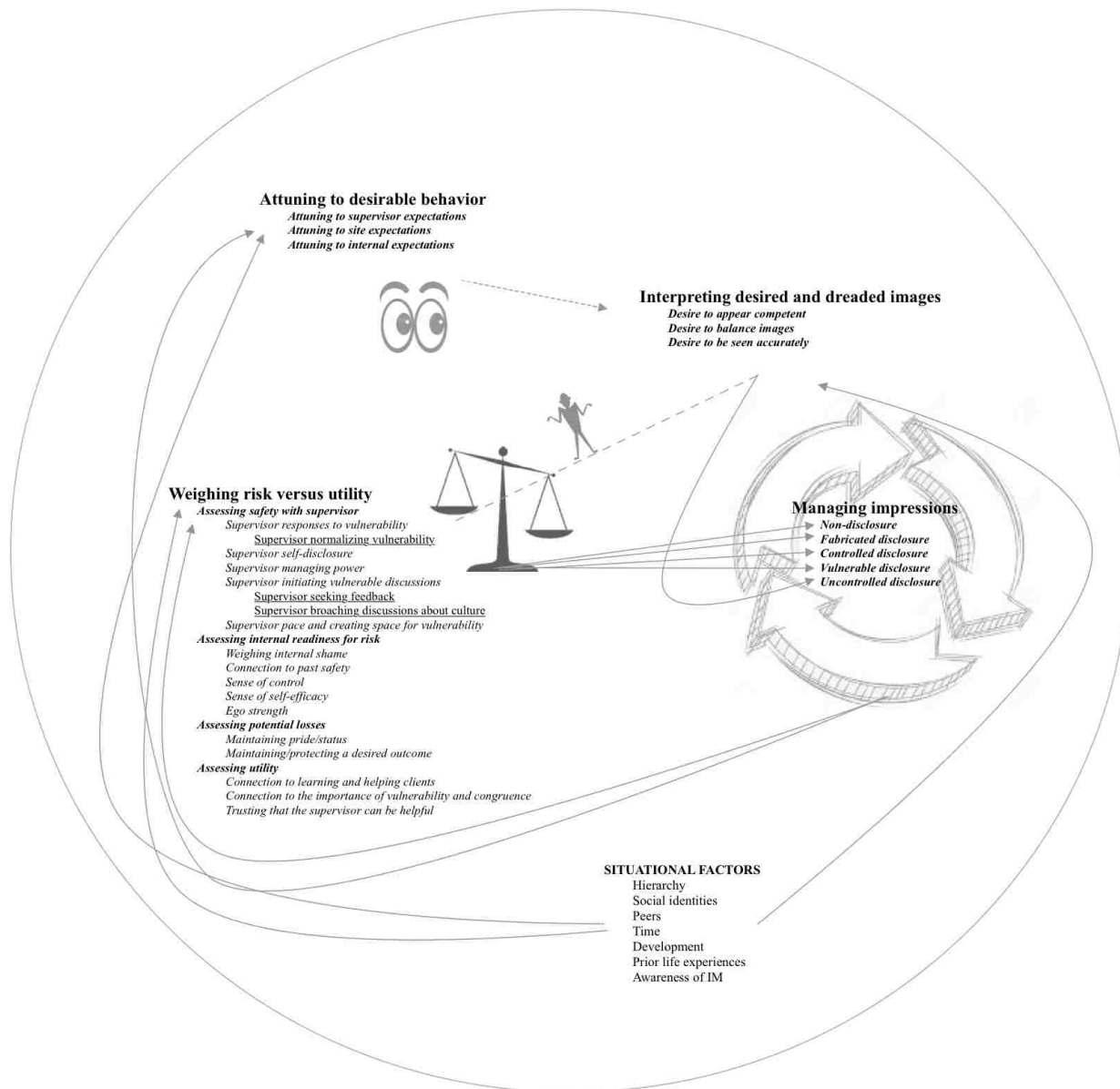
### **Member Checking**

Member checks were used to work toward credibility that the theory generated from the research process accurately captured the experiences and processes of each research participant. Member checks occurred both informally during the interview process as well as through a



formal member check after the final theory was generated. Participants confirmed that the theory generated from the research accurately captures their individual experiences and processes.

**Member check procedures.** I contacted the eight participants to discuss the results of this study. I emailed each a conceptual map of the experience and process of impression management in supervision prior to our phone call (see **Figure 3** below).



This figure is slightly different from the diagram accompanying Chapter V due to several name changes and additions following a final inquiry audit.

I recorded the conversations with each participant to ensure accuracy of their feedback. I shared a summary of the emerging theory, including main categories and processes of impression management in supervision. I asked participants the following questions:

1. Is there anything about the diagram or description that is especially resonating with you?
2. Is there anything I got wrong?
3. Is there anything that needs to be added?
4. Is there anything that needs to be changed or removed?
5. What are your overall impressions?

Participant responses were then reviewed.

**Member check results.** Overall, seven participants confirmed that the diagram and description of the theory matched their experiences. Participant Eight, who also did not participate in round-two interviews, did not respond for a member check. Her contributions to the theory cannot be confirmed, denied, or expanded upon. Each of the other participants discussed different parts of the diagram that resonated most with them and some added more examples that confirmed the naming of categories. Participants also talked about how the

**Figure 3:** Conceptual map of the experience and process of impression management used for member checks process of being involved in this research was positive for them, that it changed their experiences and awareness in supervision, and that they hoped I would continue on this research agenda.

Below are specific quotations about how the diagram and description of the theory confirmed participant experiences:

P4: As I'm hearing you talk and looking at it, I'm like 'yep there's that one, yep, yep, yep that's me.' It resonates pretty strongly with me.

P4: I can see myself in all of these things.

P1: For me, this captured the experiences accurately. Everything does feel true to me, honestly. For my experience, you captured everything.

P7: This is pretty comprehensive and useful to see. I wouldn't take anything away.

P6: My initial thought was that this was very accurate of my supervision experience. It sums up in a very comprehensive way.

P6: Honestly nothing on here I don't agree with. It 100% describes me, I can say I see myself in all these experiences.

P2: Everything you shared, I connect with.

P5: This feels spot on.

P3: It all seems like very much part of my experience in supervision. It's very accurate.

Participants resonated more with different parts of the theory and diagram. For example, Participant Four was interested in the sub-category of *uncontrolled disclosure*. He stated the following:

P4: I really like the uncontrolled disclosure, where it's like 'I didn't realize I was being vulnerable and shit now it's out.' Even to the point where we have this experience where you try to show a tape and something screws up with the software and you're stuck showing it from the very beginning... It's like, 'right now I just look like a dumbass.' That hits me on a few different levels.

Participant Six also added a comment about *uncontrolled disclosure*:

P6: The uncontrolled disclosure is interesting because I always try to be measured in my responses and saying only what I'm comfortable saying, but sometimes especially when I'm flustered or not really in that rational mind space, that has happened. It's funny looking back on it now. It's a definitely a thing. While I try to be controlled all the time, sometimes I'm not.

Participant Seven was particularly interested in the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of AWARENESS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT, stating that much of the experience of impression management was outside of his awareness prior to our conversations.

P7: I really don't think I was aware of impression management prior to talking to you. It was not on my radar. Maybe because I'm pretty wholehearted, heart on my sleeve, trusting, willing to be vulnerable, those are all accurate for me. When we first talked, I remember being like 'what are you talking about?' Now that it's in my awareness, I have thought about it some and examined my experiences and the experiences of others through that lens. It contributes to my conceptualization of others. I don't think it's changed my experience a whole lot. When I observe interactions, when I'm watching peers, I'll start to perceive that 'this is weird... I feel not connected. I'm feeling frustrated because I'm perceiving defensiveness,' I'm like 'Oh, impression management!' There's something there, there's a vulnerability they are protecting or a blind spot.

P7: The things on here make a lot of sense... they are not things that I give a lot of thought to. The thing that's the same [for me] as everybody is that I don't just walk in personality guns a-blazing. I'm going to situate myself in that relationship, that is influenced by the other. I haven't had enough time or given a whole lot of thought to what that might look like with a supervisor who wasn't supportive or had an authoritarian, institutional, deterministic, right/wrong approach. That would be challenging. I'd probably give a lot more thought to how I disclose things... I tend to show my worst mistakes... as a function of that utility, airing on the side of showing for my learning.

P7: So much of this stuff is just about my way of being, which assumes that there is always utility in being vulnerable... but I can see how someone else may have a totally opposite reaction.

P4 and P3 also noted that since our interviews they have been even more aware of impression management desires and behavior:

P4: I have more awareness now...to the point where I would sometimes realize that I know what that is, I'm going to bring in some slightly different stuff... recognizing it...

P3: After our first interview, I had the experience of 'oh I do do this...' I didn't know what it was and it opened my eyes to my relationship with my supervisor and how I try to seem to her.

P2 shared that *assessing internal readiness for risk* was most interesting to her:

P2: What stands out for me the most within your diagram is assessing internal readiness for risk in weighing risk vs. utility. I know I assessed what was 'safe' to share that wouldn't put me at risk of being *too* vulnerable when asking for help from my supervisor. Also, the more I was able to view her as human through her own self-disclosure, the more I felt comfortable with her, which lessened my risk of feeling vulnerable, even when sharing vulnerable topics.

Participant Two also wanted to add that her feelings of vulnerability and desire to appear competent have continued to evolve and throughout the year. This confirmed the SITUATIONAL FACTOR of DEVELOPMENT over TIME.

P2: I feel much more competent now, which makes me feel way more comfortable with my supervisor. Also, I found out at the beginning of this semester that my supervisor is leaving and had been unhappy at her position here for a while, which may have affected her attitude towards me (she was pretty judgmental at times).

Participant Three shared a very similar experience about TIME being related to *ego strength*:

P3: I've been getting more comfortable with it [counseling] as time goes on, I don't feel as terrible at this. I have more security in my counseling skills, which I think is related to what you called ego strength. I have more of that now and that means I'm able to share more with my supervisor.

P2 and P3 also both told me that they were comforted by seeing that other people have similar experiences:

P2: I find it comforting that I am not alone in my worries about supervision. I'm glad that I got to talk to you this year because it made me feel like what I was experiencing was normal.

P3: It's nice to know other people have this experience.

Participants One and Three told me that they connected to *supervisor pace and creating space for vulnerability*.

P1: Yeah that is true because if I don't have a lot of time in supervision, I won't get into anything heavy, I'll keep it light and superficial.

P3: The pace and timing thing is definitely true because my supervision feels kind of short and I feel like I have to rush through and I don't have as much time as I want right now.

Participant Seven emphasized *supervisor self-disclosure*:

P6: It is really helpful to fledgling counselors to have a supervisor saying, 'I've had that experience, too' and 'it's not going to derail you...'

Multiple participants encouraged me to continue on this research agenda:

P2: I'm really glad you are doing this research because this is a very vulnerable time in new counselors' lives—we have to be open to learning, but also appear competent to our clients, coworkers and supervisors, which is confusing and stressful.

P4: This would be useful for all supervisees to know.

P6: I was happy to help and it's a really great topic, worthy of research, and something that is important to me.

P7 encouraged me to continue on this research agenda, with the specific idea of training other counselors-in-training how to create more conditions for vulnerable disclosure.

None of the participants requested changes, removal, or pointed out omissions of data. In sum, results from the member checks were encouraging and confirmed that the theory generated from the study corroborated the experiences of participants.

### **Prolonged Engagement**

Another method I used to establish credibility was prolonged engagement. I worked to create and maintain relationships with both research participants and those who helped me gain access to them. I communicated with participants for a six-month period of time between November and April. Between interviews, I texted and emailed participants to keep them updated about the interview process and timeline. Because I recruited in person at one institution, I also communicated with the faculty member who granted me access to the students in that program. Participants expressed very few concerns and questions about the research project. They asked me questions about my intentions for publication and why I was interested in this topic. One participant requested that I would not use her supervisor's name in the transcript (all transcripts were de-identified, regardless of this request). Many of the participants made comments at the end of interviews about how taking time to reflect on their experiences in supervision was helpful to their development. Many also expressed interest in reading the final research study.

As is evident in the evolution of the conceptual framework from Chapter III to Chapter IV, round-two interviews yielded more vulnerability from participants. They began talking about their internal experiences of shame with a depth that was not achieved during first-round interviews. This may have been because of the trust I was able to establish with participants during prolonged engagement. Unfortunately, I was unable to continue prolonged engagement with Participant Eight. As a result, her voice is included in the first round of data and analysis and could not be expanded upon in the second round of interviews.

### **Inquiry Auditing**

Inquiry auditing was in service of dependability and confirmability, including verifying that findings were consistent with the raw data and could be confirmed by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The chair of this dissertation project, Dr. Kirsten Murray, served as my primary inquiry auditor. We met for 1-2 hours per week throughout the time period from September to May to review decision-making about the research process and product. Dr. Murray reviewed raw data, situational maps, memos, journal entries, and all drafts of this research. We discussed and negotiated feedback. I generally integrated Dr. Murray's suggestions; when I rejected them, we discussed how I made these rejections based on the data. Ultimately, Dr. Murray endorsed the results of this project. I invited Dr. Murray's feedback and critique as an ongoing part of the research process. The research process and emerging theory were also reviewed by all of the other doctoral students in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Montana and they provided feedback about how the theory matched up with their own experiences both as supervisees and supervisors.

### **Gathering Rich, Thick Descriptions**

I worked toward the criterion area of transferability through generating rich, thick descriptions during the interview and analyses processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005). Participants spoke about their in-depth experiences regarding impression management. I included clarifiers in the excerpts of data that were both detailed and broad enough to provide a full picture of what was going on in their contexts. Participants made rich and detailed disclosures during interviews, which spoke to their comfort sharing these experiences during the research process. I used direct quotations to represent the research data in each iteration of analysis and the final grounded theory; this allowed for the exact words of participants to be heard by the reader and aid in the transferability process for consumers of the research.

### **Reflexivity**

Although I had planned to keep a reflective journal of my research process, this “journal” changed into an ongoing series of notes on large sheets of butcher paper that were hung on the walls of my workspace. I drew pictures and maps ongoingly for the duration of the research process. I continually assessed my own thoughts, experiences, and beliefs during the research process.

My experiences as both a supervisee and a supervisor at various points in my career were salient for me during the research progression. I often found myself resonating with participant experiences. I was explicit about my biases to the best of my ability, both to myself and at times with participants. One bias that continues to inform my conceptualization of the data is the idea that impression management is likely happening all the time, whether people are aware of it or not. One participant spoke to not engaging in very much impression management behavior; I found myself skeptical of some of his disclosures. By becoming aware of my skepticism, I was



able to journal about it and work to ask open-ended questions minimizing judgment. I also became genuinely curious about what might be different about his experiences, contexts, and/or situations that would allow for less impression management.

Another bias that I held when starting this project was that people who experience more marginalization and stereotyping in general may have different experiences related to their impression desires in supervision. I intentionally set up the study to hear voices from different identity groups. This bias was confirmed during the research process and continues to inform how these results were felt as meaningful to me. I am also remaining curious about how participant identities and intersections not represented in this study (for example, older women) would confirm, add to, or change elements of the grounded theory produced. Although the process of weighing risk versus utility seemed to be similar for all participants, people who experienced more marginalization and stereotyping in general had more at risk when it came to exposure of a potentially undesirable image of the self. I experienced some feelings of frustration and sadness during and after interviews with participants who told me about their experiences of internal shame. Other times, I was inspired and in awe of participants because of what they have overcome in their lives. I have a new perspective and respect for how vulnerable the situation of supervision can feel for some people. Experiences in supervision depended greatly on prior life experiences.

I continue to find it a sad paradox that the shame of having a deficit can sometimes make it difficult for a person to seek help and work to rectify it. I began to see through this lens when working with my own students, conceptualizing when and why people chose to seek help and make vulnerable disclosures as the outcome of weighing risk versus utility. The very act of conducting this research changed my outlook and my behavior working with my own students.

In sum, these five methods (member checking, prolonged engagement, gathering and attending to participants' rich and thick subjective descriptions, and engaging in reflexivity throughout the process) helped warrant trustworthiness of this research process. Although I worked to establish trustworthiness, certain limitations still emerged.

### **Limitations**

This research has several limitations. The main limitations relate to the variation captured in the sample, one participant dropping out of the study, and using an interviewing method to research an experience and process that may be partly unconscious and difficult to disclose.

My objective was to interview participants until saturation occurred. The committee of advisors on this project agreed that it was acceptable for me to begin with eight participants with the assumption that I would continue recruiting new participants if necessary. Saturation was defined by data being both appropriate and adequate in answering the research question. At the point of saturation, further data collection and further analysis of data do not provide new information, all categories are fully understood, the relationships between and among categories are clear. It was apparent from second-round interviews that the depth of experiences and inclusion of additional process questions continued to produce new information until the 13<sup>th</sup> (of 15) interviews. The subsequent interviews garnered information that was easily contextualized within the framework of categories and processes that were already defined. Dr. Murray and I agreed that it was not necessary to reach out to the list of potential participants for inclusion of more people in the research study, as no new information was surfacing from the last few interviews. However, there is always the potential that subsequent interviewing would produce more information. More interviews with the same group of participants may have yielded more

information. Additionally, interviews with different participants would have generated more data and nuance given the philosophy that each participant's unique variations and experiences inform the final grounded theory. Continued interviews with people from different social locations, histories, values, and beliefs would most certainly yield more variation in the data, though may not produce new organization and changes to major categories, given the saturation across all participants in this study.

My reasoning for choosing a sample that was diverse in terms of gender, age, and race was not in service of generalizability, but rather to give space for voicing plausible experiences. This was particularly evident when it came to the interaction of marginalized social identities and impression management in supervision. I would have liked to include more participants with different intersecting social identities in this study. Additionally, my aim was to include at least two participants who identified as people of color. I did not learn until the second round of interviews that both participants who identified as people of color also identified as Muslim women—intersections of race and religious identities likely played a role in their experiences.

Although the sample was heterogeneous in some ways, there were still intersections of identities that were not represented. For example, all of the participants who were over the age of 35 were also men. It would have been helpful for the theory to have included a participant who was a woman of non-traditional age. It was also very common for participants to be interning at college campus counseling centers. This sample could have been more diverse in terms of internship location and population of clients. Participants came from multiple regions throughout the United States including the Northeast, Midwest, and Northwest. No participants were located in Southern regions, leaving space to consider if there are variations in experiences in the South that were not captured within this theory.

Another limitation of this study was that Participant Eight never responded to my requests for a second-round interview. I have no information about why she chose not to participate in the second interview or member check. I continued to reach out to her each time I contacted participants. I also sent her a copy of the concept map and invited her perceptions of the data.

Procedures for data collection also held implications that produced limitations within this study. I required voluntary participants, so motivations for self-selection may have impacted the results. One participant, for example, discussed that she signed up to participate in this study because she had a challenging experience with a practicum supervisor and welcomed the opportunity to process through this out loud. I also used interviews to gather information about an experience that may at times be unconscious. Some participants talked about how they did not know that they were doing impression management in the moment, yet in hindsight they saw that it was a factor in their behavior. I found that the act of asking about impression management behavior in supervision brought this construct to participants' awareness for future supervision sessions. Some supervisees told me that they were more aware of their impression management desires and behaviors after our first interview. Using an interview process to try to get at the experience and process of impression management in supervision had the limitation of only allowing for information that was in conscious awareness for participants. Supervisees could not tell me about their experiences, thoughts, or motivations that were not in their awareness. The research question changed slightly from the experience and process of impression management in supervision to the experience and process of *conscious* impression management in supervision. A study with a different design, perhaps a methodology that included observation,

may have gathered different information about impression management behavior that was unintentional, unconscious, or impulsive.

When reviewing my memos and journal entries, I discovered many questions and thoughts about whether or not participants were engaging in impression managing behavior with me as the researcher. Because of the nature of impression management, there is no reliable way to know. This is one of the limitations of the current study; I have to honor participant's exact words and trust that they were honest about their experiences to the best of their abilities. Still, there is space to consider that participants perhaps did not disclose their complete experiences because of a variety of reasons including the vulnerable nature of the topic and/or limited self-awareness. I embraced a perspective of holding value for the participants' disclosures, while still being explicit in the research process about with whom and when I suspected impression management to be present. My primary goal is to be a representative of participants' experiences as they report them, while also acknowledging that I am a co-constructor of the results. For example, a few participants made blanket statements about their behavior, then contradicted themselves later when providing a specific example. This leaves space to consider that certain vulnerable experiences may be missing from the data and final theory.

To conclude, the limitations of this study included the variation captured in the sample, one participant dropping out of the study, and the difficulty of gathering complete data via interviewing participants about an experience that may be unconscious and/or too vulnerable to share.

### **Implications**

This study distilled the diverse disclosures of eight counselors-in-training to form a grounded theory about the experience and process of conscious impression management in

supervision. These individuals' experiences help provide valuable knowledge for counselor educators, supervisors, supervisees, and counselors-in-training.

### **Implications for Counselor Educators and Supervisors**

Perhaps one of the most eye-opening results of this study was the finding that all participants not only had specific impression desires with their supervisors, but they at times enacted impression management behavior as a means to portray a desirable image of the self. This occurred despite consequences that impacted learning and development. At times, impression management was innocuous or even beneficial, as was the case when supervisees used impression management to not speak a dissent and instead follow a supervisor's direction. Other times, impression management behavior caused supervisees to hide mistakes, not ask relevant questions, lie about what was happening with their clients, withhold where they may be struggling, and present an incongruent veneer. These results were consistent with previous research (Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010; Webb & Wheeler, 1998). If authentic, vulnerable disclosure is a goal of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009), we can look to the information gained from the eight individuals in this study to help clarify the role supervisors and counselor educators play in facilitating impression management.

Implications for counselor educators and supervisors include how to facilitate supervision in a way that creates conditions for the utility to outweigh riskiness of vulnerable disclosure.

**Supervisor self-disclosure.** Many participants in this study discussed a changing conceptualization of what competence is in the context of supervision. Over time, when psychological safety was present with supervisors, participants saw vulnerability and help-seeking as marks of competence. The experience of attuning to desirable behavior may help inform supervisor and/or counselor educators' roles in normalizing vulnerability. Supervisees in

this study discussed needing to see and hear cues from their supervisors that vulnerability is expected and a normal part of counselor development. This finding is supported by research on effective supervision (Falender & Shafranske, 2017). Supervisees in this study were adept at picking up on cues about what was expected and normal; they did this from the outset of supervision. Participants discussed a process of “dipping a toe” into vulnerability with their supervisors. They first made small, controlled disclosures and then attuned to how the supervisor responded. These moments, especially in the beginning of a supervisory relationship, may be crucial to normalizing the process of vulnerable disclosure. Normalizing vulnerability may reduce internal sensations of shame associated with exposure and support patterns of help-seeking in the supervision context.

**Supervisor initiating vulnerable discussions.** Likely because of the situational element of hierarchy in supervision, supervisees in this study often let the supervisor define what was appropriate to discuss. When supervisors did not initiate conversations that may be challenging or sensitive, supervisees did not want to rock the boat by bringing them up first. This was true for topics such as what the supervisor might do to better to serve the needs of the supervisee or discussions about race and culture. Bernard and Goodyear (2009) discuss the need for supervisors to broach sensitive topics in supervision. Multiple examples in the current study support this theme. Participant One talked about how her supervisor did not know that she identifies as Muslim. Participant Eight shared with me that her supervisor had also never broached a conversation about religion even though she wore a religious symbol of a hijab every day. The implications of stories from these two participants leaves space to consider how people who have marginalized identities may experience different kinds of impacts from supervisors

avoiding discussing cultural phenomena and refraining from soliciting supervisee feedback about supervision.

**Supervisor management of power.** Power and hierarchy are part of the supervision situation and supervisees are aware of this (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). This is true especially in the beginning of a supervisory relationship when a supervisee has not yet proven competence to a supervisor. How the supervisor handles the power dynamic was particularly important to the process of impression management. Supervisees in this study talked about appreciating a supervisor being non-reprimanding and less rigid. Likewise, participants did not appreciate it when they perceived a supervisor as being either power-hungry or using the power dynamic in order to reprimand or prove positional power. Supervisees were less likely to take risks to share vulnerabilities in supervision when they perceived their supervisors as heavy-handed or power-yielding. If supervisors hope to facilitate an environment for vulnerable disclosure in supervision, they may consider discussing the power dynamic directly and behaving in non-reprimanding and more flexible ways. Of course, this does not account for situations in which supervisees behave in unethical or gravely concerning ways; that would be a topic for another study.

**Supervisor pacing and creating space for vulnerability.** Some supervisees discussed the importance of having time with their supervisor in order to share vulnerabilities. When supervision was “all business” and did not leave space for a supervisee to talk about personal challenges, even if the supervisee felt safe enough to do so, they did not always take the risk due to the norms of pacing and timing in the supervision situation. To increase vulnerable disclosure, a supervisor might consider how they are holding space and managing time in supervision.



**Role induction for increasing awareness of impression management.** Supervisors, counselor educators, and supervisees may all benefit from having more awareness and knowledge around the topic of impression management. A connection to the utility of vulnerability and congruence in supervision was the most important factor that led to supervisees taking risks. With more knowledge and research on the experience and process of impression management in supervision, supervisors and counselor educators can help teach supervisees what to expect in supervision regarding impression management. They can also help novice counselors reflect on the utility and importance of vulnerable disclosure in supervision, connecting the idea of impression management to the consequences of enacting it.

Many of the participants in this study talked about how they had never thought of impression management before our first interview. At the time of the second interview, they reported that it was in their awareness and for some that meant they were able to make different decisions about their behavior. If the process of impression management is happening outside of conscious awareness within a supervisee, it is unlikely they can make different behavioral decisions intentionally.

Disclosures from participants in this study highlight how challenging it is to have a blind-spot exposed. Supervisees used non-disclosure at times to guard against uncontrolled disclosure. They desired to be in control over the vulnerability they presented. Supervisees chose not to bring in work that needed the most guidance from supervisors; instead, they preferred to seek feedback that was helpful, but not too vulnerable. Supervisee's desires and behavior around avoiding exposing blind-spots have implications for supervisor role induction to the supervision process, as well for how supervisors can be more sensitive when bringing up blind-spots in supervision. Supervisors may forget at times how worrisome the supervision situation can be for

supervisees, especially those who experience a great deal of internal shame. Supervisors may consider having open discussions about how supervisees would like feedback about blind-spots to be addressed and discuss the utility of bringing in the most vulnerable work. Additionally, supervisors should consider how providing useful feedback will encourage supervisees to continue to make vulnerable disclosures.

**Continued supervisor training.** When supervisees did not perceive a supervisor as competent to provide help, they were unlikely to take the risk to ask for it. This has implications on supervisor training and continued education. Supervisors may consider continued education and training, especially in the realms of multicultural competence and the centrality of supervisee and supervisor rapport for optimal supervision.

### **Implications for Supervisees and Counselors-in-Training**

While the implications of this study are important for how supervisors educate supervisees and behave in supervision, supervisees may also take the matter into their own hands to educate themselves and facilitate their own development. Following are recommendations for supervisees.

**Supervisee reflection and awareness about impression management.** During the process of conducting this study, participants taking time to reflect on desired and dreaded images in supervision helped them see how these thoughts might influence their behavior. To increase personal reflection about impression management in supervision, supervisees could participate in self-awareness activities, and/or discussions with supervisors about their impression desires. They may also benefit from the concept of universality and take risks to share their impression desires with peers, thus creating potentially safer group/triadic supervision situations. When impression management is happening without awareness, supervisees have few

opportunities to weigh the risk and utility of their actions and understand whether their behavior is serving their supervision needs.

**Addressing supervisee shame.** For some supervisees, it did not matter what the supervisor did to facilitate safety in the supervision situation—they still faced challenges exposing potentially undesirable images of the self. Another recommendation for supervisees that arose from this research is for supervisees to spend time doing personal reflection or counseling to address internal shame related to exposing a deficit. This is likely a long-term process and would need to be addressed with care.

**Connection to utility.** Supervisees may benefit from reflecting on the utility and importance of vulnerability in supervision. Counselors-in-training are often given this opportunity in regard to the importance of congruence in the counseling room. This concept could be expanded upon for supervisees to include the supervision context. They may benefit from having a personal connection to the counseling profession as a whole, the value of congruence, and the power of curiosity.

In addition, vulnerability may actually not be useful in every supervision situation (i.e. with an unresponsive supervisor, when responses to vulnerability are judgmental, etc.). There were times participants in this study made wise choices to avoid disclosing vulnerabilities. Evaluating the conditions for vulnerability in each supervision situation may help supervisees make intentional decisions about how much is safe and helpful to share.

Though not intended to be generalizable, findings from this study may be transferable for other supervisors, counselor educators, and supervisees. Recommendations include more role induction related to the concept of impression management in supervision and advice for supervisor behavior such as increased self-disclosure and normalizing of vulnerability, pacing of

supervision to allow space for vulnerability, initiating vulnerable discussions, and handling power dynamics in non-reprimanding ways. Supervisees may also learn about the concept of impression management and incorporate it into their reflective and personal growth activities during counselor development.

### **Future Research**

The goal of the current study was to create a grounded theory for the experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision. This study illuminated thought-provoking results and paves the way for a future research agenda. This research sought the perspective of supervisees in clinical supervision, leaving space for future studies to gain awareness about impression management from different vantage points and with different populations. Additionally, while a grounded theory approach was appropriate for the current research question, future research can utilize different methodologies.

**Different vantage points and populations.** As I conducted this research, I noticed that the voices of supervisors were missing. Several participants explicitly asked me if I would also be interviewing their supervisors. A study about impression management in supervision from the vantage point of supervisors would clarify more about the phenomenon. Supervisors could share about their own experiences of impression management as well as their perceptions of supervisee impression management behavior. Reviewing video recordings of supervision and coding for specific impression management behavior could help account for the limitation of the current study related to how managing impressions may be unconscious.

It is also clear from this initial research that a grounded theory may not be sufficient for all supervisees given the way impression management is complicated by factors of social identity, personality, and prior life experience. Future studies could focus on choosing a specific

identity group such as people of color, younger supervisees, specific gender identities, sexual orientation, and/or religious minorities to uncover a grounded theory for experiences and processes within groups. It would also be interesting to see how supervisor matching of social identities impacts impression management in supervision. Isolating certain variables, such as prior trauma and the presence of internal shame, may also be helpful for gathering more specific data on how the internal sense of shame influences the process of impression management.

A grounded theory on the experience and process of impression management in counseling is another rich area for future study. Future researchers could conduct a qualitative study from the perspective of clients, counselors, and/or supervisors. Future research could also focus on the counselor's experience of impression management as well as clients' experiences.

**Different research methods.** The methodology of this study was appropriate given that no other studies have explored the experience and process of impression management in supervision. With this current research to ground future studies, different methods could be used. For example, this study could inform a training for supervisors on how to account for impression management in supervision, which could then be validated by a quantitative study using a single case design or randomized controlled trial. A similar study could be conducted training supervisees. Future research could also use correlational designs to explore the relationship between impression management and a variety of constructs that emerged through this research such as internal shame, supervisor style, and distress tolerance (ego strength).

Different qualitative designs could also be used in future studies. For example, the inclusion of visual aids such as asking participants to make a collage to depict their desired and dreaded images may create opportunities for internal processing that were not present during interviews. A phenomenological design would be useful in uncovering more about the

experience of the phenomenon of impression management in supervision. Focus groups could also help with gathering information from a group of supervisees at once. These methods would provide opportunities for understanding more specific and varied impression management strategies.

Exploring the experience and process of impression management in supervision sets a foundation for numerous future directions to expand on this research agenda. Different vantage points, different populations, and different research methodologies can all contribute to a more thorough literature base on the topic of impression management in counselor training.

### **Conclusion**

I have presented a grounded theory of the experience and process of conscious impression management in supervision and evaluated its trustworthiness and limitations. I utilized member checks, prolonged engagement, inquiry auditing, generating rich, thick descriptions, and reflexivity to establish a rigorous qualitative study. Even so, there were several limitations of this research including a range of diversity that was not represented in the sample, using interviews to gather information that may have been beyond participant conscious awareness, and one participant dropping out of the study prior to the second interview. I have also presented implications and recommendations for counselor educators, supervisors, and supervisees. Among the many recommendations, I advocate for including discussions about the construct of impression management into role induction processes for counselors-in-training. The results gained from this study may be used to help train supervisors to work towards creating conditions for vulnerable disclosure in their supervision contexts. Future directions for this research agenda include examining impression management via different perspectives and populations (i.e. that of the supervisor or the supervisee's clients). Further research ought to

utilize varied methodologies in order to build a more robust research base about impression management in counselor training. In sum, this study paves the way for how supervisors, novice counselors, and counselor educators may take the phenomenon of impression management into account in supervision to support competent client care.

**APPENDIX A: University of Montana IRB Approval**

Form RA-108  
(Rev. 09/16)



**THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA-MISSOULA**  
Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
*for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research*  
APPLICATION FOR IRB REVIEW

IRB Protocol No.:  
199-18

At the University of Montana (UM), the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the institutional review body responsible for oversight of all research activities involving human subjects as outlined in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Human Research Protection and the National Institutes of Health, Inclusion of Children Policy Implementation.

**Instructions:** A separate application must be submitted for each project. IRB proposals are approved for no longer than one year and must be continued annually (unless Exempt). Faculty and students may email the completed form as a Word document to [IRB@umontana.edu](mailto:IRB@umontana.edu), or submit a hardcopy (no staples) to the IRB office in the Interdisciplinary Sciences Building, room 104. Student applications must be accompanied by email authorization by the supervising faculty member or a signed hard copy. *All fields must be completed. If an item does not apply to this project, write in: N/A.* Questions? Call the IRB office at 243-6672.

**1. Administrative Information**

Project Title: The Experience and Process of Impression Management in Clinical Supervision	
Principal Investigator: Ariel Goodman	UM Position: Doctoral Student
Department: Counselor Education	Office location: Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences, Suite 210
Work Phone: 917-621-6104	Cell Phone: 917-621-6104

**2. Human Subjects Protection Training** (All researchers, including faculty supervisors for student projects, must have completed a self-study course on protection of human research subjects within the last three years and be able to supply the "Certificate(s) of Completion" upon request. If you need to add rows for more people, use the Additional Researchers Addendum.)

All Research Team Members (list yourself first)	PI	CO-PI	Faculty Supervisor	Research Assistant	DATE COMPLETED IRB-approved Course mm/dd/yyyy
Name: Ariel Goodman Email: ariel.goodman@umontana.edu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2/3/17 ✓
Name: Kirsten Murray Email: kirsten.murray@mso.umt.edu	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12/2015 ✓
Name: Email:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name: Email:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**3. Project Funding** (If federally funded, you must submit a copy of the abstract or Statement of Work.)

Is grant application currently under review at a grant funding agency? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (If yes, cite sponsor on ICF if applicable) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		Has grant proposal received approval and funding? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (If yes, cite sponsor on ICF if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Agency	Grant No.	e-Prop #	Start Date	End Date	PI on grant

For UM-IRB Use Only

**IRB Determination:**

- Not Human Subjects Research
- Approved by Exempt Review, Category # \_\_\_\_\_ (see memo)
- Approved by Expedited Review, Category # 7 (see Note to PI)
- Full IRB Determination
  - Approved (see Note to PI)
  - Conditional Approval (see memo) - IRB Chair Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Conditions Met (see Note to PI)
  - Resubmit Proposal (see memo)
  - Disapproved (see memo)

**Note to PI:** Non-exempt studies are approved for one year only. Use any attached IRB-approved forms (signed/dated) as "masters" when preparing copies. If continuing beyond the expiration date, a continuation report must be submitted. Notify the IRB if any significant changes or unanticipated events occur. When the study is completed, a closure report must be submitted. Failure to follow these directions constitutes non-compliance with UM policy.

Risk Level: Minimal

Final Approval by IRB Chair/Manager: [Signature] Date: 10/17/2018 Expires: 10/16/2019



**APPENDIX B: IRB Amendment**



**THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA-MISSOULA**  
 Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
 for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research  
 AMENDMENT REQUEST

Please provide  
 IRB Protocol No.:  
199-18

Email this request as a Word document to [IRB@umontana.edu](mailto:IRB@umontana.edu), or provide a hardcopy to the IRB office in the Interdisciplinary Science Building, room 104. NOTE: Submission of this form from a University email account constitutes an individual's signature; students submitting electronically **must** copy their faculty supervisors.

Project Title: The Experience and Process of Impression Management and Supervision	
Principal Investigator: Ariel Goodman	Title: Doctoral Candidate
Signature: AHG	
Email address: ariel.goodman@umontana.edu	
Work Phone: 917-621-6104	Cell Phone: 917-621-6104
Department: Counselor Education	Office location: EDU 210
Faculty Supervisor (if student project): Kirsten Murray	
Department: Counselor Education	Work Phone: 406-243-2650
Signature: KWM	Email: Kirsten.murray@mso.umt.edu

Detail the proposed amendment (protocol, recruitment, confidentiality plan) below and attach any consent/assent/permission forms for IRB-approval (if possible, use Office's "track changes" feature in your attachments):

Participants will be recruited via the following additional methods:

- Reaching out directly to potential participants that do not rely on a faculty/supervisor conduit. For example, counseling interns whose emails are posted publicly on websites (please see attached email)
- Traveling to other universities to meet briefly with students to recruit in person
- Requesting that faculty contacts extend individual and personalized invitations to interns

This Section for UM-IRB Use Only

**IRB Determination:**

- Approved by Exempt Review, category # \_\_\_\_\_
  - Approved by Expedited Review, category # 7
  - Approved by Administrative Review
  - Full IRB Determination
    - Approved
    - Conditional Approval (*see email*) - IRB Chair Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Conditions Met
    - Resubmit Proposal (*see email*)
    - Disapproved (*see email*)
- Risk level: Minimal

Final Approval by IRB Chair: Paul A. Belsky Date: 4/1/2018 Expires: 10/16/2019

## APPENDIX C: Participant Information and Informed Consent

**Study Title:** The Experience and Process of Impression Management in Clinical Supervision

**Investigator:**

Ariel Goodman, M.A.  
 Department of Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Montana  
 Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences building  
 Missoula, Montana  
 917- 621-6104  
[ariel.goodman@umontana.edu](mailto:ariel.goodman@umontana.edu)

Faculty supervisor: Kirsten Murray, Ph.D.  
 Department of Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Montana  
 Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences building  
 Missoula, Montana  
 406-243-2650  
[kirsten.murray@mso.umt.edu](mailto:kirsten.murray@mso.umt.edu)

**Inclusion Criteria:**

To be eligible to be part of this study, you must be graduate-level counseling student enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training graduate program. Participants must currently see clients as part of an internship during the 2018-19 academic year. Participants must be in a clinical mental health counseling track in their program.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to explore the experience and process of impression management in clinical supervision for counselor education graduate students. This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a doctoral dissertation and results may be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals. The investigator of this study is under the assumption that impression management may be a common experience for counselor education interns in supervision situations and that this may impact the experience of supervision. There may be implications for future research on how to address impression management to influence supervision and potentially improve client care.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked a series of interview questions about your experiences in supervision. You will be interviewed either in person or via Skype. Interviews will take place in a confidential space, at a university setting. If conducted over Skype, the researcher will be located in a confidential setting. You will be asked permission to record this interview for the purposes of transcription. Recordings will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected hard-drive. Identifying information in the transcription will be altered to protect your confidentiality. Interview recordings will be destroyed once data analysis is complete. The interview session will last approximately one hour.

**Risks/Discomforts:**

Mild discomfort may result from discussing your experiences in clinical supervision. You have the right to stop at any time with no negative consequences.

The University of Montana IRB	
Expiration Date	10/16/2019
Date Approved	10/13/2018
Chair/Admin	<i>[Signature]</i>

**Benefits:**

Your participation in this study may help inform directions that supervisors and supervisees may explore related to impression management and clinical supervision. However, there is no promise that you will receive any benefit from taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

Your records will be kept confidential and will not be released without your consent except as required by law. All efforts will be made to keep your identity private. The data will be stored on a password protected hard drive. Your signed consent form will be stored in a locked cabinet separate from the data. Identifying information in the transcription will be altered to protect your confidentiality. All interview recordings will be destroyed following the completion of data analysis.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:**

Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions about the research now or at any point during study, please feel free to contact Ariel Goodman at (917) 621-6104 or [ariel.goodman@umontana.edu](mailto:ariel.goodman@umontana.edu). Kirsten Murray, Ph.D., the supervising professor of counselor education, can be contacted at (406) 243-2650 or [kirsten.murray@mso.umt.edu](mailto:kirsten.murray@mso.umt.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the UM Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (406) 243-6672.

**Statement of Your Consent:**

I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by a member of the research team. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Statement of Consent to be Recorded:**

I understand that the interview will be audio and/or video recorded. I consent to being audio/video recorded. I understand that recordings will be destroyed following data analysis, and that no identifying information will be included in the transcription.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The University of Montana IRB	
Expiration Date	10/16/2019
Date Approved	10/17/2018
Chair/Admin	<i>[Signature]</i>

**APPENDIX D: Table 1**

## Description of Participants

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Racial Identity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Internship placement</b>	<b>Region in United States</b>
1	29	Black	Female	Community agency serving families	Northeast
2	30	White	Female	College campus counseling center	Midwest
3	28	White	Female	1. Clinic associated with a university 2. College campus counseling center	Northwest
4	42	White	Male	1. Clinic in community 2. College campus counseling center	Northwest
5	32	White	Female	College campus counseling center	Northeast
6	24	White	Male	Healthcare agency	Northwest
7	43	White	Male	Clinic associated with a university	Northwest
8	24	Black	Female	College campus counseling center	Midwest

APPENDIX E: Figure 1

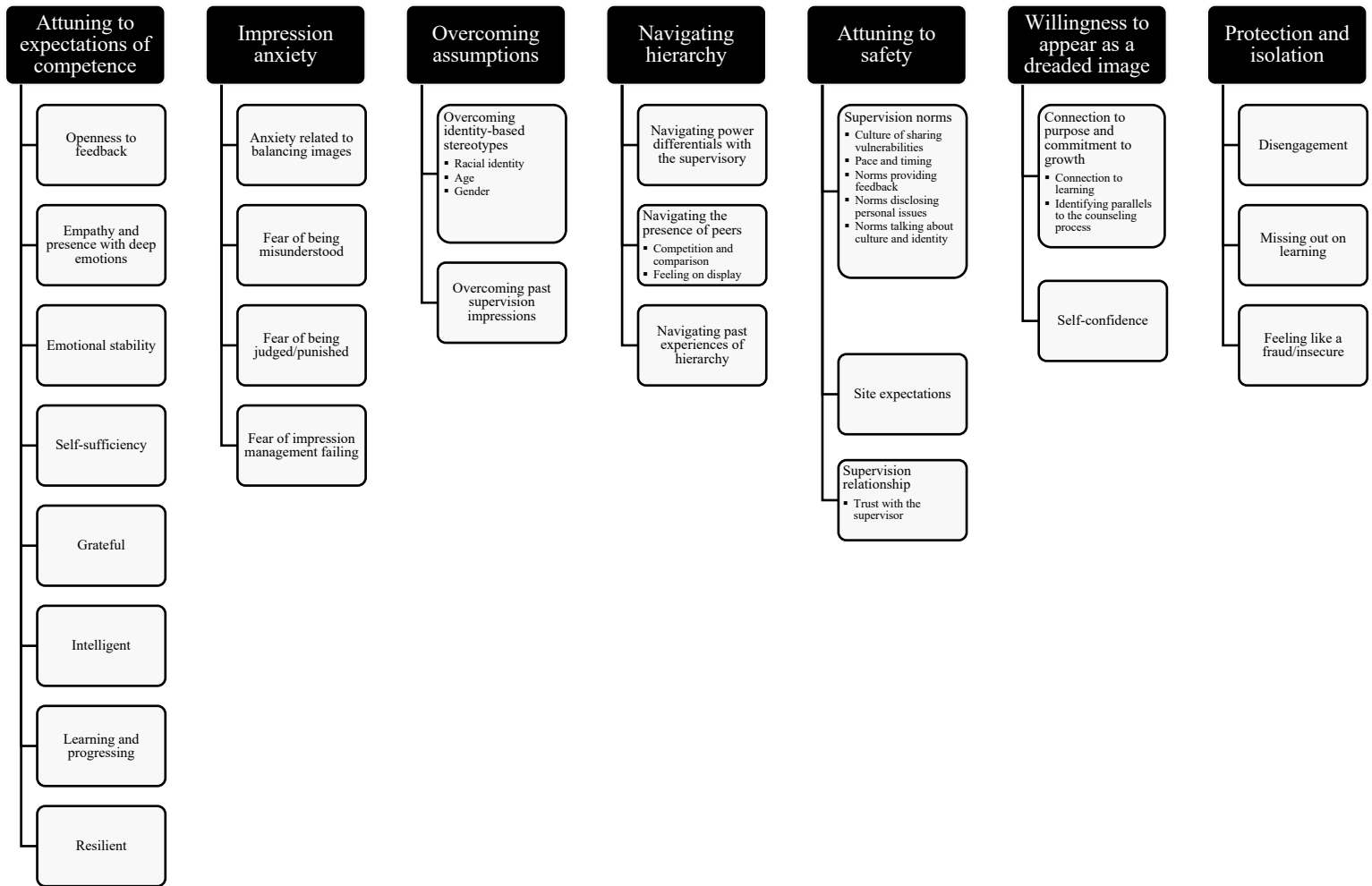


Figure 1: Concept map of experiences of impression management following first-round analysis

APPENDIX F: Figure 2

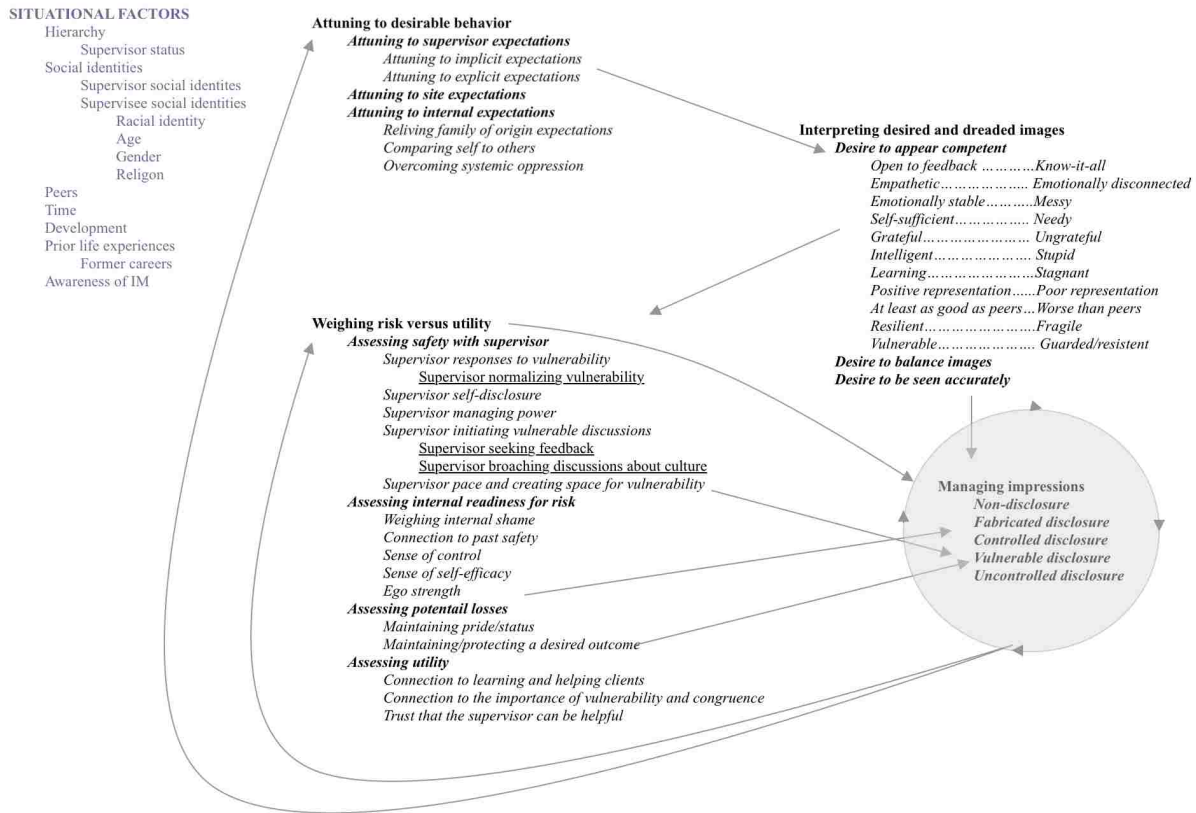


Figure 2: Conceptual map following second-round analysis

APPENDIX G: Figure 3

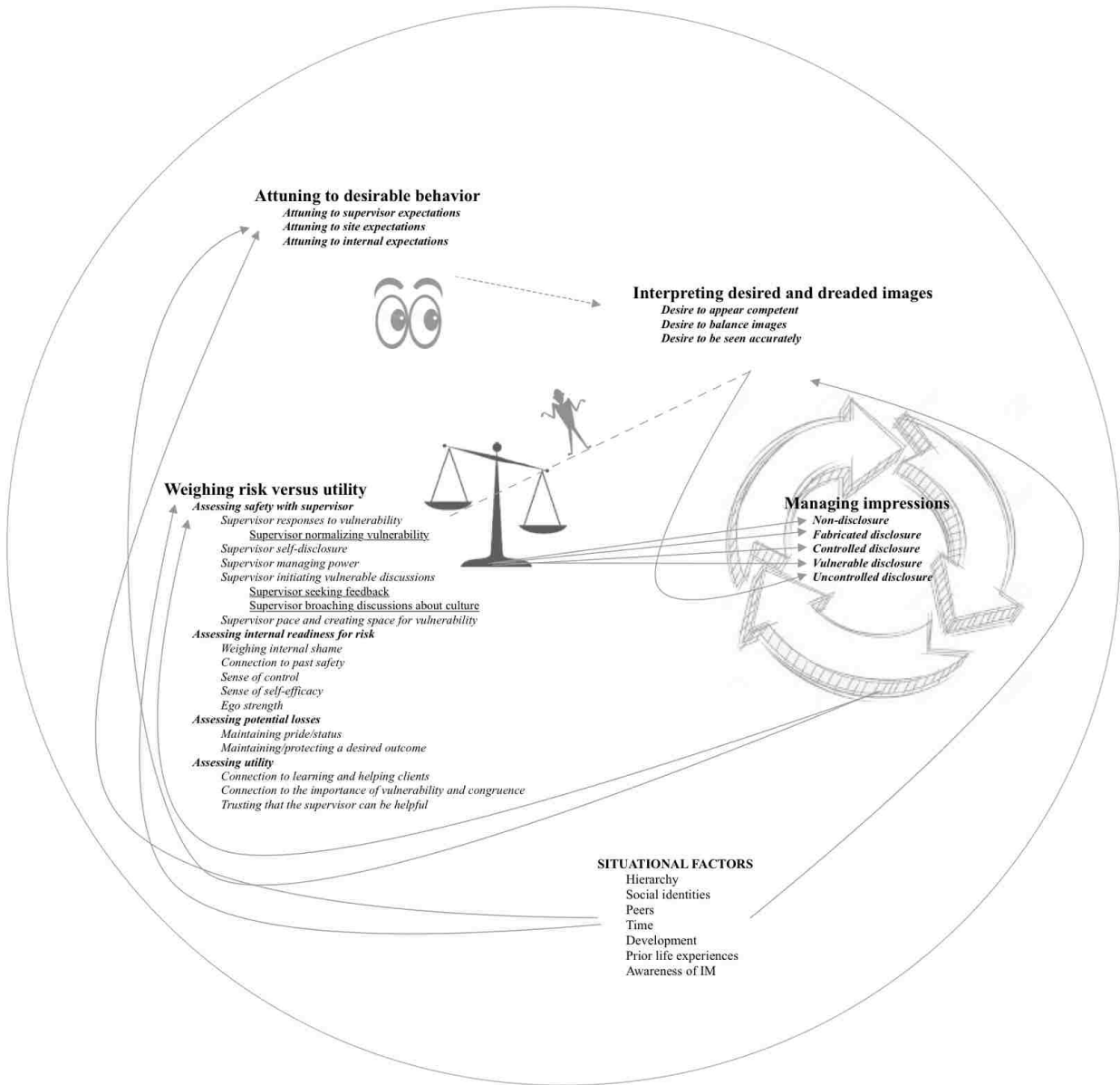


Figure 3: Conceptual map of the experience and process of impression management used for member checks

APPENDIX H: Figure 4

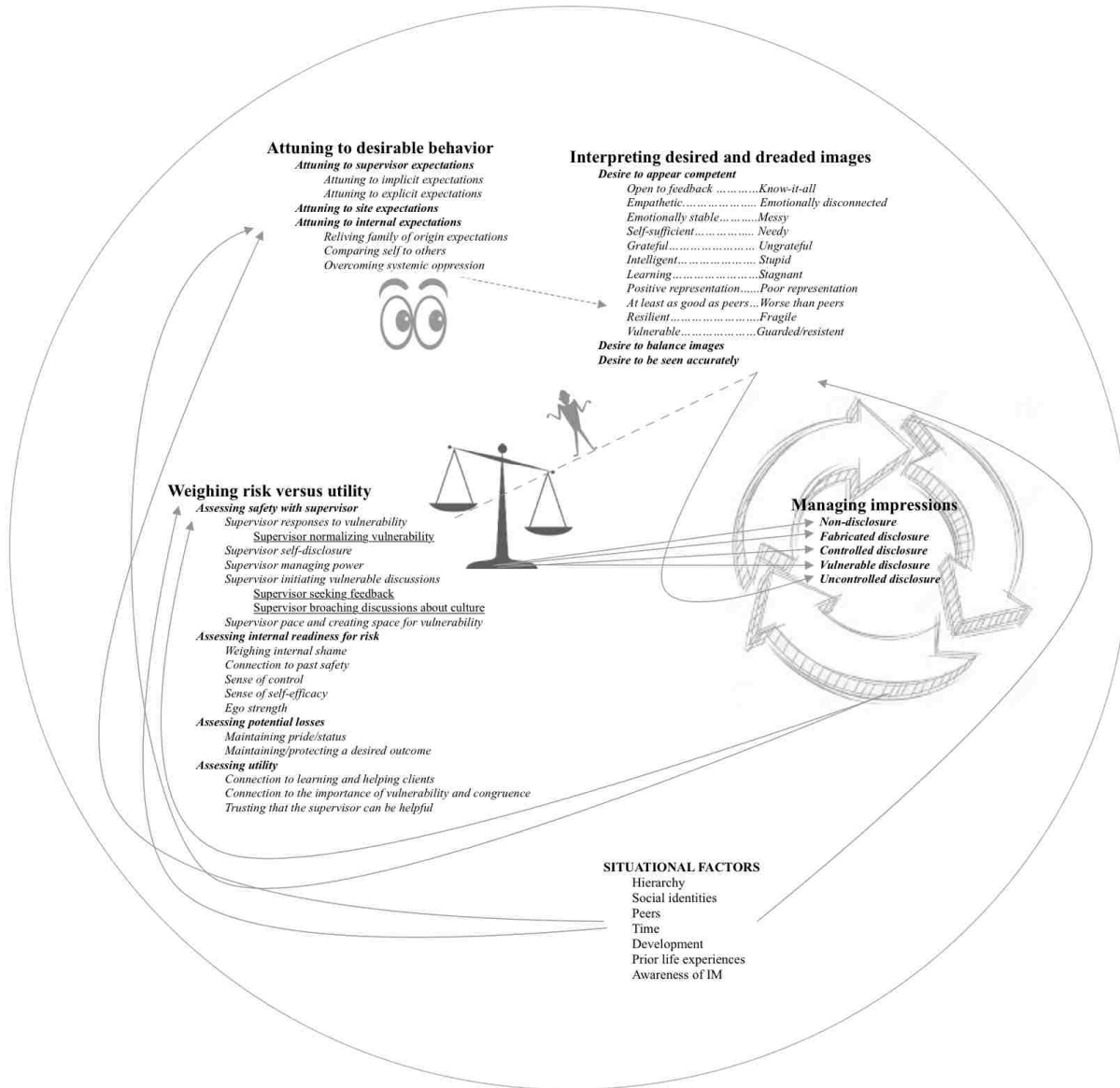


Figure 4: Final concept map of the experience and process of impression management in supervision



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