STUDENTS AND FACULTY MEMBERS IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY PROGRAMS: NAVIGATING SUCCESSFUL NON-SEXUAL DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

By

Jennifer Lambert-Shute

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Fred Piercy, Ph.D., Chair

Scott Johnson, Ph.D.

Lenore McWey, Ph.D.

Stephanie Walsh, Ph.D.

Gary Skaggs, Ph.D.

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Fred Piercy, Committee Chair

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ABSTRACT

Dual relationships in the family therapy field are currently under debate. Within this debate extreme viewpoints and opinions, on what is the best way to navigate dual relationships, are being voiced. These views range from avoiding non-sexual dual relationships at all costs to glorifying the possibilities of such a relationship. To obtain a snap shot of faculty and student experiences a web survey was sent to fifteen masters and ten doctoral COAMFTE-accredited programs. Participants were 76 students and 30 faculty members, a total of 106 respondents. The web survey revealed that the majority of respondents had positive and successful dual relationships. Faculty and students indicated several strategies to keep relationships positive and to prevent unsuccessful dual relationships. These strategies included: boundaries, respect, communication, and awareness. Additionally, the web survey revealed that students and faculty did have training on dual relationships but the majority was limited to a general exposure in an ethics class. Furthermore, the faculty and students seemed to reflect diverse opinions on how to handle dual relationships, which is also present in the MFT field. The participants’ perception of how dual relationships are viewed in the MFT field ranged from avoiding dual relationships to extolling the benefits of being in a dual relationship. To further explore how to create a
successful dual relationship between faculty and students, in-depth telephone interviews with a sub-sample from the web survey were conducted. Five dyads, consisting of faculty and their respective students, were used. These interviews explored contextual issues related to positive non-sexual relationships between faculty and student dyads. An overarching theme revealed in the interviews was the amount of activity present for both students and faculty to create the successful dual relationships. Additionally, two major themes emerged, characteristics of success and strategies for success. Characteristics which seemed to facilitate the relationship were: student characteristics, faculty characteristics, nurturance, trust, awareness, being a person, decreased hierarchy/equality, and mutual respect. Strategies revealed in these relationships included: checking, open communication, viable boundaries, navigating boundaries, assessing risk, decreasing hierarchy, and advice. Also, implications for family therapy programs are presented, as are implications for future research.
Dedicated to my Grandfather and Grandmother, Ian and Gabriel MacHattie
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Students and Faculty Members in Marriage and Family Therapy Programs: Navigating Successful Non-Sexual Dual Relationships

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A graduate student is at a party enjoying a glass of wine with one of her professors and the department head.

A graduate student and a professor have a lot in common and both enjoy arguing about philosophical debates. Many times they go out to lunch and sit around talking like old friends. Then they go to class where he is the teacher and the student is the pupil.

A faculty member who is a runner suggests that a student, also a runner, join him for jogs over the lunch hour.

Background of the Problem

Some would say these situations are unethical dual relationships. Others would find them the humanizing parts of the graduate education experience. What makes a professor-student relationship work and stay healthy? This question is the focus of the present study.

Dual relationships are an issue for fields/professionals such as marriage and family therapy, psychology, counseling, social work, education, business, and medicine. In fact, I cannot think of one place where dual relationships do not come into play. Russell and Peterson (1998) state, “a dual relationship occurs whenever we enact two or more roles with the same person” (p. 458). Dual relationships are a part of life in some professions. How many people have gone to a party and their boss has been present? Who has dated or married someone that worked at the same place of business? How many couples are also business partners? These relationships all constitute dual relationships.

Yet in the field of therapy, counseling, or psychology authors examine and debate the ethics of dual relationships. Why? Plaut (1997) suggests that the client therapist relationship
involves the necessity of trust to create an environment which allows the client to feel safe enough to reveal intimate details of her or his life. For the relationship to be trustful, boundaries between the therapist and client are essential (Herlihy & Corey, 1997).

Pope and Vasquez (1991) voice several concerns involving dual relationships between therapists and clients which have the potential to harm: (a) dual relationships tend to impair the counselors judgment, (b) conflicts of interest, (c) exploitation because the counselor holds a more powerful position than the client, and (d) boundaries becoming blurred and distorting the professional nature of the therapeutic relationship. Because of these reasons, mental health and medical professionals agree that dual relationships can be problematic if not taken seriously (Gladding, Huber, Remley, & Phant, 2001).

Sexual and non-sexual dual relationships exist (Walden, 2001; Pope & Vetter, 1999). Although the helping fields have different theoretical and sometimes philosophical differences, there is agreement regarding sexual dual relationships. Sexual dual relationships are harmful to clients and sexual intimacy with clients is prohibited in the code of ethics for psychologists, counselors, and therapists (Bersoff, 1999; Brock, 1998; Guthmann & Sandberg, 2002; Herlihy & Corey, 1997).

However, the issue of non-sexual dual relationships is still controversial in the field of psychotherapy. Agreement seems to be difficult due to the deficiency of evidence on how a client might experience benefit or harm from a non-sexual dual relationship (Pope & Vasquez, 1998). With no clear consensus for the rules concerning non-sexual relationships, the field of family therapy has split on how to practice when dual relationships arise.

One side of the split supports prohibiting all dual relationships (Borys, 1992, 1994; Cornell, 1994; Craig, 1991; Kagle & Giebelhausen, 1994; Pope, 1991; Pope, Vasquez, 1998).
The other side acknowledges that some dual relationships can be beneficial (Catalano, 1997; Lazarus, 1994; Tomm, 1991). This gap persists due to the limited empirical information regarding non-sexual dual relationships, especially on how these relationships may lead to harming the client. Furthermore, this debate might not be helpful for family therapists, according to Storm, Peterson, and Tomm (1997) since “both positions may be naïve because all multiple relationships have the possibility for harming and enhancing” (p. 254).

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapist (AAMFT) code of ethics regarding dual relationships states:

1.2 Marriage and family therapists are aware of their influential position with respect to clients, and they avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. Therapists, therefore, make every effort to avoid dual relationships with clients that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. When a dual relationship cannot be avoided, therapists take appropriate professional precautions to ensure judgment is not impaired and no exploitation occurs. Examples of such dual relationships include, but are not limited to, business or close personal relationships with clients. Sexual intimacy with clients is prohibited. Sexual intimacy with former clients for two years following the termination of therapy is prohibited. (AAMFT, 1998)

The ethical code 1.2 seems to provide a clear and reasonable solution to the problems that may arise for a therapist. Yet, a survey conducted in 1999, by Neukrug, Miliken, and Walden (2001) found that 1,018 complaints were filed against counselors across the United States and 24% (246) involved inappropriate dual relationships. Additionally, Pope and Vetter (1999) surveyed APA members and found that the second most frequently described ethical incident was dual relationships (17%). Consequently, just having an ethical code is not enough to assure that
individuals will navigate the complex issue of dual relationships. An example of a non-sexual dual relationship which may produce an ethical dilemma can be seen in the following vignette:

At a small dinner party held by close friends you discover that John & Jessica, clients of yours who you have been seeing for three months for marital therapy, are also friends to the hostess and host who they have just met through a school function. Everyone seems to get along great and have a good time so one of the couples suggests that every two weeks one couple in the group could host a dinner party at their house for the group. Instantly the host and hostess yell out “what a great idea” and the next thing you know your spouse is agreeing to host the next dinner party.

The ethical code does not seem to provide the necessary information or guidance to help the therapist navigate such a situation. Is there clearly a right or wrong way for the therapist to handle this situation? Would the concern be more or less if the therapist was seeing the couple for sex therapy, infidelity, marriage enrichment or parenting concerns? Ethical codes provide guidance and consistency to help inform practice but they can also be either vague or overly rigid, and thus limit therapist effectiveness (Lazarus, 1999).

Catalano, (1997) Gartrell, (1992), Hill & Mamalakis, (2001) and Stockman (1990) also agree that there are settings which make it difficult to apply, interpret, and adapt the AAMFT ethical code 1.2 to their unique situations. These settings include religious communities, lesbian communities, and rural settings. Such communities are small and hard to avoid if the therapist is also a member of that community. These therapists, along with others, believe that the code of ethics is unable to provide the guidance needed to deal with these non-sexual dual relationships.

Thus, an emerging thought in the field of psychotherapy is the idea that it is impossible for most therapists to avoid all situations in which conflicting interests or multiple roles might
exist (Catalano, 1997; Hedges, 1993; Pearson & Piazza, 1997; Ryder & Hepworth, 1990; Tomm, 1993). In some situations, even a therapist with the utmost ethical values may place their client in a context of multiple roles or conflicting interests. The complex nature of society and relationships creates impossibility for directives on professional conduct that encompasses every potential situation regarding dual relationships (Clarkson, 1994). Furthermore, the idea that ethical codes can rectify these dual relationships is building a naive and utopian ideal which leaves trainees and experts with little awareness, attitudes, or skills needed to deal with these situations when they arise (Brownlee, 1996; Catalano, 1997; Clarkson, 1994; Corey & Herlihy, 1997; Hall, 1996; Hill & Mamalakis, 2001). The question is not “if” these situations will arise, but “when”. This may be especially true for therapists who are also educators.

Unavoidable dual relationships present themselves during the MFT training process. These dual relationships which exist between therapists who are educators and students have been investigated primarily in the supervision literature and have mostly concerned supervisors taking on the role of therapist with supervisees (Glaser & Thrope, 1986; Newman, 1981; Tomm, 1991). However, other issues, which are cause for concern, arise between students and faculty. Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth (1997) highlight the normalcy of faculty and students in graduate programs coming together in professional and social settings such as in colloquia, receptions and special events. At these events opportunities, for both student and faculty, exist to exchange scholarly ideas, discuss professional topics, and for faculty to socialize their students into the profession. However, these events can also be a cause for concern. Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, (1997) state “when informal socializing is part of these activities, questions may arise about appropriate levels of personal disclosure between faculty and students” (p.184). These issues, plus issues such as mentoring, friendship and social relationships as well as
monetary interactions are often overlooked in the dual relationship literature. One concern is the vulnerable position of students due to the hierarchical nature of the faculty–student relationship, which may undermine truly equal consent (Bowman, Hatley, & Bowman, 1995). This is especially true when the faculty involved in the dual relationship has evaluative power (Holmes, Rupert, Ross, & Shapera, 1999). Another dual relationship concern between students and faculty is the loss of objectivity. That is, faculty may find it difficult to maintain fairness and act in the best interest of all students (Homes, Rupert, Ross, & Shapera, 1999). These issues are reflected in the AAMFT ethical principal 4: Responsibility to Students, Employees, and Supervisees. Specifically, 4.1 states:

Marriage and family therapists are aware of their influential position with respect to students, employees, and, supervisees and they avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. Therapists, therefore, make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. When a dual relationship cannot be avoided, therapists take appropriate professional precautions to ensure judgment is not impaired and no exploitation occurs. Examples of such dual relationships include, but are not limited to, business or close personal relationships with students, employees, or supervisees. Provision of therapy to students, employees, or supervisees is prohibited. Sexual intimacy with students or supervisees is prohibited (AAMFT, 1998).

As with all ethical codes, these are just guidelines. The code does not indicate how to “avoid non-prohibited dual relationships” or what it means to “take appropriate professional precautions to ensure judgment is not impaired or exploitation occurs.” (Plaut, 1997, p. 79) The field has
many ideas how to interpret these statements and what type of action is appropriate or not appropriate.

As with dual relationships between clients and therapists, the same arguments exist in the faculty-student relationship. These range from avoiding dual relationships at all costs to the overwhelming benefits of dual relationships. Kolbert, Mortgan & Brendel, (2002) find that there are differences between faculty-student relationships and therapist-client relationships. The relationships between faculty and students do not usually include therapeutic goals, financial exchange between parties, or personal disclosure. Yet, the principal similarity between these types of relationships is the inherent power differential.

Overlapping relationships between faculty and students may be unavoidable (Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997). For example, clinical faculty who may also be teachers of supervisees’ are frequently called upon to also provide advisement, supervise research, and other work outside the classroom (Homes, Rupert, Ross, & Shapera, 1999). Faculty are also expected to be mentors of their students. A mentor’s role has been described by Merriam (1983) as a friend, a guide, a counselor, and above all, a teacher. Thus, a mentor’s role may be to provide emotional support, offer advice about personal matters, and interact with students in more informal settings (Homes, Rupert, Ross, & Shapera, 1999). This type of professional relationship is permissible and even desirable (Todd & Storm, 1997). Other authors raise caution regarding any dual relationships as they are concerned that once one starts blurring the lines between roles the chance of harm occurring increases (Gladding, 2001). Both arguments have some validity. Most important, I believe, is how to negotiate these relationships in an ethical manner.

Mamalakis (2000) states that the debate of whether non-sexual dual relationships are right or wrong has led to a breakdown in the field concerning how to handle these situations.
Instead of focusing on who is right, we should be figuring out how to best deal with these situations when they arise. Models of how to negotiate dual relationships have been developed to help guide one thorough these complex issues. For example, Gladding (2001) developed a map which helped to facilitate one in making ethical decisions (Rest, 1984; Woody, 1990), for dual relationships in general (Gottlieb, 1993; Kitchner, 1988), for therapist and client dual relationships (Hill & Mamalkis, 2001; Pritchett & Fall, 2001; Williams, 2002), and for faculty and student relationships (Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997; Russell & Peterson, 1998). The models are useful and will be described in more detail in the literature review. However, most models are theoretical and have not been empirically tested. Also, the models seem to focus on what not to do instead of what one can be done to achieve a successful relationship in which the members have dual roles.

Rational

In learning about, faculty/student relationships, we may prevent unethical violations in the future. As a trainee, one learns what is appropriate and healthy from how faculty model and teach, just like children learn from their parents. Thus, if unhealthy relationships develop faculty and students, these same relationships may continue when the student later becomes the teacher (Slimp & Burian, 1994). My hope is that with a better understanding of non-sexual dual relationships, students will have access to information on identifying and dealing with these relationships in a healthy manner.

Non-sexual dual relationships are controversial and no clear, agreed upon method exist on how to best manage these relationships. The lack of knowledge leaves one to struggle, without guidance, to identify when they cross the line between appropriate and inappropriate dual relationships. Without guidelines, an appropriate non-sexual relationship can become
blurred. Once the roles have become unclear, navigating through to a positive relationship is difficult if not impossible for both members. Eventually both the faculty member and student may find themselves in a sexual relationship. Minor erosions of appropriate boundaries may lead to further slippage (Strasburger, Jorgenson, & Sutherland, 1992). These types of relationships are known for the harm they can cause, and are considered unethical and inappropriate (Bersoff, 1999; Brock, 1998; Guthmann & Sandberg, 2002; Herlihy & Corey, 1997). Yet, these still are one of the highest reported ethical violations (Neukrug, Miliken, & Walden, 2001). Thus, it is essential to provide faculty and students with knowledge on what a healthy dual relationship can and should be and how to navigate dual relationships. These skills will be imperative in their own clinical work with clients, trainees, and with other therapists as they negotiate the complexities of these future relationships.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover the strategies which have been used by faculty and students in COAMFTE accredited marriage and family therapy doctoral and masters programs who have had successful non-sexual dual relationships. If I can identify these strategies, perhaps in the future they can be taught to trainees and faculty, so that each group can make informed decisions and negotiate these relationships more effectively.

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of a non-sexual dual relationship that have been successful?
2. What types of strategies do students use to maintain successful non-sexual dual relationships with faculty?
3. What types of strategies do faculty members use to maintain successful non-sexual dual relationships with students?
4. What are the characteristics of a non-sexual dual relationship that have been unsuccessful?
5. How did participants side step some of the potential negative outcomes that some experts believe come from negotiating faculty–student non-sexual dual relationships?

Theoretical Framework

My fundamental goal is to understand the complexity of dual relationships in the context of academic family therapy so we may learn better tools to achieve healthy and beneficial MFT faculty and student relationships. To understand dual relationships one must look at the whole system, not just the individual parts. Therefore, the use of systems theory will play an integral role in studying this phenomenon. Systems theory provides an overarching framework to study the whole system which allows one to understand and observe the interaction between the parts of a system and how each of these parts contributes to the system (Bertalanffy, 1968). The use of systems theory in this study will guide and facilitate an understanding of how each individual within the dual relationship plays a role in the maintenance and health of the relationship.

Another major tenet in systems theory is the idea of circular causality. Circular causality is the idea that people and events exist in the context of mutual interaction and mutual influence (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). To understand dual relationships one must examine individuals in their relationship and how each interacts with and influences the other. Systems theory has undergone many changes through the years. One transformation was from a mechanistic view of people to an ecological perspective (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Leading this change was Bertalanffy (1968) who thought that a mechanistic view lead to “valuelessness”, a concern later voiced by feminists (Goodrich, 1991; Luepritz, 1988).

Feminist Critique

A feminist critique of systems theory includes a concern regarding the concept of recursive sequences and circular causality. These concepts derive from cybernetics and are based
on feedback loops in machines (Keeney, 1983). The idea is that control in a system is impossible because all elements are continually influencing one another in repetitious feedback loops. Thus, if all parts of a human system are equally involved in problem generation and maintenance, no one part is to blame (Goldner, 1985). While an innovative idea, this concept also can mask power and the consequences of power by endorsing the idea that responsibility for any given interactional sequence is evenly distributed over the participants. This concept can be illustrated when a husband physically abuses his wife. If one considers all behavior as connected and mutually influential, one could say that the wife is equally responsible for her husband beating her. So, says Golder (1985), “blame the victim and rationalize the status quo, in essence stating that the wife provoked or consented to her own abuse” (p.33). Acknowledging the concern of the feminist critique of systems theory the author will be responsive to the inherent power differential which exists between faculty and students by adding a feminist lens when investigating and analyzing the phenomenon of dual relationships.

Feminism

Feminism extends the theoretical framework to highlight and investigate the role of power in dual relationships. While feminism has many forms, most share the goal of raising the consciousness of oppression and strive to understand how gender, class, race, and power influence society (Avis, 1987; Hare-Mustin, 1978). Dual relationships between faculty and students have the potential and ability for the misuse of power due to the hierarchal nature of the relationship (Russell & Peterson, 1998). Feminism provides a way to understand the subtle influences of power in relationships.

Power is a force that has been exerted through domination and exploitation (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000). Foucault (1979) points out that power is located “everywhere”, in all aspects
of the public and private domain. In trying to break the bonds of oppression, feminists have endeavor to disentangle the concept of power (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000). Starhawk (1982) has stated that there are two types of power, “power over” as well as “power to”. “Power to” encapsulates the idea of empowerment. Empowerment is supporting and facilitating one through the use of sharing power or using ones power to facilitate another’s growth (Jordan, 1993). Dual relationships can provide students with personal and professional growth that may be lost if dual relationships are prohibited. Additionally, women who are the majority of students in MFT graduate programs, learn and develop through relationships and being connected with their environment (Jordan, et al., 1991; Jordan, 1993). Also, a study by Prouty (2002) revealed relationship as one of the major components in feminist supervision.

One way faculty might empower students is through the use of collaboration, mentoring, and by providing socialization into ones professional field. Hence, power itself does not have to be harmful. Rather, it may be the way relationships are socially constructed or the way power is used by the one in the hierarchal position, which causes power to become dangerous.

Those who have investigated the role power plays in relationships have solely focused on its negative aspects. Feminists have critiqued abuses of public power in economic exploitation (Eisenstein, 1979), colonialism (Mohanty, 1984), and private power in rape (Brownmiller, 1975). While feminists have advanced the understanding of “power over”, few have sought to investigate “power to” (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000). No empirical research has been conducted on how “power to” or empowerment has influenced dual relationships. Scholars, Bader, (1994); Bogard, (1992); Hedges, (1993); Ryder & Hepworth, (1990); and Tomm, (1991) have discussed that a benefit of dual relationships is the decrease in the power differential. However, I wonder if empowerment or “power to” may also play a role in successful dual relationships. To investigate
and acknowledge the importance of power in these relationships, a feminist framework will guide the researcher in understanding how power can be negotiated between faculty and students in dual relationships that can lead to successful interactions.

Postmodern Feminism

To further understand the phenomenon of dual relationships, postmodern feminism will be included as a theoretical framework. Postmodernism is a shift from modernist thinking once prevalent in the beginning of the twentieth century (Gergen, 1991). Modern thinking suggested that knowledge is objective and independent of intellect and emotions. Thus, it is seen as observed, verified, and universal (Anderson, 1997). Postmodern feminists have a commitment to plurality of possible truths (Allen & Baber, 1992). Allen and Baber (1992) state that “feminist postmodernist[s] reject the notion of one privileged standpoint.” (p. 4). This movement challenges and exposes existing beliefs and concepts which are accepted as natural or absolute (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Scott, 1990). Postmodernism involves the deconstruction of what one believes to be true to make way for multiple realities. Consequently, once accepted without question, truth, knowledge, power, and gender relations are now questioned and analyzed (Bordo, 1994; Flax, 1987; Tong, 1989).

Currently, many are of the opinion that dual relationships are harmful and should be avoided at all costs. Yet, I believe that this is only one perspective. Unfortunately, the idea that dual relationships only cause harm has been presented and accepted as the truth. The framework of postmodern feminism provides a lens to question and deconstruct, both positively and negatively, dual relationships between faculty and students. While the researcher does not deny that power can cause harm she does deny that it is the dual relationship that leads to exploitation. This theoretical orientation also provides a framework to allow the researcher to be aware and
sensitive to the nature of power and how this can limit equal participation in the creation of successful or unsuccessful dual relationships between people in which one inherently has less power. While also being open to how these relationships may empower professional growth and development.

Postmodernism is also “constructive” in that it “perceives knowledge, truth, power, and gender relations as created through the process of interaction with others” (Allen & Baber, 1992, p. 13). The meaning attributed to the relationship is co-constructed by the individuals within relationships. Postmodernism involves understanding of broad knowledge and emphasizing the creation of knowledge (Doherty, 1999). Postmodern thinking further focuses on narratives and texts (Lax, 1992). Social constructionists view concepts and ideas as being generated through language and interpretations about the world evolved from conversation (Hoffman, 1992). Postmodernism allows for multiple meanings and the idea of individuals co-constructing a relationship through their use of language.

A theoretical framework which includes systems, postmodernism and feminism provides a guide to understand the complex nature of non-sexual dual relationships. Dual relationships exist in relationship with others in which there are inherent power differentials. Thus, systems theory provides one lens in which to understand how interactions between individuals within a relationship work together to create patterns of either positive or negative interactions. The postmodern feminist framework helps to keep the researcher aware that they are multiple perspectives within these relationships that are created through the use of language and behaviors. While this framework emphasizes the value of each individual perspective within the relationship one also needs to be aware of the context in which these relationships exist. The postmodern feminist lens allows the researcher to hold both of these considerations
simultaneously and with the addition of a systems perspective to provide an understanding of the relationship systemically.

Definition of Terms

The term “dual relationship” has many connotations. Mamalakis’s (2000) study indicated that the term had a negative image. This can be attributed to several authors who have used the term to indicate an inappropriate relationship (Craig, 1991; Kagel & Giegelhausen, 1994). Another reason may be that most studies on dual relationships have looked at the sexualized relationships between clients and therapists (Glaser & Thrope, 1986; Pope, 1989; Pope, Keith-Spiegel, & Tabachnick, 1986; Pope, Levenson, & Schover, 1979; Robinson & Reid, 1985), and the negative impact of these relationships. Consequently, many professionals in the field of family therapy automatically assume unethical behavior upon hearing or seeing the term dual relationship. The assumption is that one person in the relationship has overstepped the boundaries of the AAMFT code of ethics. According to Russell and Peterson (1998), this “knee jerk reaction …contributes to a level of paranoia among professionals” (p. 168).

A dual relationship occurs when a therapist has more than one professional relationship or both a professional and a personal relationship with a client, student, supervisee, or employee (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1993; Herlihy & Corey, 1997; Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985). A non-sexual dual relationship in this study is defined as a faculty member who is in a non-sexual professional relationship, has more than one professional relationship, or both a professional and a personal relationships with a student and/or supervisee. To eliminate the assumptions of wrong-doing connected to dual relationship I will only be using the term dual relationships to mean non-sexual dual relationships in this paper unless otherwise specified.
To define terms such as, success, benefit, and negative aspects of dual relationships, I will rely on the research participants to better understand the ways in which these terms more clearly describe their experiences. Relying on the participants to define the terms is in accordance with the theoretical framework for this study and my personal beliefs as a feminist researcher and scholar. In this study the word “success”, healthy, appropriate, and effective are all used interchangeably to indicate “successful”.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a longstanding agreement in the mental health community that potential risks occur when dual relationships exist between client and therapist (Bader, 1994; Bograd, 1992; Geyer, 1994; Kitchner, 1988; Koocher & Keith-Speigel, 1998; Lukens, 1997; Pope & Vasquez, 1998; Sonne, 1994), between supervisor and supervisee (Russell & Peterson, 1998; Storm, Peterson, & Tomm, 1997), and between student and faculty (Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Herlihy & Corey, 1997; Kolbert, Morgan, & Brendel, 2002; Russell & Peterson, 1998; Storm, Peterson, & Tomm, 1997; Terneus, 1994). The AAMFT ethical code has recently been adapted to reflect these beliefs. The code 4.1 currently states:

Marriage and family therapists are aware of their influential position with respect to students, employees, and, supervisees and they avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. Therapists, therefore, make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. When a dual relationship cannot be avoided, therapists take appropriate professional precautions to ensure judgment is not impaired and no exploitation occurs. Examples of such dual relationships include, but are not limited to, business or close personal relationships with students, employees, or supervisees. Provision of therapy to students, employees, or supervisees is prohibited. Sexual intimacy with students or supervisees is prohibited (AAMFT, 1998).

This ethical code provides evidence that the associate for marriage and family therapist believes it is important for therapists, supervisors and teachers to pay attention to dual relationships and recognize the risks they may cause to clients and students.
Power

The driving force behind the potential harms of dual relationships is the inherent power attached with the role of a professional. A professional “carries with it superordinate expectations of knowledge and wisdom…[thus] greater than average power and prestige become associated with these expectations. What results is that many of the relationships in which professionals engage are asymmetrical” (Kitchner, 1988, p. 10). The professional in this case is the therapist. Consequently, the relationship between a therapist and client is hierarchal in nature. The power differential in this relationship is cause for concern because the person (client) receiving the services may not be able to objectively evaluate the advice given by the professional (therapist) and reject it when it is not in the clients best interests (Kitchner, 1988). This may be especially true when a dual relationship exists between the therapist and client (Pope, 1991). Because the power differential is inherent in any relationship between a professional and a consumer of services, the addition of a dual relationship carries with it further causes for concern.

One concern revealed in the literature is whether or not a client can freely consent to entering a dual relationship with a therapist since the professional carries the influence of her/his position in the relationship (Kitchner, 1988; Pope & Vasquez, 1998; Russell & Peterson, 1998). A second concern is when there is a dual relationship, the power imbalance carries over into the other roles. Thus, even as the second role is that of a social “friend”, an unequal distribution of power still exists (Mamalakis, 2000). This dual role of friend and therapist can distort the fact that there really is a hierarchy which may lead to more serious harm for the client since the power has, in a sense, been masked by this second role of friend.
A power imbalance also exists in the relationship between supervisee-supervisor and student-teacher since these relationships are also hierarchical in nature (Storm, Peterson, & Tomm, 1997). Like a client in therapy, students and supervisees are in a vulnerable position and can be harmed by an educator or supervisor who exploits them, misuses power, or crosses appropriate boundaries (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1998). Additionally, client and supervisees are unable to freely and equally consent to the nonprofessional aspect of multiple relationships (Storm, Peterson, & Tomm, 1997). Therefore, supervisee-supervisor and student-teacher relationships are prone to the same potential risks associated with the client–therapist relationship due to the existing power imbalance.

Client-Therapist Dual Relationships and the Possible Risks

The literature has revealed several characteristics of potential risks when a dual relationship occurs between a therapist and a client. They include confidentiality, conflict of interest, boundary violations, and tainting the relationship (Mamalakis, 2000).

Confidentiality

A major potential problem voiced in the literature concerns the violations of confidentiality by therapists when a dual relationship is enacted (Bader, 1994; Bograd, 1992; Geyer, 1994; Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998; Lukens, 1997; Sonne, 1994). The dual relationship creates an unclear boundary between the role of the therapist, which might lead to an increase risk of a break in confidentiality. Breaking of confidentiality by the therapist breaks the therapeutic trust bond and can permanently damage the relationship (Geyer, 1994). Thus, there is an increased harm of a break in confidentiality for clients when a dual relationship occurs.
Conflict of Interest

Another concern observed in the literature is the conflict of interest created by the dual relationship between the client and therapist (Bader, 1994; Bograd, 1992; Borys, 1994; Brownlee, 1996; Craig, 1991; Geyer, 1994; Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998; Pope, 1991; Pope & Vasquez, 1998). The essential cause of harm in dual relationships concerning the conflict of interest is the therapist putting their personal interests above the clients (Mamalakis, 2000). The conflict of interest also impairs judgment and reduces objectivity (Bader, 1994; Borys, 1994; Craig, 1991; Brownlee, 1996; Sonne, 1994). In a client-therapist relationship the power is already tipped in favor of the therapist and when a dual relationship manifests this phenomenon appears to escalate.

Boundary Violations

Dual relationships between clients and therapists can also create an erosion of boundaries which may jeopardize the client’s safety (Bader, 1994; Hall & Baber, 1996; Lukens, 1997; Pope, 1991). Boundaries are limits that allow for a safe space to be created (Peterson, 1992). Dual relationships destroy fixed boundaries and instead create permeable roles around the client/therapist bond. Thus, when a dual relationship exists the roles becomes ambiguous and the therapist may not know when they are crossing a boundary that may not be in the best interests of the client (Lukens, 1997).

Tainting the Relationship

Dual relationships can distort the beneficial qualities of therapy thereby tainting the relationship and creating a loss of therapeutic effectiveness for clients (Bader, 1994; Geyer, 1994; Pope, 1991; Pope & Vasquez, 1998). The relationship between the therapist and the client can become tainted by eroding the professional, distinctive nature thus obscuring the focus of
therapy (Bader, 1994; Borys, 1992; Kagel & Giebelhausen, 1994; Pope, 1991; Pope & Vasquez, 1998). Some would say that the dual relationship hinders and diminishes the therapeutic relationship altogether.

While a tremendous amount of literature is devoted to the study of dual relationships between client and therapist this does not mean that the effect of dual relationships only applies to these unique relationships. In fact, the same issues and concerns apply in dual relationships between supervisor/supervisee and teacher/student.

Supervisee/Student-Supervisor/Faculty Dual Relationships and the Possible Risks

While there are some similarities between dual relationships in therapist-client, supervisee-supervisor, and faculty-student dyads, there are also differences. The supervisor-supervisee relationship is more informal and involves more one on one interaction than is typical between client-therapist. As a result there is an even greater tendency for inappropriate or multiple relationships to develop (Thoreson, Shaughnessy, Cook, & Moore, 1993; Thoreson, Shaughnessy, & Frazier, 1995). Supervisors/faculty relationships are far more delicate and complicated than the typical educator-student relationship. Within the supervisor/faculty role, multiple roles intrinsically exist. These inherent roles may not always integrate smoothly, such as the need to be critical while evaluating, and listening empathically to others (Whiston & Emerson, 1989). Also, the role of employer and supervisor, evaluator and mentor, and co-author and teacher may all lead to complications and possible harm to the student being supervised. While the themes of confidentiality, conflict of interest, boundary violations, and tainting the relationship (Mamalakis, 2000) are from the therapist-client literature, these categories still hold true for supervisee/student-faculty/supervisor relationships. However, some of these categories are not exactly the same due to the inherent differences in the nature of the relationships.
**Trust/Confidentiality**

Confidentiality seems to exist to some level within the relationship between student and teacher and AAMFT has an ethical code to guide the confidentiality between supervisor and supervisee. Thus, in each of these relationships a bond of trust is created much like that of therapist and client. The clinical supervisor performs multiple roles: teacher, mentor, evaluator, and facilitator of self-awareness (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998). Each of these roles contain elements of a therapeutic relationship (Kurpius, Gibson, Lewis, & Corbet, 1991). As with a therapeutic relationship, supervisors also often have access to information about the emotional lives of their trainees just as they have access to information about therapy clients. This knowledge must be held with special care (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998).

The element of confidentiality or trust becomes an issue when faculty are placed in the multiple role of teacher, mentor, and supervisor and in the fact that a training experience involves the personal growth of students (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). Supervisees may disclose personal concerns and intense emotions during supervision, much as they might in a therapeutic situation. The openness of supervisees and the trust they place in their supervisors can be broken by supervisors when a dual role occurs (Corey, Corey, & Callanon, 1998).

As supervisors and gatekeepers to the therapy profession, there is a duty to encourage and challenge students to face issues that might impede their ability to help clients (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). Consequently, as teachers, they provide experiential training experiences in the classroom to encourage personal growth. Yet, these inherent dual roles of teacher and supervisor have a different set of codes to consider if the information revealed may lead the supervisor to question the student’s ability to work with clients. If the teacher maintains the trust between student and teacher then he/she may violate the responsibility to the profession. On the other hand, if the
teacher reveals the concerns then trust is broken (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). Additionally, if the information revealed by the student leads to a negative evaluation, the student again may feel betrayed (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). The multiple roles that exist for trainers and students create an increased likelihood of breaking the bond of trust which can damage the relationship and ultimately the student’s future as an effective therapist.

Conflict of Interest

A common multiple relationship in teaching involves students taking courses from a faculty member and being involved simultaneously in an employee-employer/supervisor relationship with the faculty member. For example, graduate students often take a class from the professor they are assigned to as a teaching assistant. Another example is a faculty member asking a student enrolled in her/his class if he/she would like to earn some extra money babysitting (Ford, 2001). These situations potentially compromise the ability of the supervisor to objectively evaluate and guide the student. For example, what if the student babysitting for the instructor does poorly on a paper? The faculty member is faced with the challenge of grading objectively while being concerned if the student will want to continue their babysitting services. The dual relationship between faculty/supervisors and students often consist of business relationships. Slimp & Burian (1994) state that interns and students are often hired as staff members or employees and these situations place the supervisee/student in double jeopardy. If the babysitting, research or consulting activities do not go well, the negative consequences are compounded (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). Not only does the student lose academically but financially as well, because of the dual relationship. Most importantly the learning environment has been compromised.
Another conflict of interest with a student-faculty multiple relationship may be the perception of other students when the teacher is evaluating the student’s performance (Blevnins-Knabe, 1992). “Faculty must be careful not to create an impression of possible bias or impropriety in their professional roles” (Ford, 2001, p. 194) because this can cause difficulties, not only for the faculty member, but also for the student. Trust, respect, and a sense of safety are damaged between the student and faculty/supervisors (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). The student may wonder if they received the grade they did because they earned it or for other reasons. Additionally, others within the system are affected because fellow interns/students may feel left out of what they perceive to be preferential treatment and staff members may become fractionalized as they develop opinions about the relationship (Herlihy & Corey, 1997; Storm, Peterson, Tomm, 1997).

Boundary Violations

Another boundary issue is that of a social relationship (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). Hararr, Vandercrek, and Knapp (1990) admitted that it is unavoidable that supervisors will encounter trainees in social settings. In fact, some relaxing of boundaries may be both inevitable and appropriate in the relationships between student-supervisor/teacher (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). The supervisee-supervisor and faculty-student relationship is considered a post-professional relationship (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). Some have argued that “once a client, always a client” but that claim is not made about supervisees (Herlihy & Corey, 1997) or graduate students. Our supervisees and graduate students evolve into our professional colleagues (Herlihy & Corey, 1997). However, the end of formal education in a graduate program does not automatically mean that a supervisee/student perceives that he or she is now on equal footing (Herlihy & Corey, 1997).
Tainting the Relationship

When violations occur between student and supervisors/faculty the relationships, the trust, and the respect erodes and with this erosion the function of the relationship fails (Bader, 1994; Geyer, 1994; Pope, 1991; Pope & Vasquez, 1998). The multiple roles may not always then be in the best interest of the student since the loss of this relationship ultimately leaves the student without support and the ability to succeed.

Models/Guidelines for Dual Relationships

Ethical decision-making models have arisen as a result of the complexity witnessed in the dual relationship literature and of the concerns voiced by the MFT field. Many professionals have stated that the ethical code does not provide enough guidance to manage these relationships (Bersoff, 1999; Gottlieb, 1993; Mamalakis, 2000; Sonne, 1994). Thus, the creation of ethical decision making models arose (Haas, 1989; Handelsman, 1991; Rest, 1984; Roll & Millen, 1981; Woody, 1990). However these models do not address the concerns of dual relationships. Therapist-Client Guidelines

Kitchner (1988) was the first to address dual relationship problems and provided guidelines for figuring the probability of a dual relationship leading to harm and those that do not lead to harm. Also, Gottlieb (1993) has developed a model for avoiding exploitive dual relationships regardless of the professional context in which they occur. Mamalakis & Hill (2001) presented a model that took into account the dual relationships in religious community situations and provided guidelines for therapists working in these types of settings. While these models are helpful for decision making in dual relationships they are particularly useful when considering situations in which the dual relationship consists of a therapist-client.
Faculty-Student Guidelines

To address the concern of dual relationships in training programs, guidelines have been proposed by scholars in the field (Bowman, Hatley, & Bowman, 1995; Herlihy & Corey, 1997; Peterson, 1992; Plaut 1993; Storm, Peterson, Tomm, 1997; Strom & Todd, 1997). Two models which seem to be of particular importance to this area were developed by Biaggio, Paget, and Chenoweth, (1997) and Russell and Perterson (1998).

Biaggio, Paget, and Chenoweth (1997) have attempted to provide a model for working with these populations due to the inherent differences between student-supervisor/faculty and client-therapist. In this model, one focus particularly highlights maintaining a climate that supports ethical relationships with students while managing dual roles. The model proposes guidelines for faculty to follow in order to maintain ethical relationships with students. Biaggio, Paget, and Chenoweth (1997) called for three main guidelines which include: “(a) acknowledge the power and responsibility of the faculty role, (b) develop a frame for evaluating faculty and student relationships, and (c) foster and maintain a climate that supports ethical relationships with students” (p. 186). These guidelines offer new knowledge and support for negotiation in dual relationships instead of avoiding them entirely. However, this model is still limited by a lack of research to support the model as a way to maintain ethical dual relationships between faculty and students.

Additionally, Russell and Peterson (1998) have attempted to create guidelines to facilitate the ethical management of the dual roles instead of trying to avoid these relationships (Russell & Peterson, 1998). Russell and Peterson (1998) identify the importance of recognizing patterns which create vulnerability of crossing boundaries within teaching and supervisory relationships. The authors work was based on a study by Peterson (1995) which investigated dual relationships
between supervisors and supervisees. Peterson’s (1995) study identified four characteristics of boundary violations. These included: “role reversal, secrecy, abuse of professional privilege and the presence of a double bind” (Peterson, 1995, p. 167). In her study the most frequent reported dual relationship between supervisor and supervisees was that of “personal friend” (Peterson, 1995). Guidelines are offered by Russell and Peterson (1998) to manage boundaries within dual relationships especially when one role consists of friend. Guidelines include: self care, student care, and care of the professional group. These guidelines seem to focus on creating a personal check up to help notice when a boundary is likely to be broken. This model is a preventive model to facilitate awareness of when one might be vulnerable to causing harm.

Limitations of Guidelines

While the models and guidelines developed offer some support and help when dealing with a dual relationship issues, they are limited. Most of the guidelines are based on an avoidance or negative view of dual relationships. Thus, most models try and find ways in which the therapist can minimize the risk of enacting a dual relationship with their client. However, as a supervisor or a faculty in a training facility, the minimizing of dual relationships can be impossible and unethical. Biaggio, Paget, and Chenoweth (1997) explain the impossibility of avoiding dual roles in the student/faculty relationship.

In faculty/student relationships faculty must play the roles of provider of knowledge, and evaluator of the students knowledge, mentor of the students research, and supervisor of the graduate research assistant, academic advisor to the student and informed on the student progress. Further more, in professional graduate programs the faculty must strike a balance between advocating fro and enhancing the students development on the one hand and safeguard the public from incompetent or unethical professionals on the other A
faculty member or supervisor must play the roles of provider of knowledge and evaluator (p 184).

Secondly, the guidelines and models presented by the scholars in the field have limited validity due to the highly theoretical basis of the ideas presented in these models. Not one model has been tested for validity or reliability in helping prevent or deal with the dual relationship issues experienced in practice. One way to address this limitation is for the guidelines to come from the actual participants in the field. This would provide practicality and validity to the guidelines that other’s could use to transverse the complexity of dual relationships.

Client-Therapist Dual Relationships and the Benefits

The potential for risks exists in any relationship. While a long list of scholars have detailed the harm of dual relationships, a relatively small number of investigators have elucidated the benefits. I believe this is due to the controversial nature of the topic. Not wanting to seem unethical, most shy away from speaking against the norm (Mamaliakis, 2000). Two main themes seem to emerge from this literature. These themes reveal the myth that dual relationships are inherently exploitative but also expose the potential for these relationships.

Dual Relationship is Not Exploitative

Several scholars have expressed that ethical issues concern therapist exploitation and impaired therapeutic judgment rather than the dual relationship itself being the cause of harm (Bader, 1994; Geyer, 1994; Hedges, 1993; Tomm, 1991). Thus, the focus should be on avoiding exploitation instead of preventing dual relationships (Tomm, 1991). “Duality per se does not create or encourage exploitation” (Tomm, 1991, p. 12) but the therapist propensity to exploit regardless of the presence of a dual relationship (Tomm, 1991). Consequently, the focus on the
negative aspects of dual relationships is not really the issue that should be highlighted. Instead, the focus should concern reducing the exploitation of clients.

Decrease of Power

In this theme authors discuss the decrease of power and increase of connection when a dual relationship occurs between a client-therapist. Bograd (1992) states that allowing a dual relationship humanizes and decreases the professional expertise and higher authority. This creates an environment which allows the client to accept the therapist as human instead of an expert (Tomm, 1991). Seeing the therapist as human transforms the relationship from authoritative to egalitarian. “The more egalitarian therapeutic relationship itself can be considered both a benefit that a client experiences and the mechanism, or cause, of other benefits that a client experiences.” (Mamalakis, 2000, p, 46). These benefits include increased intimacy, client empowerment, increased therapeutic alliance, and reducing the stigma associated with therapy (Tomm, 1993; Valentich & Gripton, 1992). Therefore, dual relationships can provide a way to reduce the inherent power differential between a professional and the one receiving service which may actually decrease the ability of the therapist to exploit the client.

Increased Connection

Dual relationships can also increase the connection between the therapist and client leading to enhanced therapeutic effectiveness (Tomm, 1991). These relationships are an unavoidable part of the therapeutic relationship and are opportunities for personal growth (Hedges, 1993). The dual relationship serves as a way to “open space for increased connectedness, more sharing, greater honesty, more personal integrity, more reasonability, more social integration, more complete healing, and more egalitarian human interaction” (Tomm, 1991, p. 14). A dual relationship seems to highlight the connection of one human being to another
instead of focusing on a “sick” client. This priory to professionalism over connectedness restricts the therapeutic relationship (Clarkson, 1994; Hedges, 1993; Tomm, 1991). This, in turn, serves to enhance the power differential between the client and therapist (Tomm, 1991) thereby increasing the risk of harm.

Scholars who speak against the probation of dual relationships are also aware of the risk that can be associated with this relationship. However, avoiding these relationships does not prevent harm to clients. In fact, what may happen if dual relationships are prohibited is a naïve perception that only dual relationships cause exploitation of clients when this is surely not the case.

Supervisor/Faculty-Supervisee/Student Dual Relationship and the Benefits

While the benefits received in a dual relationship between a client-therapist may reflect the benefits of a relationship between faculty and student there is also an inherent difference due to the nature of the relationships. Relationships in academia “do not have therapeutic goals, usually do not involve a direct financial contract between parties, and in some cases may not involve the disclosure of personal information. The primary purpose of faculty is the development of professionals and colleagues.”(Bowmen, Hatley, Bowman, 1995, p.34).

The relationship between a faculty and student involves overlapping roles. Faculty members frequently engage their advisees as research or teaching assistants and this opportunity is considered a privilege by many students. The student is like an apprentice, who can learn from the master sculpture (Kitchner, 1988). Professionals in this type of training facility would have to be hermits to avoid dual relationships in this setting (Kitchner, 1988).

Faculty members in training institutes have many hats that they must wear to help students achieve their goals. These hats consist of teacher, mentor, evaluator, and supervisor
(Bernard & Goodyear, 1992). Some faculties have even more roles such as research advisor, chair, committee member, employer, and co-author (Benared & Goodyear, 1992). In fact, if faculty members did not fulfill these dual relationships they would be neglecting the duties of their job (Kitchner, 1988) and thus, would be engaging in unethical behavior.

**Mentoring**

One role faculty members play is that of mentor. The mentor is a tradition in the teaching arena (Daloz, 1986). A mentor is a guide, a counselor, a friend and most importantly a teacher (Merriam, 1983). The benefits a mentor provides to a student has been well documented by many scholars (Bogat & Redner, 1985; Bova & Phillips, 1984; R. L. Bowman, Bowman, & DeLucia, 1990; Bush, 1985). Faculty interaction with students is an integral part of student’s satisfaction and success (Astin, 1993; Jacobi, 1991). A qualitative study conducted by Kolbert, Morgan, and Brendle (2002) found that students approved of the mentoring relationship and saw it as conducive to meaningful learning.

Mentoring is critical to the preparation of graduate students for their careers (Kolbert, Morgan, Brendle, 2002). Mentoring seems to involve many unique aspects which are beneficial to students (Johnson & Nelson, 1999). Additionally, mentoring provides essential elements which are needed for students to develop and be successful.

**Modeling**

Modeling is one way that therapists help to modify client’s unhealthy behavior patterns. If a client usually deals with loss by avoiding saying goodbye then the time for termination of the client-therapist relationship can provide the client with a chance to do things differently. The therapist should be mindful of this pattern and take steps to model an appropriate way of dealing with the loss of this relationship. Not only is modeling used in therapy but it is used in teaching
as well. Parents teach their children how to interact with others by modeling whether they know it or not.

Glaser and Thorpe (1986) surveyed female psychologists and found that 17% reported intimate sexual contact with a psychology educator during graduate training. Additionally, Pope and Levenson, and Schover (1979) found that engaging in sexual contact as students with educator was statistically related to later sexual contact with professionals. Thus, faculty are more than dispensers of knowledge, they are role models who contribute to the professional and personal development of students (Holmes, Rupert, Ross, & Shapera, 1999; Slink & Burian, 1994). Thus, students may learn more about ethical dual relationships by the modeling provided by faculty than in their ethics courses (Kitchner, 1992). Ryder and Hepworth (1990) believe that a good supervisor or teacher is “one that emphasizes ambiguity, contradiction, and complexity and avoids oversimplifying relationships” (p. 127). Supervisors are vital in facilitating counselor trainees in understanding the dynamics of balancing multiple roles and managing dual relationships (Storm, Peterson, & Tomm, 1997). Although students learn about dual relationships during their academic work it is when they are engaged in fieldwork and internship that they will probably have to grapple with boundary issues (Herlihy & Corey, 1997).

Modeling awareness and discussion versus avoidance is essential to the growth and development of competent therapists. “Graduate students should be helped to grow in transcending relationship complications and to have an awareness of their ability to transcend complications that will be useful in future clinical work” (Ryder, Helpworth, 1990, p. 131). Therefore, a benefit of faculty modeling the messiness of life relationships with students can lead to personal growth (Tomm, 1991) that will enhance the ability of students to face inevitable dual relationships in their careers.
Dual Relationships and Connection

Dual relationships help to provide a context which allows students to connect with faculty. Connection has been found to play a vital role in the success of students. The more contact students have with faculty results in increased levels of persistence, satisfaction, and achievement (Bean & Kuh, 1984; Pascarella, 1980; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975). Also, dual relationships can advance supervision by strengthening the connectedness and personal responsibility of participants (Bograd, 1992, Tomm, 1991).

In an atmosphere of increased connection each participant in the relationship can be more open and honest which can create a more equalitarian relationship (Tomm, 1991). Kolbert, Morgan, and Brendel, (2002) found in their qualitative study that students reported that a “casual interchange is great and enhances the comfort level enabling more intellectual stretching and risk taking on the part of the student” (p.199). Dual relationships can provide an environment which allows for joining between the student and the faculty member. This creates a sense of support experienced by the student facilitating success in their personal and professional development.

Enrich Professional Horizons

Strom, Peterson, and Tomm (1997) believe the implications of dual relationships can expand and enrich the professional horizons of students. In these relationships a more experienced member assists a less qualified one in developing into a competent professional. When a dual relationship occurs between a student and a faculty member the dual roles might be that of supervisor and co-author or co-researcher. This type of relationship can advance the abilities of a student into one of a fully participating colleague.
Decrease of Power

Another benefit of dual relationships has been the discussion of a decreased power differential between the two members. As you will recall, one main cause for concern about dual relationships is the hierarchal nature of the relationship between a professional and the one receiving the service. Some have discussed that the dual relationship only increases this concern of power. However, several scholars believe that a dual relationship does just the opposite and actually decreases the amount of power between the two (Bogard, 1992; Bader, 1994; Hedges, 1993; Ryder & Hepworth, 1990; Tomm, 1991).

Thus a dual relationship between students and faculty members can reduce the power differential. Dual relationships allow students to see the supervisor as a person instead of an expert thus creating a relationship which is more human and democratic (Bograd, 1992). A dual relationship which involves a student who is a supervisee into a dual role of co-author seems to be moving away from exploitation to the extent that they are moving genuinely toward collegiality and equality (Ryder and Hepworth, 1990). In graduate programs collegiality is an expected outcome of professional training and the opportunities provided by dual relationships by faculty may help to decrease the power differential between the two, especially as students become more equal to their teachers and supervisors.

The Next Step

While models have been developed and guidelines presented for dealing with dual relationships, violations and harm is still occurring. Most guidelines presented focus on what not to do which may lead to therapists and faculty avoiding dual relationships. Faculty having a “knee jerk reaction condemning all dual relationships contributes to a level of paranoia among professionals that will make colleagues reluctant to seek consultation when they face ambiguity
and complexity” (Russell & Peterson, 1998). This also may be the reason that research has been limited in these areas. Instead, many professionals are theorizing what should be done to manage these relationships. What little research is conducted on dual relationship focuses on the harm associated with dual relationships and how to minimize this harm. This research is necessary and important. However I believe that this limited view highlights only half the context of this issue. Therapists and faculty are left with only what not to do. With no map to guide faculty in having ethical relationships with students, they get lost and confused which appears to lead to unethical and harmful relationships.

    Scholars have only just begun to discuss the benefits that are part of dual relationships. With a further discussion of benefits of these types of relationships, a map will begin to develop which can encompass directions with dangers to avoid but also arrows pointing to a successful student-faculty destination. I propose research that will focus on the successful relationships that faculty and students have had and will uncover the strategies used by these participants to provide faculty with tools to foster ethical relationships between faculty and students and thus decrease ethical violations.
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present researcher developed this study as the next logical step to existing research in the field (Peterson, 1995). The purpose of this study was to explore successful and unsuccessful experiences related to non-sexual dual relationships between faculty and students. A main focus of the study was the strategies used by the faculty and students who have maintained successful non-sexual dual relationships. To address these issues, the researcher posed the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of a non-sexual dual relationship that have been successful?
2. What types of strategies do students use to maintain successful non-sexual dual relationships with faculty?
3. What types of strategies do faculty members use to maintain successful non-sexual dual relationships with students?
4. What are the characteristics of non-sexual dual relationships that have been unsuccessful?
5. How did participants sidestep some of the potential negative outcomes that some experts believe arise from negotiating faculty–student non-sexual dual relationships?

This was a two-phase qualitative study that was informed by the critical incident technique. The purpose of qualitative methods is to provide a deeper understanding of human interaction (Fallsberg & Hammar, 2000). The critical incident technique focuses on a critical event for study (Flannagan, 1954). Combining qualitative methods with the CIT creates a study that can be used to explore and understand specific events in participants’ lives. The research was conducted in two phases to facilitate full understanding of these events.
Phase One

Phase One was a web survey that included open- and close-ended questions focused on non-sexual dual relationships. Participants were students and faculty who attend(ed) or work in programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education. The critical incidents in this study were the behaviors reported by the participants that led them to perceive the dual relationship as successful or unsuccessful. The goal of the survey was to capture a snapshot view of the experiences by faculty and students who have had successful and unsuccessful dual relationships.

Phase Two

Phase Two of the study involved conducting semi-structured telephone interviews with a sub-sample of the survey participants to facilitate better understanding of the complexity of these dual relationships. Five faculty and student dyads were interviewed to capture the experiences of these participants that led them to have successful dual relationships. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how the participants view and make meaning of the phenomenon under study (Seidman, 1991). The critical incidents in this phase were successful non-sexual dual relationships. The ultimate purpose is to provide information to create strategies that can be utilized by others to facilitate successful dual relationships.

Critical Incident Technique

The critical incident technique (CIT) is a procedure for collecting data that grew out of studies conducted in the Aviation Psychology program of the United States Army Air Forces in World War II. The program was established in 1941 to develop procedures for the selection and classification of aircrews (Flannagan, 1954). One of the first studies investigated specific reasons for pilot failure in learning how to fly and tried to determine why bombing missions failed
(Miller, 1947). In this study, combat veterans were asked to report incidents observed by them that involved behaviors that were especially helpful or inadequate in accomplishing the mission. Thus, the CIT began as a tool to uncover behaviors for a specific purpose.

The CIT has been used by many researchers to measure typical performance, measures of proficiency, training, selection and classification, job design and purification, operating procedures, equipment design, motivation, and aspects of counseling and psychotherapy (Flannagan, 1954). Investigators have used the CIT to develop job qualifications, evaluations, examinations, operating procedures, and improve the design of equipment, and much more.

The current study looked at successful and unsuccessful relationships. This type of investigating most resembles CIT studies in the area of operating procedures. Such studies have examined data on successes and failures of great importance in improving the effectiveness of operations. For example, Flannagan (1949) used the CIT to find out the critical requirements for success in a specific assignment. This was done by obtaining firsthand reports of events in which success or failure was determined by specific reported causes. This proved to be effective in obtaining information from individuals concerning their own errors and the errors of their superiors. Similarly, incidents of successful or unsuccessful dual relationships can be used to identify and develop ways for dual relationships to become more effective and beneficial to both parties.

While the use of the CIT can provide important information, researchers must also be aware of limitations with this method. These limitations are illustrated in the study conducted by Smit (1952) that used the CIT to find out what makes an effective teacher. The study revealed that patterns of critical incidents reported by students were significantly different than those reported by faculty. Consequently, in using the CIT it is imperative to have the use of multiple
viewpoints or observers. In this study, both students and faculty were asked to provide their perspectives on what makes dual relationships successful or unsuccessful.

When using the CIT, there are no strict rules governing data collection (Flanagan, 1954). Data may be collected through observations, surveys, interviews, or paper-and-pencil tests. Information gathered from specific incidents allows the researcher to identify categories in which to classify the critical incidents and to answer the research questions (Erickson, 1990).

Originally, the CIT was used as a quantitative method of analysis that usually involved using observational techniques. However, the CIT has become an investigative tool for either quantitative or qualitative paradigms (Chell, 1998). The critical incident technique has been used infrequently until recently. With qualitative research methods increasingly being seen as viable forms of inquiry, the CIT is gaining recognition. Chell (1998) believes that the CIT can be used to facilitate an understanding of an event from the perspective of the participants. Other prominent qualitative researchers agree and are increasingly recognizing the value of the CIT as a method of inquiry in the qualitative arena (Patton, 2002; Piercy, Moon, & Bischof, 1994; Symon & Cassell, 1998).

Qualitative Methods

This study is qualitative in nature. The goal is to discover and understand the process of dual relationships. Most of the research in this area is on therapist-client dual relationships rather than on the relationship between MFT faculty and students. Specifically, there is scant empirical research involving non-sexual dual relationships between students and faculty. From previous survey research, we simply know that dual relationships can be destructive and unethical. We know virtually nothing about positive non-sexual dual relationships. Merriam (1998) states that “qualitative research builds abstraction, concepts, hypotheses, or theories…[and] often is
undertaken because there is a lack of theory or existing theory to adequately explain a phenomenon” (p. 7). Also, Ryder and Hepworth (1990) call for exploring and understanding how to deal effectively with complexity in relationships instead of considering such complexity a “blanket admonition to avoid” (p. 131).

Almost all the literature on dual relationships examines the negative aspects of the phenomena. Readers can only understand what not to do. This understanding of negative dual relationships has limited the potential for developing a more positive model. Qualitative research allows the researcher to examine the issue with a wider lens and thus to understand in more depth and in context what is going on with the phenomena under study (Merriam, 1998). A qualitative methodology in union with CIT should help reveal a fuller understanding of non-sexual dual relationships and the successful strategies used by faculty and students who have had positive dual relationships.

Qualitative Inquiry and Critical Incident Technique

With the use of the CIT and qualitative inquiry the researcher searches for a deep understanding of participants and their circumstances (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Qualitative research is not about predicting what may happen but instead is concerned with understanding the nature of the phenomenon, how the phenomenon interacts with participants, and how this shapes their lives.

Recently, researchers have used qualitative inquiry and the CIT to examine integrated teamwork and undergraduate training (Fallsberg & Hammar, 2000). They have found critical examples of efficient situations for training interprofessional work using the CIT and qualitative methods. Lee, Eppler, Kenadal and Latty (2001) investigated student stressors during the first year of MFT training. Critical incidents were captured in journals by having students answer the
question, “Select an event that occurred that day which captured something important in terms of my professional development” (p. 53). Also Wechler and Vaughn (1991, 1992) conducted a similar study that asked MFT students to think back and describe a supervisory experience that had a positive influence on their development. Data was first collected in this manner in an industrial setting in a study that asked supervisors to report on behaviors that were effective or ineffective in accomplishing specific jobs (Flanagan, 1949, 1954). Thus, the CIT can provide a systemic attempt to capture and collect events that exemplify the phenomenon in question (Lee et al., 2001).

The critical incidents to be explored in this study were the behaviors reported by the participants that led them to perceive dual relationship as successful or unsuccessful. Successful and unsuccessful were defined by the participants. The knowledge derived from this study should eventually prove beneficial in the development of a training program or model to teach faculty and students new skills for building positive non-sexual dual relationships.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is vital to the process in qualitative research since he or she is the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing the data (Merriam, 1998). Just like any other instrument used in collecting data, the researcher is fallible. In quantitative research, the researcher must discuss the limitations of the instrument. In qualitative research, the researcher likewise must be open about possible biases. For example, the researcher might examine multiple sources of data and keep journals to provide an audit trail of procedures, emerging findings, and her reactions and reflections so the researcher and others can understand how she arrived at the conclusions of the study.
My Research Lens

I am a marriage and family therapy graduate student working towards my doctorate, and I see myself as a postmodern feminist. These roles influence who I am as a researcher and thus may guide my analysis and interpretation of data. As a marriage and family therapist, I am informed by systems theory, which suggests that individual behavior exists in dynamic interaction with others (Duhl, 1985). The individual, the relationships and larger systems (school, community, society) simultaneously affect and are affected by one another. Therefore, I will consider imbedded systems as I analyze and discuss my findings. In systems theory, if one part of the system is altered, other parts of the same system will be affected (Keeny, 1983). A systemic lens allows me to understand dual relationships both contextually and reciprocally.

Another lens I use to view and understand the world is postmodern feminism (Allen & Baber, 1992). As a postmodern feminist, I deny that there is a single truth or reality. I believe that knowledge is constructed through a process of interaction with others and society (Hare-Mustin & Marecedk, 1988). The feminist perspective that guides my work is the belief that research can be for women and about women. Some may ask how non-sexual dual relationship research is for women. Since most MFT faculty members are men and most MFT students are women, the potential unequal relationship between faculty and students includes traditional gender power imbalances reflected in our society. Unequal power does not necessarily lead to exploitation. However, we need to take into account the benefits of dual faculty-student relationships in order for the power imbalance to be successfully managed.

Also in keeping with qualitative and feminist perspectives, I would like to acknowledge my biases and views of non-sexual dual relationships. Instead of letting my values remain covert (Doherty, 1995; Doherty et al., 1993; Wolfe, 1989) in this research study and perpetrating the
idea that value-free research exists, I acknowledge my bias. Complexity is essential to living a full life. I also believe negotiating complexities in relationships is where real learning occurs. I value the non-sexual dual relationships that I have had in my life. These relationships have provided me with enriched personal and academic experiences that have empowered me to accomplish my goals.

My Experience

One dual relationship that has had a tremendous impact on my personal and professional life was developed during my master’s training as a marriage and family therapist. I was a student, and the person I had the non-sexual dual relationship with was a male faculty member (whom I will call Dave) who was my teacher, supervisor, mentor, friend, co-therapist and co-instructor. This relationship is still strong today, although we do not see each other often.

This relationship was and still is successful in the sense that I have gained a tremendous amount from the relationship both professionally and personally. Dave also benefited from our relationship. In the following quote, Dave discusses the benefits of this dual relationship:

A major benefit was in gaining a better understanding of my theoretical beliefs. In this dual relationship, the power differential decreased when Jennifer moved from just student to co-instructor. As co-instructor it was natural for her to ask me to explain, why I am doing something a certain way or to ask, “what does this mean?” or to say, “that doesn’t make sense.” These questions and interactions stretched my beliefs, ideas and knowledge. In doing so, I was better able to voice these thoughts in a clear and concise manner, which allowed me to express these thoughts in writing and in class. Another key element is the opportunity to share and learn from each other. The dual relationship allows me to
share my ideas, knowledge, and professional interests but to also learn new ideas and innovations (Dave, personal communication, January, 12, 2003).

My relationship with Dave was not without its challenges, and this is where I believe the learning and benefits really occurred. As the relationship moved from one-dimensional (teacher only) to multi-dimensional (co-therapist, friend, supervisor, mentor, and co-instructor), the negotiation between us intensified. We could no longer rely on concrete boundaries because these had become blurred. Therefore, we had to be intentional about the role each of us was taking on and when these roles were played out. This relationship between me, a student, and Dave, a faculty member, could have ended in disaster, but it didn’t. Why not?

Because I was able to successfully negotiate my relationship with Dave, I believe positive non-sexual dual relationships between students and faculty are indeed possible. I also believe it is important to struggle with these complexities and to discover the ways in which people have developed successful dual relationships. If we can do this, we can develop a fuller view of dual relationships and learn more about how to support positive dual relationships within academic family therapy programs. Even though my views inform the work I do, they do not necessarily have to undermine the credibility of the present research.

Trustworthiness, Credibility, & Transferability
Every researcher is concerned with creating valid and reliable knowledge (Merriam, 1998). However, different paradigms have different assumptions about validity and reliability which in essence produce distinct ways to assure others that their research is trustworthy (Firestone, 1987). Trustworthiness is defined as how one can know that the evaluator’s findings can be trusted (Patton, 2002). There are several strategies suggested by Merriam (1998) to enhance the trustworthiness of one’s research, including:
1. *Triangulation*, which is the use of multiple methods for observation of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). There are four types of triangulation: 1. data, 2. investigator, 3. theory, 4. methodological (Denzin, 1978).

2. *Member checks*, which involve “taking data collected from study participants, and the tentative interpretations of these data, back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if the interpretations are plausible, if they ‘ring true’” (Merriam, 1998, p. 54).

3. *Long-term observation*, which is the engagement and emersion of the researcher in the research situation (Merriam, 1998).

4. *Peer examination*, which is when the researcher has peers or colleagues examine the data to see if the researcher’s emerging findings are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 1998).

5. *Openness regarding researcher’s biases*, which is when the researcher states her or his “experiences, assumptions, biases at the onset of the study which allows the reader to better understand how the data might have been interpreted in the manner in which they were” (Merriam, 1998, p. 55).

The issue of credibility concerns whether the results are consistent with the data collected. Are the results credible, and can I, as a researcher, believe the results that were obtained? Merriam (1998) states that, “rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense” (p. 206). One way a qualitative researcher shows credibility is to present the reader with ample description so conclusions drawn by the author seem plausible. Other strategies include triangulation and an audit trail. An audit trail is a detailed account of the data collection, how
categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study (Merriam, 1998). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) suggest the audit trail needs to be so detailed that “other researchers can use the original report as an operating manual by which to replicate the study” (p. 216).

In qualitative research, generalizability is not a primary goal. However, transferability lets the reader decide how the study’s findings might relate to other circumstances (Merriam, 1998). The importance lies in the particular, which means that “…we can extract a universal from a particular…what we learn in a particular situation we transfer or generalize to similar situations” (Merriam, 1998, p.210). To enhance transferability, the researcher can use rich, thick description, audit trails, member checking, and peer review (Merriam, 1998). Rich, thick description allows the reader to know the setting, participants, and the research as if they were present (Patton, 2002). Denzin (1989) defines thick description, as presenting “detail, context, [and] emotion… [also] the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individual are heard” (p. 83).

Procedures

As previously mentioned, to meet the goals of the study, the researcher has arranged two phases of data collection and analysis. Phase One will consist of a web survey, and Phase Two will include in-depth phone interviews.

Phase One: Web Survey

In Phase One, a web survey will be used to assesses a) types of non-sexual relationships between faculty and students, b) training received on dual relationships, c) the positive and negative experiences of faculty and students who have had or have non-sexual dual relationships, and d) strategies used by students and faculty to maintain positive non-sexual dual relationships. After IRB approval was granted, a letter including the web survey’s address was sent through
email to directors of COAMFTE-accredited master’s and doctoral programs. The letter also included an explanation of the study and instructions asking the program director to forward the letter on to all students and faculty in the program (Appendix A). The online survey served several functions: it (a) provided an overview of the type of non-sexual dual relationships MFT student and faculty members in COAMFTE-accredited programs have experienced, their view of these experiences, their view of dual relationships in general, and their experiences with training and dual relationships, (b) informed the participants of Phase Two, (c) recruited participants for Phase Two.

Electronic E-mail and the Internet

To answer the research questions, I used the Internet to collect data for Phase One of the study. Internet surveys have been found to have a faster return rate, lower item non-response, lower costs, and more complete answers, especially for open-ended questions, than traditional mail surveys (Schafer & Dillman, 1998). Thus, Internet questionnaires have some unique advantages.

However, some caution is needed when using the Internet instead of traditional mail. Before deciding to use the Internet for data collection, it is necessary to first determine if the participants are accessible by email. Schaefer and Dillman (1998) have indicated that “E-mail access has reached nearly 100 percent for some groups of participants, such as company employees and association members” (p. 378). University faculty and students likewise, approach 100% Internet use.

Raj and Sivadas (1995) have found that unsolicited email surveys are less likely to be responded to unless participants were given prior email notification. Schaefer and Dillman’s (1998) research also indicated the same findings. They suggest compressing the time frame of
prior notification, the survey, and the follow up reminders. Their research found that the response rate for email was significantly quicker than for traditional mail. Consequently, Schaefer & Dillman (1998) suggest the survey follow the pre-notice by 2-3 days and that reminders be given several days later.

Another key element to retaining a high response rate for e-mail surveys is personalization (Dillman, 1978; Dillman, Tortory, & Bowker, 1998). Schafer and Dillman’s (1998) study describes how one can know in an instant if an email message is personal or not. Strategies include sending the email messages directly to individual respondents instead of part of a mailing list and sending the pre-notice letter/email to someone in authority that the participant group knows.

Participants and the Internet

As indicated by Schaefer and Dillman (1998) the first step is to know if the participants for your study are accessible by email. Currently, an empirical study is not available. However, with the wide use of email by universities, faculty, and students for conducting day-to-day business, the use of email appears to be an essential component of success in academia. Email is used by students and faculty to retrieve and send homework, to facilitate professional communication with students and faculty, to sign up for conferences, to conduct research, and to enable people to communicate on a personal level. Thus, an email survey appears to be appropriate for the participants in this study.

The letter sent to the program directors of the selected programs contained specific elements to address the issue of personalization, which is vital to success of participation. These elements included addressing the program director by name in the letter, including the director’s
name and title in the subject line of the email, and asking for their help in completing this project. See Appendix A for a copy of the letter.

Recruitment of Participants

To recruit participants, the researcher randomly selected 10 doctoral and 15 master’s programs from the possible 53 master’s and 16 doctoral COAMFTE-accredited MFT programs (Appendix B). A letter was sent to the program directors of these programs (Appendix A). The email included information about the study and the hyperlink, which, when selected, automatically directed the participants to the survey. The target number of participants to respond to the survey was, at a minimum, 25 students and 25 faculty members. A follow-up letter was sent four days after the initial letter to remind program directors and faculty to let all MFT program participants know about the survey. See Appendix C for a copy of the follow-up letter.

After one week, student responses had totaled 76, while faculty had only provided 10 responses. Thus, the researcher sent out an email directly to the faculty of the selected programs inviting them to participate (Appendix D). This produced an additional 10 responses. To produce 30 faculty responses, the researcher sent the same letter (Appendix D) with an addendum. The addendum asked program directors to encourage faculty members to participate in the survey. After the 30 responses were received, the survey was closed.

Web survey

Prior to starting the survey, an informed consent form was provided to advise the participants of their rights, inform them of whom to contact in case of questions or concerns, and explain that by completing the survey, they were consenting to being participants in the study. See Appendix E for a copy of this statement.
The survey was constructed from other instruments used by researchers on this topic, including those used in the research of Colleen Peterson (1995) and Cassandra-Andrea Erickson (1990). To increase the effectiveness of the online survey, I used guidelines that were developed by Dillman (2002). The researcher made additions to the previous work by purposefully omitting the definition of non-romantic dual relationships. Omitting a definition provided an opportunity for participants to reveal their understanding and interpretation of non-romantic dual relationships. Additionally, the researcher also did not define “training.” Again, the researcher felt it was important to have the participants reveal their interpretation of training on dual relationships. These omissions facilitated the exploration and understanding of the participants’ views of non-romantic dual relationships, instead of relying on the researcher’s interpretation of these ideas. Again, to open up the data and facilitate reliance on participants’ views and interpretations, the researcher thought it was important to use several terms to ask about non-romantic dual relationships. Terms used in the survey to ask about non-romantic dual relationship were positive, successful, negative, unsuccessful, benefits, preventions, and harmful.

The survey was piloted on a group of five doctoral students to evaluate the overall clarity and organization of the survey. The students also completed the survey so that I could determine the face validity of the questions. After receiving feedback from the students, I revised the survey. After the revisions, the survey was accessed again, and a final version was created. To see a copy of the survey, see Appendix F.

To address the purpose of the study, the survey consisted of five areas: (a) demographics, (b) positive dual relationships, (c) negative dual relationships, (d) training, (e) culture of dual relationships.
Demographics. Demographics Questions included questions about gender, age, race/ethnicity, role in the program, status as a student or faculty member, and amount of clinical experience.

Positive Dual Relationships. Open-ended questions were designed to explore the experiences of students and faculty who have had or have positive non-sexual dual relationships, find out why they are positive, determine the benefits and any outcomes received while in these relationships, and learn about the strategies used to keep the relationships positive.

Negative Dual Relationships. Open-ended questions were designed to explore the experiences of students and faculty who have had or have negative non-sexual dual relationships, find out why they are negative, determine outcomes of being involved in these relationships and learn about what could have been done to prevent these negative experiences from occurring.

Training. Information was requested on whether training was received on dual relationships, the type of training received, and recommendations for training to facilitate successful dual relationships.

Culture of Dual Relationships. One question on the survey asked about the culture of dual relationships. Students and faculty were asked to describe what they believed to be the perception of the MFT profession to be on dual relationships.

Specific questions on the web survey that were designed to elicit critical incidents included the following:

1. Why was it positive?
2. What strategies did you employ to keep this relationship successful?
3. What did you do to keep this relationship from being harmful to yourself or the other person in the dyad?
4. Why was it negative?

5. What could you have done differently to prevent the relationship from becoming unsuccessful?

6. What would you tell MFT students and faculty that they should do to develop successful multiple relationships?

Phase Two: In-depth Phone Interviews

I interviewed a sub-sample of five faculty and student dyads to build upon the knowledge obtained in the online surveys in Phase One. In Phase Two, I explored types of strategies that graduate students and faculty used to support positive non-sexual dual relationships.

Participants

Participants in this phase were faculty and student dyads who are at COAMFT-accredited MFT doctoral or master’s programs and report having or having had positive non-sexual dual relationships.

Recruitment of Participants

In Phase One, the web survey, participants who indicated that they had a successful non-sexual dual relationship were asked if they would be willing to be involved further in this study by participating in a phone interview. As an incentive to participate, ten dollar gift certificates to Wal-Mart or Target were offered. If the participants was interested in this, they had to submit their names, phone numbers, and email addresses to be selected to participate in a phone interview. To obtain the dyads, the researcher first interviewed students who reported that they have had a successful dual relationship with a faculty member and were interested in being involved in a phone interview. This was to ensure that dyads were considered successful non-sexual relationships by the person with the least amount of power in the relationship. The
students were contacted via email. An email containing information about the study, the informed consent form (Appendix G), and a statement asking them to respond if they were still interested was sent to the students. See Appendix F for a copy of the email. Those that indicated that they were interested set up a time to conduct a phone interview.

At the end of the interview, the students were asked if they would be willing to contact the faculty member with whom they have this successful dual-relationship and ask the faculty member if he/she would be willing to participate in a phone interview. Whether the student agreed or disagreed, each received a gift certificate for completion of the interview. If the student agreed, she/he was asked to contact the faculty member, and if the faculty member agreed, the student was asked to email the researcher with the faculty member’s email address. Next, the researcher contacted the faculty members via email and provided information about the study and asked the faculty members if they were interested (Appendix I). Once the faculty member agreed, a time was set and a phone interview was completed. The faculty member also received a gift certificate for participating. Phone interviews with students occurred until five dyads were complete.

The researcher stopped with five dyads for several reasons. One, recruiting students to participate proved to be successful. However, the researcher had difficulty obtaining faculty participation in this portion of the study as well as in the web survey portion. The researcher interviewed 25 students, and 22 indicated that they would be willing to ask the faculty member, with whom they had a successful dual relationship, to be part of the study. Also, the researcher later sent an email thanking them for their participation and asking them if they had received their gift certificate. A reminder to please contact their faculty member was also enclosed. Almost all 22 sent a reply, via email, indicating that they had told their faculty members about
the study. Thus, it seemed students were willing to participate in this research and contact the faculty member with whom they had been in the successful dual relationship. However, faculty did not seem to be interested in participating. Consequently, interviews were stopped because there was no one new to interview (i.e., I had interviewed all the students who indicated that they wished to participate and all faculty who responded to the requests made by their students).

Additionally, the number of participants recruited for the study was determined by budgetary considerations as well as reaching “saturation.” Saturation is defined in terms of a lack of new substantive information (Bertaux, 1981). The data obtained in the web survey along with the data obtained in the interviews revealed similar findings, and, in fact, each seemed to build upon one another, allowing the researcher to say with certainty that saturation was obtained. A total of 106 faculty and students responded to the web survey, and 30 interviews were conducted to produce five faculty/student dyads.

The Interview

The phone interviews lasted approximately an hour and a half with several lasting two hours in length. The interview was semi-structured and was directed by an interview guide. The interview guide was informed of the results of the web survey. See Appendix J for the interview guide used for students and Appendix K for the interview guide used for faculty. Yet, the interview guide was only a guide. Each interview is a journey, and no two journeys are exactly the same. Qualitative research is about discovering new and unexpected information (Morse, 1991). Thus, it is impossible for the researcher to know ahead of time exactly which path will be taken.

Several questions included in the interview guide were developed to discover the effective behaviors of successful dual relationships. These included:
1. Can you describe a time when the faculty member/student did something that you felt should be encouraged because it seemed in your opinion an example of a good way to build a successful dual relationship?

2. When there have been difficulties in this relationship, what did you or the other person in the dyad do to move past them?

3. Many scholars discuss the issues of power, especially in this type of relationship, and the negative effects it can have. When you were in this relationship, what did you do and what did they do to help elevate or decrease power?

4. In negotiating the successful dual relationship, what do you think helped you build this type of relationship or prevent this relationship from becoming unsuccessful?

5. In negotiating the successful dual relationship, what do you think they did that helped build this type of relationship or prevent this relationship from becoming unsuccessful?

Building Trustworthiness, Credibility, & Transferability

In this study there were several ways that I incorporated techniques to improve the trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability of the research (see Table 1).
Table 1: Incorporating Trustworthiness, Credibility and Transferability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trustworthiness</th>
<th>Credibility</th>
<th>Transferability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How one can know that the evaluator’s findings can be trusted?</td>
<td>How one can know if the results are credible and consistent with the data collected?</td>
<td>How one can know if the study’s findings might relate to other circumstances?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation through:</td>
<td>Triangulation through:</td>
<td>Triangulation through:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web survey</td>
<td>Web survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness of researcher bias:</td>
<td>Audit trail:</td>
<td>Peer examination:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occurs when the researcher states his/her biases, experiences, and assumptions, allowing the reader to understand how the data might be interpreted</td>
<td>Is a detailed account of the data collection, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study</td>
<td>When the researcher has peers or colleagues examine the data to see if the researcher’s emerging findings are consistent with the data collected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trustworthiness

The researcher openly states her bias and assumptions on dual relationships, which were presented in the sections on the theoretical framework, role of the researcher, and “my research lens.” This acknowledgment of the researcher’s bias and experiences with this topic allows the
reader to understand how these may influence the interpretation of the data and findings (Patton, 2002).

Credibility

Credibility was established with the use of an audit trail. An audit trail is a detailed account of how data is collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study (Patton, 2002). Anfara, Brown, & Manigone (2002) call for qualitative researchers to provide readers with an in-depth view of how the data is connected to the themes and categories produced by the researcher. One way to do this is to make the research process transparent and thus help to establish the methodological rigor of the research study. One way to provide the reader with a view of this process is through the use of an audit trail or decision trail (Koch, 1994; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). Table 2 provides an example of an audit trail used in this study.
Table 2. Audit trail: Mapping identification of categories and themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Exemplars of Participants Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of Dual Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic:</strong></td>
<td>“I have had faculty serve as both teachers of classes and supervisors of therapy”</td>
<td>“my professor is also an advisor of mine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superior/Hierarchical:</strong></td>
<td>“I have a professor who is also head of the department, my practicum supervisor, and my boss”</td>
<td>“professor from whom I was taking a class and for whom I was a graduate assistant”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collegial:</strong></td>
<td>“one professor worked as my advisor, course instructor, co-editor on a newsletter, and committee chair”</td>
<td>“I was in a group led by a professor, and the same professor and I lead another group together”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-academic:</strong></td>
<td>“I have played racquetball and gone to football games with a faculty member. I was good friends with his wife before entering the program and have maintained a friendship with them as a couple”</td>
<td>“I have a professor that I am a graduate assistant for, and I consider her a friend”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiple:</strong></td>
<td>“one of the faculty members was simultaneously my supervisor, professor, and assistantship supervisor”</td>
<td>“I had a professor who was my supervisor, instructor, and research advisor”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Characteristics of Successful Dual Relationships (Faculty)

**Personal Characteristics:** “This was a good student; not a winner; did assignments; asked challenging questions; like[d] to laugh”

**Respect:** “I respected them as people and they appreciated the respect”

**Mutual Benefits:** “Benefits were I was more able to advise them and they were more able to be open about their struggles”

Characteristics of Successful Dual Relationships (Student)

**Open Communication:** “I can openly say when I disagree with something, and he acknowledges that”

**Comfortable & supportive environment:** “I am comfortable with her and feel less anxiety about difficult material in her class”

“openness to discuss[ing] concerns and frustrations; had integrity”

“we respect each other’s clinical abilities”

“we both learned from one another”

“ Took steps to keep communication open and fluid. Touching base during times when there were no issues”

“It was positive because it provide[d] much needed support”
**Clear Roles:** “This relationship was positive due to a clear understanding of the different roles”

“I feel the relationship was excellent. The roles were clear and distinct”

**Benefits (Faculty)**

**Better understanding of students needs:** “I am better able to learn more effective teaching strategies that will meet particular students’ needs”

“I get to know the students very well, and this helps build trust when it comes to supervision and advising”

**Opportunities for collegial activities:** “with this relationship we started working on a paper together which we are currently publishing”

“In this relationship we present and do workshops together”

**Benefits (Students)**

**Empowerment:** “great learning experience; definitely pushed me, which increased my flexibility and confidence”

“I have felt empowered by this relationship to fully become a great therapist”

**Guidance:** “She understands what I have to learn and is able to point me in the right direction”

“provides more guidance on various clinical and ethical matters”

**Modeling:** “seeing firsthand how a professional handles the many hats she has to wear will be beneficial”

“I have learned what I would like a professional relationship to look like”
**Academic Growth:** “Better able to integrate complex concepts and increase self-awareness”

“They also know me as a person; they are able to assist me in integrating who I am with what I do”

Characteristics of Unsuccessful Dual Relationships

**Blurring of Boundaries:** “Uncomfortable listening to a faculty member complain about another faculty member, and faculty member tired to triangle me into this personal conflict”

“Dual roles with a student in which one turned into a paid research assistant, we clashed over the quality and timeliness of her work”

Strategies to Create Positive Dual Relationships (Students)

**Boundaries:** “Always keeping in mind the relationship was professional and acting in a professional manner by understanding boundaries and maintaining them”

“Have clear expectations and boundaries about the roles each person plays”

**Respect:** “I made sure to have the same respect inside and outside of the room”

“Impactful for me to respect his space and time as it was for her to respect mine”
Communication: “Open communication; helpful in identifying issues and processing [them]”

Awareness: “I kept conscious of the two roles that the faculty played”

“Have honest, direct, and open communication”

“Acknowledge it is a dual relationship, be transparent, and pay attention to it”

Strategies to Create Positive Dual Relationships (Faculty)

Awareness: “I am aware of my power and [try] to not take for granted that it is there, present in these relationships”

“Be clear about the differences in roles and expectations of each role for each other”

Communication: “Try and create a space for students to share negative feedback”

“Talk with the student and be direct about concerns”

Minimizing Potential Risks: “Use of contracts to explain how the relationship might look and handling of conflicts or concerns”

“Involve other faculty early in the process to help think about possible ramifications”

Types of training received

Wide Range: “training on dual relationships in general in ethics class,” “some about dual relationships with faculty and teacher in ethics class,” “AAMFT workshop on dual relationships”

“Through teaching ethics class,” “conducted research on dual relationships,” “research interest on supervisee dual relationships”
Perception of dual relationships

*Wide Range:* “as potential[ly] explosive,” “less critical than therapist/client dual relationships,” “[to] be avoided,” “can’t avoid,” “potentially beneficial”
“[Viewed] Negatively,” “Not encouraged,” “impossible to get around,” “view[ed] them favorably”

Transferability

Transferability was established in this study through the use of peer examination. Peer examination is when the researcher has peers or colleagues examine the data to see if the researcher’s emerging findings are consistent with the data collected (Patton 2002). The researcher recruited two colleagues to serve in this capacity. Each colleague had earned a Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy and has done research and published manuscripts in peer reviewed journals using qualitative research. I had a separate meeting with each colleague in which we compared initial codes that we thought had emerged from the interviews. In addition, my chair, Dr. Fred Piercy, also served as a peer examiner to help ensure that the findings were consistent with the results. After meeting with the peer examiners and after multiple discussions with Dr. Piercy, I developed a coding scheme to analyze the data.

Triangulation

Another technique used to strengthen the trustworthiness, credibility and transferability of the findings was to triangulate the data through the use of the web survey, interviews, and field notes. The use of field notes allowed the researcher to provide rich, thick description and
triangulation of the data. Field notes were taken during and after the phone interviews for several reasons. One was to ensure the data would not be lost; the field notes served as a backup in case the audio on the tape was not clear. Secondly, I recorded field notes after the completion of each day of interviewing to ensure that my observations about the interview and participants would not be forgotten (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Third, upon the completion of each interview, I created a summary note outlining what I felt were the most important points to remember. For an excerpt of my field notes, please see Appendix L. The field notes were used to guide my logic for further interviews, development of my coding scheme, and analysis of the data. Another reason was to help keep track of my bias during the process of the study. Field notes provided an outlet for me to reflect on my experience and observations while in the process of conducting the research. The notes served to bracket my thoughts, feelings and interpretations so as not to get in the way of the participants’ stories (Patton, 2002). Also, field notes are one of the integral sources of data in qualitative research and aided me in data analysis (Patton, 2002). The participants’ responses revealed the interconnection between the web survey, interviews, and field notes as presented in the findings.

Data Analysis

Phase One

To analyze the demographic data obtained in the survey, the researcher used frequencies. The survey contained demographic data, such as gender, race/ethnicity, student standing, faculty standing, training, age, years of clinical experience, and years of supervising experience.

The open-ended questions from the web survey were downloaded into a word document. Then, each open-ended question was placed under a sensitizing concept that was developed based on my research questions (see Table 3). These sensitizing concepts provided the researcher
with an organization for placing the data in categories. Then, each category was analyzed through the identification of major themes, and subsequent interpretation developed over time and reflected a series of modifications based on repeated readings of the data. This approach to qualitative analysis is consistent with methodology described by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Table 3: Sensitizing Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of dual relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of successful dual relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of unsuccessful dual relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies of successful dual relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of the culture of dual relationships in the MFT profession</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These sensitizing concepts were used to inform the interview guide in Phase Two.

*Phase Two*

I conducted 10 interviews within a period of four months. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. I transcribed two of the interviews myself and paid a transcriptionist to transcribe the remaining eight. For the interviews that I did not transcribe myself, I listened to the tapes and reviewed the transcripts to check for accuracy. I was able to make changes to the electronic copies of the transcripts and clarify information that the transcriptionist found inaudible. After all the transcriptions were accurate and complete, I printed two hard copies of
each transcript. I saved one copy of each transcription in a secure location and used the other copies for data analysis.

During the initial reading of the interview, initial hypotheses were placed next to sections of text. After a few more readings of the transcripts, during which I kept the research questions salient, I noted themes emerging from the topics and text. Further readings of the transcripts were done to create a final list of themes that seemed to capture the essence of the data and were compiled through the use of constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The constant comparison analysis helped the researcher to support, modify, and collapse emerging themes. Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed constant comparison analysis as an explicit coding procedure, which allowed the researcher to go back and forth between the data and previous themes to develop a final list of themes that encapsulates the data. This was done by two main coding procedures: (a) making comparisons by determining if the theme is similar or different from the others, and (b) asking the question, “[to] what class of phenomenon does [the theme] seem to pertain?” (p. 62). These two main coding procedures created themes that form the coding scheme. Next, coding of the transcripts was completed using the initial coding scheme.

To ensure the trustworthiness of my findings, I asked my dissertation chair and two of my colleagues to each cross code 2-3 interviews. Each of the colleagues has a Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy and has done research and published manuscripts in peer reviewed journals using qualitative research. In addition to the colleagues, my chair, Dr. Fred Piercy, also served as a peer examiner to help ensure the credibility, transferability and trustworthiness of this research. I had a separate meeting with each colleague, and we compared initial codes that we thought had
emerged from the interviews. At this point, I developed a coding scheme. To also ensure credibility and transferability, I kept each coding scheme and all coded interviews to provide an audit trail to reveal to other researchers how the final list of themes was developed.

As I read the transcripts for a third time, with the final coding scheme, I highlighted the themes and sub themes within each of the transcripts. Next, I compiled the list of all participants and compared responses across participants. At this point, I listed the themes that seemed most significant to the research questions of this study and tried to get an overall description of the participant’s experiences.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Phase One

Participants.

Participants were 106 faculty members and students from COAMFTE-accredited programs. Total respondents broke down into the following categories: 74.5% (79) were female, 25.5% (27) were male, 82.1% (87) were Caucasian, 11.3% (12) were African American, 5.7% (6) were Hispanic, .9% (1) were Asian, 71.7% (76) were students, and 28.3% (30) were faculty.

Student participants broke down into the following: the mean age was 32 years old, with the oldest being 55 and the youngest being 22; 84.2% (n=64) were female; 15.8% (n=12) were male; 78.9% (n=60) were Caucasian; 13.2% (n=10) were African American; 6.6% (n=5) were Hispanic; 1% (n=1) were Asian; 65.8% (n=51) were master’s students; 1.3% (n=1) were post masters students; 31.6% (n=24) were doctoral students; and 1.3% (n=1) were doctoral interns. Most students indicated they had about 3 years of clinical experience (M= 2.80) with a range of 1-15 years, and almost all had little to no supervising experience (M=.41), with the most being 5 years. Most students, 82.9 % (n=63), indicated they had received some kind of training on dual relationships. For selected student characteristics, see Table 4. For a comparison between master’s and doctoral students who responded to the survey, see Table 5 and Table 6.

Faculty participants had a mean age of 47 years, with the oldest being 63 and the youngest 28; 50% (n=15) were female; 50% (n=15) were male; 90% (n=27) were Caucasian; 6.7% (n=2) were African American; 3.3% (n=1) were Hispanic; 9.4% (n=10) were assistant professors; 9.4% (n=10) were associate professors; 3.8% (n=4) were full professors; 1.9% (n=2) were adjunct professors; 1.9% (n=2) were directors of MFT programs; .9% (n=1) were emeritus professors; and .9% (n=1) did not indicate their faculty status. Faculty participants had an
average of 14.5 years of clinical experience, with a range of 0-33 years, and an average of 11 years of supervising experience (M=11.33), with a range from 0-31 years. Most (70%) indicated that they had received some training on dual relationships. For selected faculty characteristics, see Table 4.

**Table 4.**
**Participant Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Student Characteristics</th>
<th>Faculty Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=76)</td>
<td>(n=30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>90.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>13.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>6.6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>21</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>82.9</td>
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<td>17.0</td>
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Table 5.
Comparisons between Master’s & Doctoral Students’ Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Master’s students (n = 51)</th>
<th>Doctoral students (n = 25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>African American</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
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</table>

Table 6.
Comparison of Age and Clinical & Supervising Experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Master’s Students (n = 51)</th>
<th>Doctoral Students (n = 25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years):</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical experience (years):</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising experience (years):</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.151</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Phase One: Web Survey Findings

The web survey contained open-ended questions to capture a view of the experiences by faculty and students in COAMFTE programs who have had successful and unsuccessful dual relationships. Several categories were developed prior to analyzing the data to manage the wealth of data received. These categories are presented in Table 3 and include types of dual relationships, characteristics of successful dual relationships, characteristics of unsuccessful dual relationships, strategies to create positive dual relationships, types of training received, and perception by faculty and students of dual relationships in the MFT profession.

Types of Dual Relationships

Students and faculty responses revealed several types of dual relationships: academic, superior/hierarchical, collegial, non-academic, and multiple. An academic dual relationship is one which contains roles such as instructor/supervisor or advisor/instructor. A superior or hierarchical dual relationship is one in which one of the participants is in the role of boss, department head, program director, or chair. This is a different type of relationship than an academic dual relationship because being someone’s boss or chair means having much more influence and power than an instructor or supervisor. Also, when one person is in the position of department head or program director, the one with less power in the dual relationship has fewer resources or avenues through which to access support. A collegial dual relationship is one in which the student and faculty member have engaged in activities such as writing and publishing as co-authors, conducting research together, participating as co-therapists, co-leading a group, presenting at a conference as co-presenters, and engaging in other activities to professionally support one another in their careers.
Surprisingly, a number of participants indicated they had relationships either with faculty or students which involved nonacademic roles. A nonacademic dual relationship is one in which one member of the relationship states they are friends or that in the past they had a therapist/client relationship. According to the participants, most dual relationships involved more than two roles. Thus, a category was developed to capture this phenomenon. This category was labeled “multiple dual relationship” and is one in which there are more than just two roles; there are usually several and sometimes as many as 5 or 6. For example, several participants indicated they were instructors, program directors, supervisors, co-authors, bosses (in charge of research assistants), and friends with a student. While this type of relationship was not unusual, most participants indicated they were supervisors, instructors, advisors, and bosses (in charge of teaching assistants) but not friends with students.

*Characteristics of Successful Dual Relationships*

*Faculty.* Faculty responses revealed three main themes: personal characteristics of students, respect, and mutual benefits. Faculty seemed to mention aspects about the student that created an environment for success, and these included: “like[s] to laugh,” “[has a] sense of humor,” “was a good student,” and “[was] very mature and responsible.” Another theme was one of respect. Faculty members stated, “I respect them as people, and they appreciate the respect,” “we respect each other’s clinical abilities,” “[we] respect one another,” and “it was positive because we respected…each other.”

The third theme revealed in the faculty responses was the idea of mutual benefits. Faculty seemed to think it was important for both faculty and students to benefit from the relationship; one a faculty member stated, “we both learned and benefited from one another,” “we have been
mutually supportive,” “we continue to grow from our mutual involvement,” and “it is mutually beneficial for [both].”

*Students.* Students indicated several themes of a successful dual relationship with a faculty member, and these included: open communication, clear roles, respect, and an environment that is comfortable and supportive. Students indicated that being able to talk with the faculty member without worrying about consequences was an aspect of a positive dual relationship. Examples of these responses include the following: “I can openly say when I disagree,” “no consequences for being open,” “[had] open communication,” “able to discuss matters pertinent to my training,” and “I felt free to state my feelings [and] reactions (positive or negative) and trusted that it would not impact any grade or evaluation.” Another theme indicated by students was having clear roles between the types of relationships. Students stated, “It was positive because there was awareness of the concerns and issues and a clearly communicated willingness to address [the dual roles],” “my positive experience with him is that he established clear boundaries from the beginning,” and “I feel the relationship was excellent. The roles were clear and distinct. This was made possible as there was regular invitation… to discuss our relationship.” Additionally one student stated, “This relationship was positive due to a clear understanding of the different roles that our relationship entails. I feel that I have a clear understanding that she has different responsibilities in each role and will act differently in each role.”

The third theme within this category was an environment that felt comfortable and supportive to students as a result of the dual relationship. This was exemplified by students’ responses: “From knowing her well, …I felt confident asking for guidance and getting support from her,” “our relationship is beneficial to me as I am comfortable with her and feel less
anxiety…because I know her so well,” and “this established a relationship where I felt comfortable disclosing appropriate concerns.” Dual relationships that were successful seemed to produce many benefits for students and faculty.

**Benefits**

*Faculty.* Faculty responses revealed two main themes regarding the benefits of the dual relationship that they had experienced. The first benefit, indicated by faculty, was a better understanding of students’ needs. Faculty stated, “because we got to know each other better…I was more able to advise them and they were open with me about their struggles,” and “I get to know students very well, and I think that this helps build trust when it comes to supervision and when it comes to advising on academic…issues.”

A second benefit seemed to be the opportunity, created by the dual relationship, to facilitate development of students into colleagues. This theme was exemplified by statements such as, “One of the outcomes is that we are publishing a paper together,” “…student seemed to view our relationship as more collaborative than hierarchical,” and “we are more equal as colleagues now than at the onset of our relationship.”

*Students.* Students reported many benefits to having been a part of these successful dual relationships. The themes included empowerment, guidance, modeling, and academic growth. Empowerment means to give or supply with power (Jordan, 1993). In this context, students indicated that faculty had provided them with power. This was seen as giving them confidence or encouragement, which helped to facilitate growth both professionally and personally. Students indicated this by such statements as, ‘I [grew] as a researcher [and] felt successful,” “great learning experience; increased my flexibility and confidence,” “confidence,” and “the major
outcome of these relationships is that my respect and admiration of my professors has become reciprocal.”

Guidance is a theme that was also addressed by students. Students indicated that “it is positive because she/he knows what I have learned and my strengths. He/She understands what I have to learn and is able to point me in the right direction” and “[the faculty member has] a better understanding of me in my various roles…[benefits include I can go to him/her] for guidance on various clinical and ethical matters.” Students seem to think that dual relationships create more moments to know each other better and thus enable them to receive better direction.

The theme of modeling, revealed by analyzing the student responses, indicates that students are learning how to interact in relationships and are consciously viewing this as an opportunity to create successful dual relationships in the future. An example of this idea is seen in the following student response:

This professor has always maintained a professional atmosphere while also being friendly and encouraging my development as a therapist and professional. Some of the benefits of the relationship are seeing firsthand how a professional handles the many hats she has to wear. Also, this professor has modeled for me boundaries involved in handling different aspects of one’s professional career.

Another student stated,

Benefits were learning to feel confident and as safe as I could in challenging a person in a position of power and authority over me. I feel it has also helped me to do the same as I find myself (especially in therapy) in a position of power and authority over others. Outcomes are a relationship based on respect, trust, and a greater understanding of each other’s position in the relationship considering various dynamics of power and privilege.
The theme of academic growth seemed to be facilitated by the dual roles, as indicated by the following student response:

A clear benefit...was the depth of learning possible when [faculty] have the opportunity to observe the student in multiple contexts and thus respond with feedback and observations informed by a variety of experiences and based on varied data. As a result...[I have been able] to [gain] valuable insight and been given opportunities to integrate complex concepts and increase self-awareness with the result of increased professional competence.

Another student stated, “because they know me...more fully...they are thus able to assist me in integrating who I am with what I do.” Other students discuss the benefits of being in these dual roles as opportunities to be involved professionally such as “successful collaboration,” “constant opportunities for publications and presentations,” and “being treated like a colleague...co-writing, co-authoring a published article.”

Characteristics of Unsuccessful Dual Relationships

Unexpectedly, faculty and students did not report many negative experiences involving dual roles. Moreover, the experiences reported were very similar for students and faculty. Both students and faculty reported one main theme, the blurring of boundaries. However, the outcome of the blurring of boundaries was articulated differently by students and faculty.

Students. Students felt that this blurring often led to an abuse of power. The blurring of boundaries was a theme present in the description by students who reported having a negative experience with a faculty member in a dual role. An example of this theme can be seen in the following student statement:
The professor that supervises me in an assistantship setting served on the same committee as I did in a local organization and turned to me in the middle of the meeting and began to give me ‘orders’ as if we were conducting research. Another student stated, “[In supervision,] I grieved my grade. Then in the course I was in, the [same instructor]… was clearly biased toward me.” Additionally, a student reported, [I thought he wanted to] collaborate…on a journal article…he wanted to have an affair.”

Faculty. Faculty responses also revealed the same theme of the blurring of boundaries. However, instead of this leading to an abuse of power, these participants seemed to indicate that a breakdown in the relationship between self and student was an outcome. An example of this can be seen in the following statement: “One student was upset that I would have a friendly relationship with some students and not with others.” Another participant stated, “[I asked a] student to watch and feed our dogs…I was annoyed and disappointed that the student did not do as agreed.” Additionally, a participant explained how the breakdown in the relationship between student and faculty member can also affect students’ learning and thus, clients. The following dual relationship involved an instructor/ supervisor with the same student. While in the supervisor role, the faculty member felt the student was not being honest with supervision issues; the student stated she was doing things in the class the instructor was unaware of. As a result of this interaction, there was a breakdown in the faculty student relationship. The faculty member stated, [the student] dismissed my ideas rather than integrate them or decide to not use them—it was more of a reactive dismissal. I think that this may have harmed [the] relationship with [the] client; it definitely harmed our relationship because [the student] became less able to interact with me at an honest level.
Strategies to Create Positive Dual Relationships

The category “strategies to help create positive dual relationships” was developed by specifically looking at two questions posed in the web survey. One was “In the relationship you just described above, what strategies did you employ to keep this relationship successful? What did you do to keep this dual relationship from being harmful to yourself or the other person in this dyad?” The second one was, “In the relationship you just described above, what could you or the other person in the relationship have done differently to prevent this from being unsuccessful?” After the student responses to these two questions were analyzed, four main themes were revealed: boundaries, respect, communication, and awareness.

Boundaries. Students felt that one important strategy either they or the faculty member employed that was helpful was to maintain appropriate boundaries. This theme was revealed in the following student statement: “I think the faculty member did a great job of not crossing lines that should not have been crossed and keeping appropriate boundaries.” Another student stated, [the faculty member was] clear in maintaining professional boundaries…. [he/she was] clear, and I responded consistent[ly] to [the] message.” Students also were active in maintaining boundaries, as seen by this student’s statement: “I had to remind myself to separate my experience with him or her in class from my experience during supervision.” An interesting facet revealed in these themes is that more often the students seem to look to the faculty members and how they handled the dual relationship to see how they, themselves, should act.

Respect. Students seem to think that an important strategy they employed was to be respectful of the faculty members and their positions. Several students gave examples of this idea in the following statements: “I treat my supervisor with the same respect inside and outside of the supervision room,” and “I respected the professional and personal boundaries of all concerned
(e.g. I did not over disclose personal information; I did not ask for favors of any kind).” Other students discussed the importance of reciprocal respect and explained that this was important in keeping the relationship successful. It was important to not only show respect but also to receive respect. This is illustrated in the following statement: [It] was important...for me to respect his/her space and time as it was for him/her to respect mine.” Another student revealed the power of respecting and being respected:

I always approached the relationship with a deep respect for the position the professor held….I made sure that I genuinely appreciated the respect I felt from the professor. During disagreements or differences of ideas this professor demonstrated the same respect….Ultimately, and in no linear order, (a) I respected the professor’s position; (b) the professor realized the respect I held; (c) the professor respected me for who I was; (d) I gained an appreciation and respect for the person the professor was.

Within this theme, another student discussed how respect for hierarchy was the main strategy she/he employed to maintain a good relationship. This is seen in the following statement:

The main strategy I employed was to maintain respect of the hierarchy…Along with recognizing this hierarchy is to show respect to the professor even when disagreeing with them at times. I show respect by maintaining boundaries, such as listening to [their] ideas, scheduling appointment around their schedules, giving advanced notice when needing to cancel, being active in class discussion….I have seen students approach [a] professor…with an attitude of entitlement….I think what these students are missing is the view of hierarchy and that these professors deserve students respect. It is through maintaining this hierarchy and respect that others respond.
While students view respect in different ways or are respectful in different ways, respect clearly is important in creating a successful dual relationship.

*Communication.* Since these relationships are complex, it is not unexpected that open communication would be a strategy viewed as important in maintaining good relationships, especially dual relationships. Students relayed the significance of communication as a strategy in the following statements: “Clear communication about boundaries of each role. Continuous dialogue about keeping ourselves in check,” “we spoke specifically about the differences in our roles,” “took steps to keep communication open and fluid,” “using clear communication; not being afraid to ask my questions.” As one can see, communication provided a space to talk about the relationship and possibly prevented negative interactions from spiraling out of control and damaging the relationship.

*Awareness.* Another strategy revealed in the students’ responses was awareness. Students seemed to feel it was helpful for them to be aware, as seen in these statements: “I kept conscious of the two roles that [he/she] played,” “it was important for me to be aware that no matter how close our relationship seemed, they were still in a position of power, and that position must be respected,” and “just keeping myself aware of my contributions to the relationship to make sure I wasn’t sending any mixed messages, etc. was what I did to keep the relationship from being harmful.” While students indicated that they needed to be aware, others voiced the importance of faculty awareness, as exemplified by the following statement:

I felt that I was not the person in the relationship who shouldered the responsibly to keep it successful—especially considering the power dynamics. I felt that I concerned myself with being open and honest and that my supervisor/professor consistently showed [his/her] desire to be accountable for [her/his] position in the relationship.
Awareness was present in many forms, but the significant component is being aware that the dual relationship exists and, as such, being thoughtful. This was voiced by one student’s statement: “First of all, acknowledge it was a dual relationship—be transparent about it. Second, pay attention to dynamics.”

Each of the themes presented, boundaries, respect, open communication, and awareness, seems to be connected to one another, leaving the researcher to wonder whether one can exist without the others.

Strategies revealed in the faculty responses were similar to those revealed in the students’ responses. Faculty also felt that awareness and open communication were strategies they used to keep dual relationships successful. In addition to these themes, faculty also discussed minimizing potential risks. The importance of awareness of their role and the dual relationship is seen in the following statements: “I am careful to keep in mind, at least in my own mind, the boundaries, rules, roles, etc. associated with each relationship,” “I am very careful to not take my power for granted and assume that it isn’t there,” “I am very sensitive to issues of power,” and “I…make [the student] aware of the costs and benefits of [being in this dual relationship].’’ While awareness seemed to help produce success, faculty, as did students, highlighted the importance of communicating about the dual relationship. This theme was exemplified in the following statements: “I discuss this openly and do not hesitate to name different roles in order to help clarify a particular interaction,” “we frequently talk about how we are managing the teacher/trainee portion of the relationship,” and “we did a lot of talking about the relationship.” Providing a space to discuss the dual relationship and the complications seems to result in fewer difficulties. Faculty in this study also discussed different specific strategies they performed in these relationships to try and minimize the potential harm that can develop in dual relationships.
Faculty tried to minimize harm by “[providing] written supervision contracts with boundaries openly acknowledged,” and “[allowing] no outside socializing.” Some faculty participants explained, “I always check in with students to see how the relationship is working for [students],” “I take major responsibility for potential difficulties,” “I try not to overstep my boundaries as [a] professor,” “[I] tried to minimize the number of times I was in an evaluative position of this student’s work,” and “I didn’t discuss other students or faculty. I didn’t put them in a position of taking care of me. I didn’t share extremely personal information [or] ask them to share extremely personal information, although we both talked about our families.”

Type of Training Received

Both faculty and students reported a wide range of training received, from little to in-depth knowledge of dual relationships between faculty and students. Most had at least received training on dual relationships while participating in an ethics course. Several students and faculty members reported having specific information on dual relationships between faculty and students. A sub-sample indicated that they had in-depth knowledge about dual relationships between faculty and students. This entailed attending workshops specific to dual relationships between faculty and students, conducting and/or reading research in this area, and, for some of the faculty in this sub-sample, teaching and/or leading workshops in this area.

Perception by Participants of Dual Relationships in the MFT Profession

Faculty and students’ responses indicated a wide discrepancy exists regarding how the field views dual relationships and can range from complete avoidance to acceptance. Some see them as beneficial. Several statements made by faculty and students reflect this confusion: “Negatively,” “as a whole, I think the profession…prefers for dual relationships to be avoided if at all possible,” “generally frown on them,” “my impression is that the profession views them as
bad and manipulative,” “dual relationships are inevitable,” and “I...think that the profession views these relationships favorably.” These responses seem to reflect the confusion that is present in the research and among professionals in MFT.

Fear. As the field grapples with how to handle dual relationships, we seem to be sending a message to students advocating fear surrounding this issue. This fear is seen in students’ statements regarding how they think the profession views dual relationships: “I had one professor who refused to talk to students in the supermarket out of fear of ‘improper boundaries.’” Another student told this story:

One professor told us a story in which she was at a faculty function with several of her students, [and] she refused to get on the dance floor for fear of it being deemed inappropriate....I thought this was extreme, but then again I have never had a dual relationship [in which I was the supervisor].

Additionally, another student explained, “my sense is that the idea of ‘dual’ relationships scares the heck out of most in the profession.”

This fear has also spread to responses made by students indicating that they do not have dual relationships with faculty. Some appear to believe that having a dual relationship means something bad has to happen. This is illustrated in the following participant’s response: “I haven’t experienced a dual relationship with a faculty member. In all cases, each faculty member in the program has kept good boundaries.” This fear may lead to the real issue being masked. As one faculty member explained,

I think many in the profession are phobic about dual relationships....I think that using sledgehammers to fix staples is unnecessary and that clarity is essential....I hear way too many people talking about dual relationships when I believe the issue is related to
exploitation….It is possible to exploit a student in a sole relationship (e.g. grade them unfairly because we don’t like their opinions). Thus, a concern is that the fear being sent to students to run from dual relationships may hide the actual ethical issue, exploitation.

*Lack of guidelines.* However, the fear felt by students may be beneficial given the lack of guidelines available to deal with these relationships. Students discussed how dual relationships do not get enough attention and explained that they are concerned that they will not know how to work with these issues. One student stated, “It seems that no one talks about the dual relationships until there is a problem. That sounds like far too many of the clients we treat.”

Another stated, “I don’t think we address the potential implications very clearly.” Additionally, a student acknowledged,

As a whole, I feel that the MFT profession doesn’t put enough emphasis on this relationship and the complexity that is involved….I feel that it is a relationship that is often overlooked…as if this relationship should be easy to maintain.

Lastly, a student discussed how this lack of guidance influences her/his ability to handle these relationships. “Professors try to avoid them, which is bad for students. Knowing how to interact on different levels with professionals is an important part of our education.”

*Faculty members’ desire for change.* While many faculty and students indicated that the field may view dual relationships as something to be avoided, they see this as faulty thinking and would like to see a change. For example, one participant stated,

[The] profession prefers dual relationships to be avoided if at all possible (found in Code of Ethics), but realistically, this is not possible. We need to spend some time thinking about dual relationships and how to deal with this most realistic possibility….We need
more open discussion about dual relationships instead of running in fear from the possibility.

Another participant stated, “AAMFT makes dual relationships something to be avoided as much as possible….I think that policy is too rigid and sterile.”

Phase Two

Participant Profiles

Phone interviews, which lasted approximately 60-90 minutes, were conducted with five dyads consisting of three master’s students and two doctoral students, representing four COAMFTE accredited programs, and respective faculty members whom students identified as the people with whom they had successful dual relationships. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, I have chosen pseudonyms for each and have altered other identifiable markers.

Dyad 1: Sally & Virginia. Sally is a 36-year-old master’s student who was recently completing her first year and was going to start working with clients the following month. Sally described her relationship with Virginia by explaining that she was a student in a couple of classes and a research assistant. Sally also explained they have traveled together to a conference and in the near future will be sharing a room while presenting at a conference. Virginia is a 56-year-old associate professor who has been working in academia for about 11 years. Virginia described their relationship as one that “hasn’t been that long….she was in my research class…and I was working on a project that she was interested in working on as well,…[she became] a graduate assistant, and we expanded into the summer.” Additionally, there is a social aspect to their relationship, as Virginia explained in the following statement:

We have several social events that relate more to faculty as a group and graduate assistants as a group, like the end of the year picnic…and have [we] lunch and a holiday
party…so there is sort of a blurring, not technically a social relationship, but yes, in some ways it is.

While this social role is more confined to a group, there is also movement toward more one-one-one social situations, such as sharing a room at a conference where they are co-presenters; thus, a collegial relationship is also evident.

Dyad 2: Rebecca & George. Rebecca is a 29-year-old master’s student who was just about to graduate from a marriage and family therapy program. George is 51 years old and is an associate professor and director of the MFT program. He has been a professor for 15 years and has been program director for 12 years. George and Rebecca have known each other for two years. Rebecca reported that he has “been my professor, my supervisor, and I’ve done co-therapy with [him], and I would consider [him] in many respects a friend. [He] helped me through a lot of personal stuff.” Rebecca stated that she has been in three of his classes, has done about six hours of co-therapy, and has been in the supervisee role for about a year. George described his Rebecca’s roles in the relationship as student and supervisee. He also stated, “[we have] mutual interests, she got a new dog, and I’ve talked to her about training it, dog equipment.” When asked if he would call them friends, George answered, “Yes.”

Dyad 3: Emily & Michael. Emily is a 25-year-old master’s student who was about to graduate from the MFT program. Michael is 53 years old and is an adjust professor and full time clinician in private practice. Michael has been in academia for about 10 years. Emily and Michael have known each other for about two years, and she described their relationship in the following statement: “I’ve had classes with him, I’ve volunteered at his private practice, [and served as a] graduate assistant, [and] I’ve socialized with him [in groups].” Socializing has consisted of social gatherings involving holiday parties with the program, going out to eat, and
going out for drinks. Michael reflected on their relationship and discussed the multiples roles that they have had to negotiate:

She has been a student in at least two of my classes, and she approached me to ask me if there was any work that she could possibly do at my practice. I told her I would think it over, and after two weeks,…I asked her if she would be interested in doing some filing and organizing charts and she [agreed]…. [Also] at times there is a social interaction in a group function with a number of other students, say at the end of the semester dinner/celebration…and then occasionally some students going out to listen to music have invited me along, and Emily has been a part of that group…. Her husband is a musician, so occasionally they invite me to listen to them play music

Dyad 4: Rhonda & Sam. Rhonda is 38 years old and currently employed as an ABD faculty member. Rhonda and Sam have known each other for about 15 years and have had a long-standing relationship that started when she was a student in one of his classes as an undergraduate. Describing their relationship, in her own words, Rhonda stated,

He was an undergrad professor of mine, and I assisted in one of his classes, was a teaching assistant in one of his classes, and we worked together as co-therapists. He’s been my supervisor in supervision, and we’ve gone out to lunch together, sometimes to discuss stuff, and he’s also my major professor for my dissertation. He’s been a friend as well for most of that time…. [Also] he knows my children [and has been around them as they have] grown up.

Sam is 57 years old and has been a full professor since 1980. He was just finishing his 31st year in the program. Sam revealed the nature of his long-standing relationship with Rhonda and discussed how it has evolved over the years in the following statement:
[Rhonda] was originally an undergraduate in a class I was teaching…and I needed discussion group leaders and Rhonda volunteered….Now this is the early eighties. She wound up leaving [upon completing her undergraduate degree]…we kind of stayed in touch, and when I had a meeting in XXX I would go over and tell her I was coming in, [and] we would have lunch or coffee or catch dinner or something like that, and sometimes my wife and Rhonda and I, and sometimes just Rhonda and I, and other times Scott (Rhonda’s husband), Rhonda, and I…. [Then] she came back here and I was a professor for her master’s, and she said ‘hey, we know each other real well, I should probably get someone else as my major professor,” so then she did but [people kept leaving] so then I said, “Okay, let me do this,” so I finished up her masters and then she was in the doctoral program, so we did everything in the doctoral program and then toward the end of the program she got what she thought was her ideal job, so she [left] but was ABD….We tried to work on the dissertation but over the miles, it is difficult.

Dyad 5: Lucy & Tim. Lucy is 28 years old and a recent graduate from a PhD program in marriage and family therapy. This dual relationship is one in which Tim was her supervisor, co-presenter, and instructor, and she considers him her friend. When describing this friendship, Lucy stated, “it was a professional friendship…we would go to lunch, I mean with other colleagues, not always talking about clients and supervision but outside stuff, about his family, life, about how that was and dinner at his house….Also, he went to my wedding.” Tim is a 48-year-old associate professor and described his role in his relationship with Lucy as teacher, supervisor, director, and committee member. This relationship was also a long-standing one that began about four years ago when Lucy was a master’s student.
Phase Two: Finding

Interviews

In analyzing the interviews, the researcher was informed by critical incident methodology. The critical incident for this study was a successful dual relationship; thus, the researcher kept two questions at the forefront: What are the characteristics of a successful dual relationship, and what strategies do students and faculty use to create successful dual relationships? After the interviews were analyzed, two main themes emerged: characteristics of success and strategies for success. These themes highlighted what faculty and students did to facilitate success. Additionally, there was an overarching theme that seemed to permeate all the participants’ interviews: being active. Table 7 provides an overview of the themes found in the interviews.
Table 7. Overview of Themes

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*Being Active*

A major theme found was the amount of activity present in these relationships. Faculty members and students were active in creating good relationships. When asked by the researcher
what the other person in the relationship did to help maintain a successful relationship, each
person rattled off a list of things that the other person did. When asked what they themselves did,
the participants easily generated another list. Students and faculty discussed a wide range of
activities they performed to keep these relationships successful. The activities that students and
faculty members employed ranged from being aware to implementing specific strategies to
prevent harm.

*Characteristics of Success*

The second theme, characteristics of success, encapsulates the personalities of these
dyads, which appeared to facilitate successful dual relationships. This theme had six sub-themes:
(a) student characteristics, (b) faculty characteristics, (c) nurturance, (d) trust, (e) awareness, (f)
‘being a person,’ (g) decreased hierarchy/equality, and (h) mutual respect. Table 8 provides an
overview of this theme.
Table 8. Overview of the Theme: Characteristics of Success

<table>
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<th>Sub-Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nurturance</td>
<td>An environment which contains essential elements needed to facilitate growth and help create a healthy environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Ability to give someone the ‘benefit of doubt’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Ability to be conscious of the complexities in a dual relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Being a person’</td>
<td>Faculty’s willingness to acknowledge that they are human</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decreased hierarchy/power</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Respect</td>
<td>Ability to give respect and receive respect</td>
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*Student Characteristics.* When asked about indicators that the relationship was successful, each faculty member responded by describing the student as follows, “[she is a] hard worker,” “[she has] good demeanor,” “she was a little bit older,” “she doesn’t go off the deep end on things,” “she was the best assistant/student I ever had at that point in time,” “[she] is a
real bright person,” “she is a bright and likeable student,” “a good student,” and “very professional.”

Faculty Characteristics. Faculty in these dyads had many similarities; almost all were associate professors, with one being a full professor, and almost all had been involved in academia for at least 10 years, with some having even more experience. In bringing this knowledge and experience to the table, they have had multiple possibilities to practice dealing with this type of complex relationship. This practice has provided opportunities to learn how to navigate dual relationships, which can be a positive experience for them as well as for students. A statement made by Sam exemplifies how the faculty has changed as they have become more experienced with the complexities of these relationships:

When I started, I was more cautious because I was less sure of myself. When I started, I probably had more rules about what to do….But I was very cautious at the beginning. Then, what happens is that I loosen myself up and say, “okay, let’s see what happens.” And I think what I did was I started to loosen up and then take a step back and where I am at now, I think it flows a lot more naturally. It takes less processing on my part because I know me, and I know the situation.

Nurturance. Nurturance involves creating an environment that contains the essential elements needed to facilitate growth and help create a healthy environment. In these dyads, the elements of nurturance were connection, warmth, support, comfort, and security. These factors seemed to interconnect and build upon one another. In these successful relationships, there seems to be a connection between the faculty member and the student. George talked about how he and Rebecca have a “complimentary personality; she’s New York in your face, and I’m Chicago, so
we hit it off well.” Rebecca also felt that they had a bond, as revealed in the following statements:

I am able to connect with him…[our] personalities click…[and] I feel comfortable in the relationship. I feel that he feels comfortable in the relationship,…and if there is any discomfort, well, it’s just a very open and honest relationship [because] our personalities click, and we’re able to maintain that relationship.

Another way faculty and students connected was having similar interests. When the researcher asked Rhonda if there was anything else that helped along the way to make the relationship work between her and Sam, she replied,

Similar interests certainly help. I like adolescents, he likes adolescents. He’s a sex educator and a sex therapist, and I have been a sex educator for a long time. He never parented, but he watched us parent our children, and I think he really appreciated the way we did that. I know he’s always kind of considered himself an uncle for the kids, so I think certainly that has helped along the way. It’s always easier to get along with somebody that has similar interests.

Sam also highlighted why he thinks he and Rhonda have a successful relationship:

Rhonda has children; I have none. She is fairly Republican and fairly religious, I’m less institutionally religious, although my minor is in theology and philosophy, and I’m about as liberal as they get. So what the hell do these people see in each other? Because her heart burns for people who are in trouble, and so does mine…. [Also] we’re a really good as a therapeutic team. We play off each other like you wouldn’t believe. And see the weird part about it, Rhonda and I like each other….There’s some kindred spirit in there.
Sally described her relationship with Virginia, “There is a real genuine warmth which allows me to feel that there is a mutual likeableness.” Sally explained, “we get along together, we work well together, there’s a mutual like that I feel.” Virginia revealed how the mutual interests she and Sally share led to the dual relationship evolving from student to student/research assistant: “I was working on a project that she was interested in working on as well.” Also, Virginia believes that their relationship is successful because she “enjoys working with her.”

Another key element present in the category of nurturance was support, as illustrated by Rhonda: “Sam has been a great supporter of me for many years.” Rhonda gave an example of the type of support and caring that Sam has given her:

I was a couple of days late paying my tuition one semester, and I lived out of town….I called the registrar’s office and said, “it cost you more than 10 cents to send me the stupid letter that I owed you ten cents. Can’t we tag it onto next year?” No, you can’t graduate; check out books or any stuff, all for ten cents. So, I emailed [Sam] and said, “Hey when you are out walking at lunch tomorrow, can you take a dime in and pay it for me?” Of course he did that for me. So, I guess I still owe him a dime.

Lucy and Emily both expressed that they felt comfort and security in their relationships. Emily explained, “I guess it’s just the sense of no matter how we are interacting, it felt like he was always looking out for my best interest, and so I felt safe.” Lucy described her experience:

“I think his humor was awesome, he made things enjoyable…he was just fun to be around, [which] takes away the nervousness and anxiety…he was a good listener, he doesn’t jump the gun on things, [and] he would always contact me back”
Trust. Several students mentioned that when there was a bump in their relationship with the faculty member that the relationship stayed healthy because there was a sense of trust. One student stated, “even though we disagreed, we still had that basic trust that he has always done what he said he would do and that has been the case.” Also, several students suggested that since there was trust they had freedom to challenge the faculty member. A statement by a student reflected this idea:

I feel there have been times he has said something that I thought was not accurate to who I am and didn’t say anything at the moment and went back and said, “I don’t think that was an accurate thing to say,” he says, “okay,” and we talk about it, and it’s okay.

A faculty member also illustrated how having trust can maintain a good relationship. Sam described this idea as the “benefit of the doubt”:

If I don’t get back to Rhonda immediately, most of the time she’ll sit there and say, “that’s Sam being Sam” or “Sam’s real busy right now,” or something like that. And she’ll cut me some slack. That’s helpful for me, because it means I can sit over here and say, “sorry I couldn’t be in three places at once,” and its my understanding that she’ll be okay with that…[So, the “benefit of the doubt”] is I’m assuming she’s thinking good thoughts about me, and I am thinking good thoughts about her…even when there is no communication. There’s no problem. The big assumption is that, whatever happens, it’s benevolent.

Several student statements highlighted this idea of having the “benefit of the doubt” towards the faculty member. One student said, “And I think at one point my feelings got hurt. And I thought about confronting him on it. But, I figured it was not personal….And later found out that I misunderstood and it wasn’t about me.” Also, another student explained, “When he did that to
[me], it’s not like [my] head popped off, so you know, it didn’t hurt [my] feelings, [I] totally understood, so I guess [I] knew that we could do the same.”

Two of the faculty members felt that an important component of their successful relationships is creating a trusting environment. One faculty participant explained, “I think I’m a pretty relaxed, easygoing person, and I think I’m honest and straight-forward with people, and they know where I stand, and they have a sense they can trust me.” Another faculty member described his role with students:

[They are] A treasure in his custody, and they are going to be learning something very difficult and we’re going to take a lot of knocks regardless of what I did, and I feel if they could survive the knocks they would get the experience to become a great therapist. So part of my job is to keep them encouraged and give them a place to grow.

Awareness. A characteristic of these successful relationships was awareness. Each faculty and student articulated how being aware of the complexities involved in this relationship helped to facilitate success. The importance of this awareness was exemplified by Sam:

Sam: I have a field. The field is 100 yards by 300 yards. The field has grass up to your chest. The object of the task is you have to walk 100 yards from one side of the field to the other. The task is which field do you choose? One of the fields has an elephant grazing in it. The other field has a rattlesnake in it. Which field do you want to go through, the one with the elephant or the rattlesnake?

Researcher: The elephant

Sam: The elephant. Think about it for a second. An elephant is much more likely to run you down over a 100 yards than a rattlesnake. An elephant is going to do much more
damage. If I give you a stick, you’d probably keep the rattlesnake away from you. The elephant can run faster than you, and yet you still choose the elephant. Why?

Researcher: Because you can see it

Sam: Bingo—what you can see makes you feel more confident. You just take a look and see where the elephant is and just go on the other side. After all, the elephant will be 300 yards away. And then you go over and just kind of sneak through. But the rattlesnake, the chances of you walking in a 100 yard by 300 yard field and cross[ing] the rattlesnake at all is minimal, but it may jump on you, you may step on it by accident.

Consequently,…what you don’t know can hurt you more than what you do.

“Being a person.” Participants felt that one reason these relationships were successful was the faculty members’ willingness to recognize and acknowledge that they are just people. Virginia stated,

I’m a person who happens to be an associate professor, I have research interests, I am a teacher, an advisor, I love all those things, and I work hard at it. That’s all of me as a person. So, in a sense, they are not separate entities. I’m not some hot-shot; I just work hard. I have an education; I’m not better than anyone else.

Acknowledging that faculty are just people seemed to decrease the hierarchy felt by the student in this dyad. Sally illustrated this view in discussing her relationship with Virginia: She’s a very authentic, genuine person who is comfortable in her own skin, and kind of knows where she begins and ends and is okay with that, and doesn’t have to hold a certain air because she doesn’t need to; she is who she is and she brings what she brings to the program.

As George explained, this awareness and acknowledgement seems to also prevent a Pollyanna view of dual relationships:
I am a person, I am always George the person; for example, in the real world I have children and I treat them differently, and that’s hard for them to learn, but they are only seven (George Jr.), four (Julie), and two (Ralph). By the time they are in graduate school, I hope they learn that. So George Jr. will get to go to the Zoo, and “Julie, while George Jr. is at the Zoo, I’m going to take you out for breakfast, and tomorrow, I’m just going to take Ralph by himself out to breakfast.” So I tell my kids, “I love you all, but I love you differently.”

Another faculty member, Sam, also acknowledged the importance of “being a person”: “Rhonda as a student and Sam as a professor, there is also Rhonda and Sam as people, and I have to always recognize that.” In discussing this aspect of being people, Sam, like George, compared working with students to being a parent and how each relationship will be different and if people try to make them the same you are denying “you are a person”:

Talk to parents who have multiple children, and one of the things they’ll do is they’ll sit and say, “I love all my children.” And that’s a truism—I think most parents do love all their children, but you don’t like them all the same way. And if you get a parent who loves all their children and is trying to love everybody equally and like everybody the same way, I’ll show you a parent that needs to come into therapy. The same thing with professors; I try to be fair to all my students whether they be students I like or student I don’t like. But the fact of the matter is that there are students I like better than others, there are students I like personally, interpersonally, there are some students I don’t particularly like to be around.

This view seems to provide faculty with a better expectation of what their relationships with students may be like and thus prevents an unrealistic ideal that can never be achieved.
**Decreased hierarchy/equality.** Faculty indicated that they tried to decrease the hierarchy or power differential in these relationships. When faculty were asked how they managed the power dynamic within these relationships, they revealed that they tried to decrease the hierarchy and create more equality. For instance, Tim explained,

> Some people like to get carried away with being a professor or the illusion of power; they can browbeat students and get away with it if it meets some need for them. But I think it is more important to work with the students, so I try and decrease the hierarchy.

Virginia expressed a similar feeling: “my power is the ability to evaluate, but I guess one thing that makes it easier is obviously there is a power differential, but I am inclined to think the approach here is more of an equalitarian relationship.” Another faculty member, George, also agreed with this idea:

> I don’t think of myself in a higher position than the students or more powerful position; we are just people who have different experiences. I am an expert, but they also bring lots of experience to the table, so I think it is important to create an environment which creates opportunities for students and faculty to share, to decrease the hierarchy so that we can learn together.

**Mutual respect.** The sub-theme mutual respect was predominantly highlighted by students. An interesting facet of this sub-theme is that students stated that their respect for faculty as well as faculty’s level respect for them was as an indicator of success. Thus, this seemed to be a key ingredient in creating relationships that are positive, especially in terms of the students’ perceptions. An outcome of this characteristic expressed by students was that if they knew they
were respected, they perceived less power/hierarchy in the relationship. This concept emerged in the interview with Emily:

    Researcher: You talked about how there is a power differential between the two of you. Can you explain more about this?
    Emily: I knew they are better educated and have been around the block, you know, but I never felt like anybody, well, that didn’t make me feel less, you know what I mean?
    Researcher: How do you think that you guys were able to do that?
    Emily: Mutual respect.
    Researcher: How do you know that he respects you?
    Emily: I guess because he was able to share certain things to soften things up….he’ll say things like “I respect what you did in that situation…It may not have been what I would have done, but as long as you are comfortable with that, it’s the right thing to do,” and he encourages it.
    Researcher: How do you show him respect?
    Emily: By first and foremost, when he sets boundaries, respecting them, and I guess just paying attention to what he is comfortable with and what he’s not.

Rhonda also talked about her respect for Sam: “I respect that he has much more experience than me and knowledge, at least general knowledge, than I do, and so I think I try really hard to be respectful of him.” When asked how she shows him respect, Rhonda stated, “I ask for advice, then I listen to his advice and…[when] I challenge him or question him…I am always respectful in the way that I do that.” Then Rhonda discussed how this respect is also reciprocated by him, and she punctuates this by saying, “he’s always accepted my challenging of him.” She also explained, “he’s challenged me a number of times as well, so I guess from that perspective, it
feels like a fairly egalitarian relationship.” This idea that respect facilitates a feeling of more equality between the student and faculty was also emphasized by Sally in the following statements:

[Virginia] really appreciates my hard work, so she’s acknowledged my hardworking attitude and that she thanks me for my time in making things happen or pulling a meeting together….In fact, we just presented research a couple of weeks ago, and she wanted to list my name as second and there are four principle investigators and I was gong to list my name as fifth….[this] acknowledge[ment] of my work goes a long way….to be recognized is helpful.

Lucy highlighted the importance of mutual respect in creating a positive experience. Lucy said, “I respect him by being on time, doing well, look[ing] to him for advice, and tell[ing] him how much I appreciate what he has done for me.” When asked how he shows her respect, Lucy replied,

He has shown me respect by not abusing power; although he challenged me in a lot of ways he never put me in a position he did not think I could not handle….Respect by knowing I had other interests in my life such as a boyfriend, family, so he took an interests in outside things. He showed me respect by if I show up on time he shows up on time. He doesn’t keep me waiting….he also lets me try to process things on my own strengths and abilities.

Rebecca shared in her interview that she feels her relationship with George was successful because “we’ve developed a more mutually respecting relationship.” In explaining how she knows she is respected by George, Rebecca claimed that respect is also one way to convey that one person will not use the power dynamic against the other:
I feel like he listens to me, he listens to my opinion, he respects my emotional boundaries and doesn’t push me too far when he knows that’s not what I need or want, or when I express that to him. So in that sense, I feel he is very respectful….Also [I respect him by] not asking for him to overstep what I believe to be his comfort level and maybe even asking about his comfort level.

*Strategies for Success*

Strategies for success are the techniques used by the participants in the study to create successful relationships. Under the category “strategies for success,” there were eight sub-themes. These themes included (a) checking, (b) communicating openly, (c) having visible boundaries, (d) navigating boundaries, (e) assessing risk, (f) decreasing hierarchy/power, and (g) giving advice. Table 9 provides an overview of this theme.
### Table 9. Overview of the Theme: Strategies for Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checking</td>
<td>Maintaining an internal dialogue to remain aware of how students and faculty were managing the dual relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating openly</td>
<td>Openly talking with each other about the relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having visible boundaries</td>
<td>Making the boundaries that exist in the dual relationship visible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigating boundaries</td>
<td>Managing the boundaries in the dual relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing risk</td>
<td>Looking for signs to see if they should enter a dual relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreasing hierarchy</td>
<td>Facilitating a more equalitarian or collegial relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving advice</td>
<td>Revealing how they learned to deal with dual relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Checking.* In the web survey, one theme that was present for strategies used by both faculty and students was being aware of the dual relationship. Faculty and students who
participated in these interviews seemed to increase their awareness by using internal checking of the situation. Rhonda described this technique: “it’s continually checking with myself as well as with whoever I’m working with. If it feels like things are changing or like they need to change, it’s saying, okay, let’s go back and revisit who we are in this situation.” Another student, Rebecca, also stated,

It is about being honest and continuously checking, because I think there is an obvious power differential, and if you are not careful, that can disrupt the relationship, so I think part of it for us is just always checking. Okay, are we meeting each other on the same page?

This internal checking behavior seems to facilitate awareness of one’s boundaries and whether the boundaries are being crossed. Virginia explained this idea:

I guess just knowing what the roles are and again being intentional, checking myself—am I getting this mixed up, am I approaching [the student] the way I should as a teacher, am I approaching [him/her] the way I should, am I divorcing myself from what happened in this arena, rather than letting what happened affect how I work in the other.

George also talked about internal checking and how this helps him to maintain boundaries, but in his internal dialogue he asks himself about what others might think. “If I can imagine myself saying to [my wife or to a colleague] I just did this, and [she/he] doesn’t looked shocked, then it’s probably okay. Like if I said I had lunch with two female students and talked about this, then I’m okay. If I can’t imagine that, I start to worry.” Sam also uses checking as a strategy; however, instead of having an internal dialogue, he discussed the relationship with others to check and uses this to gauge if the relationship is staying on the right track. He discussed what this means for him: “I think that part of it is processing through the relationship, not only in
terms of Rhonda and I, but also in terms of how [my wife] felt and feels about it and how [Rhonda’s significant other] feels about it, and so we’ve spent a lot of time checking up.”

Open communication. Another theme also revealed in the web survey was open communication. This theme was highlighted by the interview participants as a strategy for success. Sally illustrated the importance of open communication as she explained that some of the dual relationships she has had that were not as positive as the one with Virginia because “I would wonder what they are really thinking, or are they telling me what they are really thinking.” But in her relationship with Virginia, Sally revealed, “[Virginia] can be very direct and very blunt, and so I appreciate knowing what she’s thinking, but [she can] also be warm and friendly about it, and so she is not threatening.” Another student, Rebecca, indicated how essential communication can be in creating a feeling of comfort. “I feel comfortable…I feel that he feels comfortable, I feel that if boundaries are crossed we are able to discuss that, if there is any discomfort, well, it’s just a very open and honest relationship.” Additionally, Sam illustrated the importance of communication in his relationship with Rhonda:

I laid our ground rules pretty early,…I said to her that I work on ‘high information exchange.’ I would rather have you tell me if you are [upset]….It means that sometimes you make more ado about something than you have to, but it also means that things don’t slide between the cracks.

Sam also believes that if there is ‘high information’ exchange, than it is less likely for miscommunication to occur, “because when you have a lot of silence in the relationship, then you fill that with spooky kinds of things and that’s not what we want to do.” Additionally, Sam stresses to Rhonda, “when in doubt shout it out.” Sam believes that this technique frees the
student and himself. Sam stated that by “shouting it out you are making the covert, which is making you very uneasy, much more overt, and once it’s overt you can work it overtly together.”

Visible boundaries. Another theme voiced in the web survey was the importance of boundaries in creating a positive dual relationship. One goal in the interviews was to find what faculty and students are doing or learn about behaviors they are using to generate success. One technique revealed by the interviews is the ability to make boundaries, which are invisible lines (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998), visible. One way this was done by the participants was to be overt and just state, “this is a boundary.” For instance, Emily says that when a boundary is being crossed, Michael would just say, “I don’t think this is appropriate for us to talk about.” For Emily, this helped her to know where the boundary was and gave her freedom, as seen in the following comment: “It’s all about boundaries. And knowing where, and also too, the freedom with each other to say, this is my boundary, you crossed it, or hey you are getting close.” George provided an example of how he draws a boundary: “[she] would say, ‘you look like you are having a rough time,’ and I’d say, ‘yeah I am,’ and she’d say, ‘wish I could help you,’ and I would say, ‘I wish you could too.’” George described another example of this kind of boundary setting: “if she asked me if she could ask me a personal question. I would say, ‘sure, you can ask it, but I may not answer it.’”

Another strategy used by the participants to make the boundaries more visible was to clearly state when they were changing roles, which means changing the rules that govern the boundaries. For example, Rhonda explained how she and Sam do this: “we’ll deliberately say, ‘okay, I’m switching into this role now.’ And certainly there have been a couple of times when I’ve said, ‘okay are you telling me this as a professor or this as a friend, what role is this coming from?’.” Sam also explained that in his relationship with Rhonda he would explicitly state the
boundary: “Now on phone calls, we drift into some personal stuff, and we might not say much, but if it goes beyond two or three minutes, we’ll label it, and it’s kind of making territory.” Sam then went on to provide a great analogy for thinking about how to make boundaries visible:

There is movie about this guy from Washington who goes off to study wolves in the wilderness in Alaska. And what happens is, he goes over and marks off the territory by peeing on the other side of the tree, and he marks off the territory, and the wolf respects this boundary. Well, that’s the same thing; we’re making territory on this stuff, and I think we have to make sure that we do a good job of it….The more overtly we can do it, probably the less trouble we get into under those circumstances.

Another strategy used by faculty and students was the idea of a ‘clean slate’ or the act of separating one role from another. Virginia believes it is important to use this idea of a ‘clean slate’:

As I walk into class, what [the student] does as a graduate assistant has nothing to do with what she does or does not do in research class or as a student of mine. The importance is that it is a clean slate, nothing to do with what’s over here.

Michael also described how to effectively negotiate dual relationships: “I just generally keep what’s said or done separate.”

Students also illustrate the use of the technique of a ‘clean slate,’ as discussed by Sally, “So even though my job and my school are in the same place and I get taught by and work for the same person, I like to maintain clarity around the right time for each.”

Another technique mentioned by faculty for keeping a ‘clean slate’ is to blindly grade student papers or to check to make sure that they are not grading one student more or less leniently than another. For instance, Virginia explained,
If I know one student better than other students…there’s a potential problem, but I have
to make sure when I’m grading papers I grade blindly, or if I can’t do that I check myself
by saying, “I’m looking at this paper this way because it’s XXX or because it’s the way
the paper’s written.”

Faculty and students described additional techniques they use to ensure the success of dual
relationships: “Be clear about what the expectations are,” “If I was not able to do the ‘clean
slate’ thing, I would consult,” “Be purposeful about it,” “[You can do improve the relationship
by] being deliberate, thinking ahead, being explicit, anticipating what potential pitfalls there
could be and how you’d want to handle them,” “I think you have to watch the boundaries and sit
there and say what works and what doesn’t work,” Sally described her approach as follows:

I have to respond to my own listening that way. Like my own listening to my sense that I
have to employ appropriate boundaries myself and not ask the [faculty member] to place
those boundaries, like not knock on her door all day, or at a certain time of day when I
know that he/she is involved in something else.

Navigating boundaries. The sub-theme of navigating boundaries emerged from the
interviews as students and faculty revealed that one way they managed the boundaries was to
follow the other’s lead. Several students indicated that they followed the professor’s lead in
navigating the relationship. Sally, for instance, explained,

I let her lead the relationship because I’m just a student and only the employee. I’ll let her
lead, like I don’t ask her about her personal life, or anything that is extracurricular, but if
she brings something up I’m happy to have a conversation, and so in a way I let her lead
because in a way, since it is a dual relationship, and I haven’t had a dual relationship in
this setting….I mainly deferred to her, because it’s a new setting for me.
Another student, Emily, stated, “I think that to a certain extent, it has to be [the faculty member’s] responsibility to say at times, but then it’s also up to the other person to respect that.” Rebecca also believes that the faculty member needs to set an example: “I agree with the fact that the therapist is responsible for maintaining certain boundaries that apply to the code of ethics. The patient is not the one responsible…in the same sense, the faculty member…has the professional experience.” Additionally, Rhonda believes that

The responsibility falls on the person in power…Sometimes, as the person in power myself, I’ve given the other person a choice and honored and respected that, but I still hold myself responsible for making it absolutely clear what the choices are for making the environment safe enough.

A a faculty member, Virginia agrees that the faculty member should provide the structure. Part of that structure involves safety and a positive relationship: “I’m responsible for that, definitely, not the student. [It should be] a relationship where the student would feel comfortable saying, ‘I’m not comfortable, I don’t understand, any of that,’ where they are not going to be judged harshly, criticized.”

Also, Sam, a faculty member, illustrated why he thinks “boundaries are dictated predominantly by the professor,” in the following statement:

Remember the first time you had a practicum? You walked in and you had that first supervisor, and the two of you sat down. Suppose the supervisor sat down and said, “Okay, do you want to talk about your expectations, or do you want to talk about my expectations?” What would you say? Researcher: His! Sam: Right. Why his? Researcher: Because you don’t know what yours are yet? Sam: Right. [the supervisor] is the one who
has done this before, I haven’t. Well, the same thing with a student. Most students haven’t had this kind of tutorial.

However, George pointed out that if a faculty member follows the lead of the student instead of being the leader, she/he may be more respectful of the student’s boundaries: “The way it works for me is I follow people’s lead. If they want to get personal or get close, I am open to that and I am available to that, but if they want to keep private to themselves then I respect that also.”

Assessing risk. One strategy reported by the faculty was to assess whether adding the complexity of a dual relationship was sound. Virginia discussed that she looks for “signs that are already there that this might not be a good idea, and if there aren’t any signs,…any obvious risks,…go ahead.” Other faculty members also look for signs to indicate if adding a role would be wise. Michael explained, “I guess one of the things I consider is the maturity of the person, and if they understand boundaries and how to keep boundaries separate and are also open to discussing that they are clear.”

To assess the risk, faculty used several techniques. One technique was to assess the current relationship, as illustrated by a response made by Virginia:

If I were having difficulty being fair [or] if I thought the student wasn’t giving 100%, I don’t know [about] adding another complicated feature to it, but since the relationship is going well, then it could mess it up potentially, but [that’s] unlikely.

Sam also discussed his relationship with Rhonda and how this influences if he can have this type of relationship, as revealed in the following statement: “She doesn’t go off the deep end of things. I’ve had students that, if you can’t call them back in five minutes, they have apoplexy. That’s not an easy student to work with.” Michael described his approach:
[I] use my own clinical judgment to assess characteristics, and I think their performance in the classroom and some of the comments they make in class are preliminary indicators of where they are maturity wise and where they are in terms of their understanding, and I guess, also too, sometimes people’s life experiences make them able to understand and negotiate this relationship in terms of boundaries. I also want to add that there is probably at some point and time something I observe directly, sometimes I can tell an intuitive feeling of someone who is capable of doing that or I wouldn’t enter into this kind of thing.

George has his wife assist him in assessing if someone would be a good candidate to invite into another role, a more personal role:

[My wife] is pretty good at helping with that….Like [my wife] said, “hey XXX is pretty sharp, I like XXX, let’s have her babysit,” and I think, “wow, okay. I’m comfortable with XXX, and she’s not the type that’s going to have problems or like any major problems like where XXX and XXX, maybe a student who is struggling.”

Decreasing hierarchy. Within this sub-theme there are two main strategies used by faculty and students to decrease the power dynamic that is present in these relationships. One is to acknowledge that it exists, and two is to enable faculty to reveal vulnerability,

Acknowledgement that this type of relationship is different and comes with complexities is one way these participants managed the power differential. Michael indicates that he openly communicates that “this is a dual relationship, what it will be like, and I make sure they understand this and the nature of a dual relationship.” Additionally, Emily highlighted that this awareness was one way she tried to keep the relationship positive: “I guess just never lost focus on what our real relationship is, even with having a social relationship…but we never lost focus
that he in a position of power.” George also explained that he was always aware that he is in a different position and relays this to students: “I’m a different person than XXX, I’m in a different position, so I can’t do that.”

A second strategy that was shared by students was that they felt faculty did create a sense of equality, or less hierarchy, in the relationship by revealing their vulnerability. This idea is addressed by Rebecca:

It’s been a give and take so I don’t feel like I’m just pouring stuff out to him and he’s taking it in. I feel like he meets me there…. [Also, he] opens himself, becomes more vulnerable himself, shares some of his own personal struggles.

Lucy also discussed that “when [Tim] talked about his own personal experiences…I really like that. It shows the human side of someone and [their] growing process,” and Emily stated, “I ask him about personal issues; he shared with me some personal things going on in his life.” Additionally, Sally talked about the importance of “admitting [the faculty member’s] own shortcomings” in helping to decrease the hierarchal nature in the relationship.

When asked how to decrease hierarchy between himself and the students George responded, “[by] showing them you have flaws.” Lucy stated that Tim tried to break down the power and when asked how, she replied, “by showing us his mistakes he made in therapy….The biggest influences was him [Tim] showing us a video tape of him doing therapy when he was a student and making mistakes.”

Advice. When faculty members were asked how they managed boundaries, two of them discussed how they learned to do this. These faculty members took a more black and white view until they had more experience. Michael was the one to illustrate this ‘black and white’ view:
…very clear distinctions between relationships, so it wouldn’t be that one relationship was black and one was white…it is a way to make a point, because it is a professor and a student; those are certainly one type of person versus another type of person, so you would make distinctions between people and their roles. So when I talk about black and white, all I’m talking about is very clear defined levels, so to speak, around what roles people may play….So, I think if you start with a very clear idea of what black and white is, it makes it much more possible to negotiate the gray areas and then to pull back to the black and white distinctions….This gives you a keen awareness of when you are in a gray area, and you are then very conscious of entering into that gray area. So you start with professor and student and say, “these are the rules, now you know.” Then you add a social role, which is a gray area. I know clearly that I am a professor stepping into a gray area, i.e. social interaction with students, so I am very cognizant of this shift.

Another faculty member agrees. She described her experiences as a new faculty member:

I would question, “Well, what am I suppose to be as a professor? How am I supposed to act? I’ve got to do this, and I’ve got to do that. How am I supposed to be?” For me this equaled a separation between the different parts of myself and the roles I play. As I was less confident, I was less integrated, and I know I was probably a more distant person, and the more clear to me my roles the more integrated I get, the less distant I get and [it] seems to be a smoother process.

As the researcher, I thought it was important to explore Virginia’s perspective because she is the only woman faculty member to participate. She described her experience as a woman in academia and discussed how to manage these roles:
I think it is probably, in some aspects, more difficult for women. But I think I, as a woman, it seems more natural to be the caretaker, and probably particularly when I was first starting out, I was fighting that. Although we never did the hierarchy thing, the Dr. went out the window on the second day after I defended. So, that wasn’t an issue, but I probably was maybe more stuffy or whatever just as an effort to resist the urge to be otherwise, or to be too lenient…. But I think for a lot of women that bend toward nurturing maybe gets in the way and you have to sort of undo some of that but don’t want to undo it all, and obviously that is part of it too. I think it is a lot easier for men than women, and I’ve watched male faculty; the boundaries seem to come more naturally to them. I think males don’t have to question as much. I don’t know, that’s my best guess.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Overview

The purpose of this study was to capture an overview of the experiences that students and faculty from COAMFTE-accredited programs have had with successful and unsuccessful non-sexual dual relationships. Additionally, the main goal of the study was to discover the strategies that have been used by faculty and students in COAMFTE-accredited marriage and family therapy doctoral and master’s programs who have had successful non-sexual dual relationships. My goal is to identify these strategies so that, perhaps, in the future they can be taught to trainees and faculty, thus helping each group make better informed decisions and negotiate these relationships more effectively. I attempted to achieve this goal though the use of a web survey and interviews of five dyads who indicated that they have had successful dual relationships.

Phase One: Web Survey

In Phase One, a web survey was conducted to capture faculty and students experiences with dual relationships. Ten master’s and ten doctoral COAMFTE-accredited programs were randomly selected, and 106 responses were received. Seventy-six were students, and 30 were faculty members. Most participants were female (74.5 %) and Caucasian (82.1%). This seems to be representative of the MFT community as a whole (Norehtey, 2002).

Students were between the ages of 32 and 55, and again most were female (84.2%) and Caucasian (78.9%). The majority were master’s students (65.8%). At this time, the researcher was unable to obtain demographic data on students who attend COAMFTE-accredited programs. However, the demographics of this study seem to reflect the demographics presented by the U.S. Department of Education from 2000-2001 of graduate students within the psychology field.
Table 10 illustrates how the study sample compares to the U.S. Department of Education’s national center for statistics for graduate students within the field of psychology.

Table 10. Comparison between Student Sample and Department of Education Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Student Characteristics (n=76)</th>
<th>U.S Department of Education psychology graduate student characteristics (N=19,855)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>14,765 74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5,090 25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15,065 75.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
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<td>2,049 10.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,184 6.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>774 3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Standing</td>
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<td>Master’s Level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Level</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4,659 23.4</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Faculty participants were between the ages of 28 and 63, with half being female and half being male; the majority of them were Caucasian (90%). There was a range of faculty status, with most being either an assistant or associate professor. Again, at this time, the researcher was unable to obtain data on the demographics of faculty who teach at COAMFTE-accredited
programs. However, the researcher was able to compare the faculty in this study with full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting institutions (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education, Statistics, 1999) and found that the faculty who responded to this survey were fairly representative of faculty members as a whole. The study’s sample, however, had a higher percentage of females than the national sample. Additionally, none of the respondents were Asian, while the national sample reveals that Asians represent 5.8% of faculty in higher institutions. See Table 11 for a comparison between the study’s sample and the National Center for Education’s data on faculty demographics.

Table 11. Comparison Between Study’s Sample of Faculty Characteristics and U.S. Department of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Faculty Characteristics (n=30)</th>
<th>U.S. Department of Education Faculty Characteristics (N=590,937)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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The open-ended questions were analyzed using categories developed prior to analyzing the findings. These categories included: (a) types of dual relationships, (b) characteristics of successful dual relationships, (c) characteristics of unsuccessful dual relationships, (d) strategies to create positive dual relationships, (e) types of training received, and (f) perceptions by faculty and students of dual relationships in the MFT profession.

*Types of Dual Relationships*

Participants described several types of dual relationships: academic, superior/hierarchal, collegial, non-academic, and multiple. The majority of the participants indicated they had an academic dual relationship, one in which both roles were academically focused, such as instructor and supervisor. Additionally, many of the faculty and students also indicated that they had a dual relationship in which they considered one of the roles to be friend. Peterson (1995), when studying dual relationships between supervisors and supervisees, also found that the most frequently reported dual role was that of “personal friend.” This was unexpected given that most of the participants indicated that MFT practitioners think dual relationships should either be avoided or be handled cautiously.

It is not surprising that dual relationships do occur, given that these are intense clinical programs in which train students to become therapists. Usually this type of training involves revealing personal information and exposing one’s vulnerability. Additionally, upon graduating with this degree, which typically takes two years to complete, students instantly become colleagues who are part of the MFT community. Typically, the MFT community is small, and thus, future interaction between students and faculty is likely. Consequently, the gap from student to colleague to friend is slight.
Characteristics of Successful Dual Relationships

Faculty. Faculty revealed three main themes that they felt created were related to success: personal characteristics of students, respect, and mutual benefits. Personal characteristics of students seemed to impact the faculty perception of why these relationships were successful. I wonder if this is because faculty members prefer to interact with students who share personal characteristics that they find attractive, such as humor, maturity, responsibility, and intelligence.

Respect, both respecting the student and feeling respected, was a theme reported by the faculty as a trait of a successful relationship. This mutual respect seems to provide a sense of being valued and of valuing the other person in the relationship. Respect also conveys appreciation. In a relationship where there is mutual respect, one feels valued and appreciated, and this facilitates positive interactions. Additionally, I believe that a relationship with these characteristics would be prized by both parties, and thus, both would work to keep them successful.

The third indicator of a successful dual relationship for faculty was that they felt both people in the relationship benefited. It seemed that knowing only one was being rewarded in the relationship was not enough. Believing the student was also benefiting indicated to the faculty member that it was a good relationship. Mamalikis (2000) conducted a Delphi study on the ethical issue of nonsexual dual relationships between clients and therapists. In his study, findings revealed faculty members as a whole did not agree on any possible benefits. These contradictory results could be due to the fact that the current study addresses faculty and student relationships. However, this is still a surprising result given the lack of support for this type of relationship in the field and a significant number of scholars still supporting prohibition of all dual relationships (Borys, 1992, 1994; Cornell, 1994; Craig, 1991; Kagle & Giegelhausen, 1994; Pope, 1991; Pope,
& Vasquez, 1998). The current findings seem to further reflect the beneficial opportunities that dual relationships can create if handled with care (Catalano, 1997; Lazarus, 1994; Tomm, 1991).

Students. Students indicated several themes that they felt related to success: open communication, a comfortable and supportive environment, and clear roles. Open communication seemed to create freedom for students to talk with faculty without having to worry about the consequences. Open communication appears to be connected to the second theme of a comfortable and supportive environment. If one feels free to talk without consequences, an atmosphere that is comfortable and supportive is created. Consequently, when there is a feeling of comfort and support, it might follow that there would be more willingness to be vulnerable and open than in an environment where one does not feel encouragement and reassurance. The third theme reported by students as an indicator of a positive dual relationship was the presence of clear roles. Clear roles seemed to provide students with a sense of reassurance that the boundaries would be respected and that they themselves would be respected as well.

Benefits

As previously mentioned, faculty indicated that one way they knew the relationship was successful was that they felt both the students and themselves were benefiting. Faculty revealed two main themes under the category of benefits. These benefits included better understanding of the student needs and opportunities for collegial activities. Faculty were not alone in thinking that students were benefiting from these relationships. Students also indicated several benefits they received from being in a dual relationship. These included empowerment, guidance, modeling, and academic growth. While faculty and students both indicated different benefits of the dual relationship, these benefits seem to produce similar results. Dual relationships appear to
provide students more interaction with faculty, which seems to facilitate professional growth and development. This result further reveals that dual relationships can provide benefits for each person in the relationship. Additionally, this may clarify that dual relationships are not the cause of harm but rather that exploitation may be the main culprit.

*Characteristics of Unsuccessful Dual Relationships*

While there were few reports of negative interactions or unsuccessful dual relationships, the experiences described were similar. A theme that connected these experiences was the blurring of boundaries. These concerns were also voiced by Pope and Vasquez (1991) as a reason these relationships can be problematic. It appears that once the roles merge there is a greater likelihood that difficulties will arise and it then becomes difficult to return back to a relationship with distinct roles and boundaries.

The negative interactions revealed by students were ones in which students were hired for activities outside of academia, such as babysitting or dog/cat watching. These types of activities have been labeled risky by Slimp and Burian (1994) due to the double jeopardy experienced by students. Not only do they lose financially, but they also can lose academically. These activities may be seen by students and faculty more as favors than employment; thus no written contract with clear guidelines for agreement exists, creating a greater likelihood for disagreements regarding expectations.

Problems from the student’s point of view occurred when faculty wanted a romantic relationship. This type of boundary crossing more clearly falls into exploitation. These unsuccessful dual relationships highlight the risks that dual relationships can have, especially for students. The result of the unsuccessful interactions seemed to have larger negative effects on the students than the faculty members. While these interactions involving dual relationships are
important to pay attention to, they were in the minority of experiences reported by students and faculty involving dual relationships.

*Strategies to Create Positive Dual Relationships*

Students revealed several strategies they employed to keep the relationship successful. These included boundaries, respect, communication, and awareness. Faculty indicated awareness, communication, and minimizing potential risks as strategies they have employed. Even though each of these strategies is presented as a separate entity, in action they are difficult to separate. Awareness without action would probably lead to failure. The reason awareness is helpful in creating a successful dual relationship is that it facilitates communication, navigation of boundaries, and the minimizing of risks. In a relationship where each member actively cares about the relationship, I think a feeling of mutual respect is conveyed. Furthermore, when one feels respected, he or she is more likely to do the work needed to keep the relationship successful, such as staying aware, communicating, minimizing risk, and maintaining clear boundaries.

*Training*

The majority of students reported learning about dual relationships in ethics classes but other than that received little to no information on how to deal with dual relationships in practice. This lack of education on dual relationships reflects the tendency to literally avoid them outside of the classroom. While the training may reflect this view, it does not hold up to the reports of dual relationships that are occurring between faculty and students. Thus, given the occurrence and harm these relationship can produce if not handled appropriately, further education and training is needed. This call has been voiced by others as well (Brownlee, 1996; Catalano, 1997; Clarkson, 1994; Corey & Herlihy, 1997; Hall, 1996; Hill & Mamalakis, 2001).
Participants indicated their training occurred primarily in an ethics class. However, non-
formal training dealing with dual relationship issues probably occurred in supervision. Trainees
often ask questions about how to handle clinical situations that delve into dual relationships
issues, such as questions like “what do I do when I see my client in the grocery store or
restaurant?” and concerns like, “my client wants me to go to lunch with them,” and “I think my
client is great and we have similar interests, it feels like we are friends.” These are just some
possible situations that student trainees may bring into supervision. In supervision, one is usually
provided with training in managing these complex situations. Thus, students may be receiving
this type of guidance and training but may not be labeling it as such.

*Perceptions by Participants of Dual Relationships in the MFT Profession.*

Faculty and students revealed a wide range of perceptions about how they think the MFT
profession views dual relationships. Some faculty and students indicated that the MFT field
believes that dual relationships should be avoided at all cost or at least handled with caution,
while others said the field views them favorably. This uncertainty seems to reflect the field’s
own confusion on what to do with these relationships (Peterson, 1995; Russell & Peterson,
1998).

*Faculty’s desire for Change*

The theme faculty desire for change emerged from previous faculty responses. Faculty
indicated that the view of the field is that dual relationships should be avoided. However, faculty
indicated that they think this policy is too rigid and impossible. A better way would be for the
MFT field to hold open discussions on how to deal with these relationships instead of simply
living in fear of them.
Summary

The web survey provided an overview of the experiences students and faculty have had with dual relationships. Overall, the majority of participants reported having positive and successful experiences with dual relationships. Additionally, participants were able to identify why these relationships went well and offered strategies that they thought kept them successful. Unexpectedly, participants reported very few negative or unsuccessful dual relationships. Given the field’s view of the difficulty managing these complex relationships, I thought there would be more reports of negative interactions surrounding dual relationships. This may be due to the participants’ unwillingness to reveal these occurrences or the fact that those who did have unsuccessful experiences did not respond to the survey. Another interesting component of the survey was the awareness it seemed to create for the participants who responded. At the end of the survey, participants were offered an opportunity to advise others about how to have good relationships. In their responses, a majority of students and faculty wrote extensively about how important this area is and explained that they wanted more to happen—more research, more guidance, more awareness, and more training. Thus, it seemed that the act of merely taking the survey seemed to alert them to the importance of this issue in their life.

Phase Two: Interviews

In Phase Two, one overarching theme, being active emerged, capturing the essence of all the interviews. Additionally, the interviews uncovered two major themes: characteristics of success and strategies for success. Under the characteristics of success, six sub-themes emerged: (a) student characteristics, (b) faculty characteristics, (c) nurturance, (d) trust, (e) awareness, (f) “being a person,” (g) decreased hierarchy/equality, and (h) mutual respect.


*Being active.*

Activity permeated the participants’ stories as they shared their experiences. This overarching theme is that each person in the relationship was actively participating in creating a successful relationship. The dual relationship literature discusses the importance of faculty taking an active role in these relationships to make sure no harm comes to the student (Bowman, Hatley, & Bowman, 1995; Gladding, 2001; Russell & Peterson, 1998). While this was occurring, students were equally as active. The activity ranges from thinking, such as acknowledging the complexities of the relationship, to doing, such as having the difficult conversations. A relationship is successful because both parties are working to maintain the connection. Some dyads were more active than others. The dyads that involved more roles and a larger social component seemed to be more active. Consequently, the greater the complexity, the greater the action one needs to produce, navigate, and maintain positive interactions.

*Characteristics of success*

The first major theme is *characteristics of success*, which highlights aspects of the relationship between faculty and students in the dual relationship that seemed to facilitate success. The characteristics present in these dyads seemed to naturally materialize. The characteristics also appear to be implicitly tied to the strategies. For example, if there is not trust in a relationship, neither member of the dyad would be able to negotiate the boundary.

*Student Characteristics.* The first sub-theme under characteristics of success is student characteristics. All of the faculty members described the students within these dyads in a glowing light. I wonder if this may be an important aspect of these relationships because students that faculty label as exceptional are seen as more attractive to work with in other areas. Thus, faculty are more likely to offer these types of students more collegial opportunities. Also, faculty
may view working with the students in these multiple roles as less risky than working with students who are not doing as well in the program. Students who are struggling may pose a higher risk for faculty since the one aspect of the student/instructor relationship is already showing signs of trouble. Thus, faculty members who want to cut down on confusion and risk to either themselves or the student will probably not increase the roles they play with this type of student.

*Faculty Characteristics.* Another sub-theme under characteristics of success is *faculty characteristics.* An interesting phenomenon was uncovered in this sub-theme that revealed that faculty in these dyads have had at least 10 years of experience. This amount of experience each has attained may be a major reason these relationships are successful. These faculty members have had many opportunities to learn how to work with these types of relationships and handle the many complexities that may occur. Thus, they may already have figured out what is helpful, what is not helpful, and what to do to avoid bringing harm to the students.

*Nurturance.* The third sub-theme is *nurturance,* which involves elements, such as connection, warmth, support, comfort, and security, that appear to promote healthy growth. Each of the dyads in the study contains aspects of a nurturing environment. I believe this atmosphere fosters safety, thus allowing the people involved to be vulnerable, make mistakes, fail, and take chances to further their development. Consequently, nurturance helps to create a relationship where one can challenge and develop the personal and professional self.

*Trust.* The fourth sub-theme under characteristics of success was *trust.* Trust seemed to be evident in these relationships as revealed by both faculty and student statements. Trust was witnessed in several ways in the interviews, such as acknowledging that there is trust in the relationship, revealing that students had the freedom to challenge faculty members without fear
of repercussions, and perhaps most importantly, giving each other the “benefit of the doubt.” In giving the “benefit of the doubt,” each person in the relationship assumes the other person wants what is best and genuinely cares for the other. In these relationships, the “benefit of the doubt” was evident. This seemed particularly important because, without this trust, one cannot face the many complexities that are involved in these relationships. The trust in the relationship allowed students and faculty the freedom to comment on, challenge, and question the relationship and aspects of the relationship, thus, enhancing the relationship and/or preventing harm.

Awareness. A fifth sub-theme under the major theme of characteristics of success is awareness. Awareness has been recommended and indicated, by numerous studies, as a way to prevent harm from occurring in dual relationships or to generally avoid unethical occurrences (Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997; Erickson, 1990; Peterson, 1995; Russell & Peterson, 1998). Awareness was addressed by the participants in the study as they shared their experiences. It seemed that just the act of acknowledging the dual relationship existed provided a technique to guard against potential harm. Once the people in the relationship were willing to expose the multiple roles, space was created for each member to recognize and accept the complexity and discuss how to navigate these challenges successfully. It may be that even the ability to identify when there is a possibility of an ethical dilemma and admit it is better than trying to disguise that it is occurring.

“Being a person.” Participants revealed that in trying to navigate these relationships, even though they may be faculty or students, they are also people. The idea of being a person seemed to impact students’ views of the faculty members as the students reported feeling less hierarchy. One reason might be that showing one’s human side allows each person to begin to relate to each other as a person, instead of as a person playing roles.
Additionally, faculty members’ perceptions about dual relationships revealed they felt that everyone is human and when dealing with humans the chance of creating an ideal relationship is not possible. This idea, that faculty are just people, conveys the impossibility of faculty treating all people the same. One concern voiced by Homes, Rupert, Ross, and Shapera, (1999) seems to suggest that a faculty member should treat all students equally. This possibly suggests that as one becomes a faculty member, one develops a superhuman power that allows that person the ability to have similar and equal relationships with all students. While we all know this is a myth, it may be a hard idea to resist. One participant stated that if you showed him a faculty member who tries to love everybody exactly the same, “[he would] show you a [faculty member] that needs to come in for therapy.” This faculty member voiced the implausibly of this concept. Stating this implausibility seemed to create the freedom for both students and faculty to have relationships that are as unique as the people in the relationships. Consequently, no two people can have the same relationship, which neither faculty nor students seem to desire anyway.

Each of the above sub-themes seems to be intimately connected. For example, the two sub-themes nurturance and trust seem to be interconnected. Without trust can there be nurturance, and without nurturance can there be trust? Without awareness can there be trust? These themes appear to go hand in hand, with one providing the foundation for the other. Thus, in these successful dual relationships many aspects need to be present to produce success.

Decreased hierarchy/power. The seventh sub-theme under the major theme of characteristics of success was decreased hierarchy/power. Faculty reported that in order to have good relationships with students they should decrease the power differential. The faculty having this view seemed to create an environment where this was evident from the students’ perspectives as well. Faculty who have this perspective on the power differential between
students and faculty may also hold students to a higher level than faculty who do not have this perspective. Thus, faculty who care about students and want more collaborative relationships may also hold other qualities that facilitate successful dual relationships.

*Mutual respect.* The idea of *mutual respect* was revealed as a significant factor of successful dual relationships from the web survey. An interesting facet in this theme is that students are the ones who predominately identify this, in the web survey and in the interviews, as a key ingredient and as an indicator of success. In the interviews, the students explained that mutual respect conveyed a feeling of equality.

The feeling of being respected by the faculty members gave students a sense of acceptance and support. Knowing that one is respected creates a feeling of equality even though the other may have a role that contains significantly more power. The faculty members were active in helping students feel respected. The students reported that the faculty respected them by not making them feel inferior and by sharing, giving them space to have a voice, respecting their boundaries, and appreciating, acknowledging, and rewarding the students’ hard work.

*Strategies for success*

A second major theme that was revealed in the analysis of the interviews was *strategies for success*. Strategies were behaviors or actions implemented by faculty or students to help navigate and create good relationships. Under the *strategies for success* major theme, five sub-themes emerged: (a) checking, (b) communicating openly, (c) having visible boundaries, (d) navigating boundaries (e) assessing risk, (f) decreasing hierarchy, and (e) giving advice.

*Checking.* The first sub-theme under the major theme of strategies for success was *checking*. Almost every participant revealed some sort of internal checking behavior to help negotiate the dual relationship. The internal checking seemed to facilitate awareness and help
them determine boundaries and roles. This seems to help the participants be clear for themselves on how they are doing in managing the relationship. Since these relationships are so complex, the checking behavior helps people keep track of what role they are in, what boundaries the role calls for, and whether they are stepping over the line or not. Additionally, several faculty members discussed the use of checking by thinking about what others might say about what occurred. For instance, they would ask themselves, “What would my wife say about this situation?” or “What would my colleague think if I told them this happened?”. This type of checking seems similar to supervising one’s self: If a respected colleague would act in a similar fashion and have similar reactions, the situation is less likely to be deemed unethical.

The strategy of checking revealed by both faculty and students has also been reported as a technique in the dual relationship literature. Gottlieb (1993) presented a model to avoid exploitative dual relationships; Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth (1997) provided a model for the ethical management of faculty and student dual relationships; and Russell and Peterson (1998) offered guidelines to prevent vulnerability to boundary infringement between supervisors and supervisees. Central to these preventive models for reducing harm to the client/student in the dual relationship are checking behaviors. Thus, it seems the practice of checking helps to both define and maintain lines that should not be crossed.

Open Communication. A second sub-theme under the major theme of strategies for success is open communication. This sub-theme was indicated as an important strategy for successful dual relationships in the web survey as well. Interviewed participants stated that one of the indicators for the success of these relationships is the willingness of faculty members to openly discuss the relationship. This included being able to be clear on what is okay and what is
not okay, to welcome feedback, to be open about what they are thinking, and to allow for disagreements.

In the web survey, the participants were not able to provide information on how to facilitate open communication. However, the interview participants provided many examples of how to promote open communication within these relationships. Many participants said the faculty members were direct and blunt about what they felt or about their concerns. Other faculty created a rule about having “high information exchange,” which was a rule to share with each other if there was something that happened that one of them did or did not like. Open communication seems to invite one to talk about the relationship and any challenges or apprehensions one has. This type of communication encourages an environment that is supportive and safe in order for the people involved to share what is going well and discuss when they are having difficulties. This type of communication may be one effective way to prevent minor concerns or difficulties from turning into conflicts that can no longer be repaired. If problems are not addressed within relationships, a wedge may be created. However, with the use of open communication, the people in these relationships seem to catch difficulties before they become problems.

Visible boundaries. The third sub-theme under the theme strategies for success is visible boundaries. Another strategy identified in the web survey was to pay attention to and have clear boundaries. However, the participants in the web survey left the ‘how’ a mystery. In the interviews, faculty and students revealed the many ways of making a boundary visible. These included overtly stating the boundary, stating when a person is switching roles, marking the boundaries, being explicit, and keeping a clean slate when moving from one role to another. The ability of faculty and students to make boundaries visible provides them with a clear path on how
to navigate this complex relationship. Additionally, when they know where the line is, it is easier to stay on the right side or to know when they are crossing it.

_Navigating boundaries._ Students and faculty seemed to feel that one way to manage the dual relationships was for the student to follow the faculty member’s lead. This way, the student can know what is okay and what is not okay. One student pointed out that for this to be successful the student has to be willing to respect these boundaries or the relationship will not work. Also, one faculty member revealed that he, unlike other faculty, likes to follow the student’s lead. He felt that following the student’s lead was more respectful. It would seem that one needs to have a delicate balance of both. Others highlighted that the faculty member is the one who has to at least provide the structure and the opportunity to discuss what these boundaries might look like. Faculty stressed that such boundaries are always up for reassessment when needed by either party. This then provides the student with a voice in determining what type of relationship is created.

_Assessing risk._ The fourth sub-theme under the theme strategies for success was assessing risk. There were several ways that faculty assessed risk. One technique was to evaluate the current relationship, consult with others, and use one’s own clinical judgment. This type of strategy seems to be especially effective for helping them to decide if adding another role would be wise for both student and faculty. In these dyads, faculty reported using these assessment techniques to determine if the student they are currently in the dyad with would be a good candidate with whom to enter into a dual relationship. Each faculty member in these dyads indicated hers/his had been a successful relationship. Again, this strategy was revealed in the literature by Biaggio, Paget, and Chenoweth (1997) and Gottlieb (1993) as a way to prevent harm. Thus, one potential technique to ensure success is to evaluate if it would be appropriate to
enter into this type of relationship with a particular student to begin with. Even though the students in this study did not indicate they also had a similar process of assessing, they probably did. One must wonder whether students also make these types of assessment to decide if entering into a dual relationship with a particular faculty member would be safe and beneficial.

*Decreasing hierarchy/power.* The fifth sub-theme, under the theme strategies for success, was techniques to *decrease hierarchy/power*, and it contained two main strategies for navigating the power dynamics. The first strategy is to acknowledge the power differential between students and faculty. This acknowledgement seems to provide a space for awareness. This strategy may have been successful because when the faculty member acknowledges they hold a position of power in the relationship, then they are also acknowledging that their conduct has consequences (Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997).

Additionally, this awareness that a dual relationship is different from others allows one to also be conscious of the different roles each person plays. Students revealed in the interviews that they never forgot that in this relationship the faculty member has more power. Being conscious of the power differential helped the student to never misunderstand what the relationship could and could not be. Additionally, this acknowledgment helped each person in the dyad be aware of the different roles that are being played. Thus, declaring there is a power differential between students and faculty helped to keep one’s roles and boundaries clear. Brown (1991) has made similar statements concerning dual relationships between client and therapist. I wonder if this strategy of acknowledging the power differential played a role in decreasing the risk for abuse of power. This super awareness made faculty extremely conscious of their advantage; thus, the misuse of power seems less likely.
The second strategy used to manage the power dynamic was to create a sense of equality or decrease the hierarchy in the relationship, which students described as faculty revealing their vulnerability. Mutual sharing was indicated by students as a main way they felt the relationship had a give-and-take quality. This created an environment in which students felt they were not the only ones giving. Also, revealing flaws builds on the idea of mutual sharing. The willingness of faculty to be vulnerable, by doing things such as sharing struggles and revealing their flaws, helped to decrease the hierarchal nature of the relationship and shift to more of an equal relationship. This would appear to help the student be more willing to reveal her/his mistakes. When students learn faculty members have made mistakes and are not perfect, they realize they don’t have to be perfect either.

*Advice.* Faculty members seemed to believe that a way to learn how to manage or navigate dual relationships is first to learn what is appropriate and inappropriate. Once one can identify appropriate and inappropriate boundaries, the person is able to recognize when he/she is in bounds. When the person has accomplished how to do this, then that person can take baby steps outside of the strict relationship into less complex multiple roles. Now the person can go to the next level, and so on. Thus, it takes practice to learn how to navigate these relationships well.

**Characteristics and Strategies**

The characteristics and strategies seemed to mutually reinforce one another. The relationships that have these characteristics appear to create an environment that allows for the occurrence of the strategies. Conversely, the strategies used by the faculty and students seemed to provide an atmosphere in which the characteristics identified by the participants are able to exist. This indicates that one might not be possible without the other. For instance, will a student
feel comfortable using the strategy of open communication if the characteristic of a nurturing
environment does not exist?

Addressing the Concerns

The literature on dual relationships has focused on the concerns and harms that these
relationships can cause. These included impairment of the counselor’s judgment, conflicts of
interest, exploitation because the counselor holds more power, and boundaries becoming blurred
and distorting the professional nature of the relationship (Pope & Vasquez, 1991). It seems that
strategies developed by faculty and students in these dyads were able to address these concerns
and prevent the problems from occurring. The strategies presented by the faculty and students
appear to be effective given that these relationships are perceived as successful by both parties.
Table 12 reveals the strategies used by the faculty and students to address the concerns posed in
the literature.

Table 12. Addressing Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impairing the counselor’s judgment</td>
<td>Checking, Communicating Openly, and Assessing Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts of interest</td>
<td>Checking, Assessing Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitation because the counselor holds more power</td>
<td>Checking, Assessing Risk, Decreasing Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries becoming blurred and distorting the professional nature of the relationship</td>
<td>Checking, Communicating Openly, Having Visible Boundaries, Navigating Boundaries, and Assessing Risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feminist Lens

As one considers or looks at the findings, one cannot miss the fact that most of the faculty were males in the dyads and all the students were females. This reflects the traditional power imbalance present in society and in most COAMFTE-accredited programs. Additionally, these relationships have the added power differential of the faculty/student aspect of the relationship as well. While many participants discussed the decrease in hierarchy present in their relationship through sharing, respecting, revealing vulnerability, and acknowledging one’s humanness, we cannot forget that the hierarchy still exists. The hierarchy for these students was not forgotten; faculty and students discussed their awareness of the hierarchy, and students were especially aware of the feminist implications of their position. In fact, this awareness and respect of the faculty position was presented by both faculty and students as a characteristic of a successful relationship as well as a strategy. Another strategy and characteristic revealed by the participants was the decreased hierarchy/power. This idea is also suggested in the feminist literature as one way to decrease harm and avoid the misuse of power. Another characteristic that has been discussed by Prouty (2000) is connection, a way to build successful relationships between supervisors and supervisees. This idea was reflected in several successful dual relationship characteristics, such as nurturance and trust.

Strengths of the Study

Connection & Consistency

A strength of the study is the connection between the web survey and the interviews. Each seems to inform and build on the other. The characteristics of a successful relationship and the strategies reported in the web survey are also reflected in the interviews. Additionally, the web survey provided an overview, which the interviews later confirmed, highlighting what
people do to manage dual relationships. The interviews further indicated and identified how these strategies of success were implemented. This provided valuable insights into how to build a positive dual relationship. Another strength in this study is that the strategies and characteristics were identified by both students and faculty; this gives a complete picture of what each person is doing to produce a successful dual relationship. This allows one to not only check themselves but also to check the other person in the relationship to prevent harm from occurring.

Another area of strength in this study was the consistency of findings. One limitation of a qualitative study is typically generalizability. However, this research implemented several techniques to increase the trustworthiness, creditability, and transferability of the findings. One technique was triangulation. Triangulation was done in this study through the use of the web survey, interviews, and field notes. The findings mutually influence and support one another, providing more assurance that the data is trustworthy, credible, and transferable.

Limitations of the Study

This study investigated the experiences of COAMFTE-accredited marriage and family therapy students and faculty and thus is limited in generalizability by the demographics of these participants. Most students in COAMFTE-accredited programs are female and Caucasian. Although there was little diversity among the sample, with most of the participants being Caucasian, this race demographic seems to represent the makeup of COAMFTE-accredited programs. The students were predominantly female, but this also seems representative of COAMFTE-accredited programs on the whole.

Another limitation may be the sampling bias. Students and faculty who were eligible for this study came from only 15 master’s and 10 doctoral COAMFTE-accredited programs. Additionally, the participants from these programs were self selected and are possibly not
representative of the population under study. For example, it may be that because these
participants were self selected, they may have given this topic more thought or energy and might
have provided answers that were not representative of the entire population of student and
faculty. This seems to be especially true for the faculty participants. Due to the difficulty in
recruiting faculty, it may be that only those who were particularly interested in this topic were
willing to take the time to participate. At the same time, because of their possible interest in the
topic, their responses may have provided particularly rich insight into this area. Similarly,
Mamalakis (2000) and Peterson (1995) found that the phrase “dual relationship” carries a
connotation of unethical behavior. Therefore, potential participants who have had a dual
relationship may not want to admit this for fear of being labeled unethical. Additionally, possible
participants who had negative or unsuccessful dual relationships may not want to share these
experiences for fear of further harm.

Furthermore, this study utilized a web survey that ultimately provided the interview
participants. Only those who were likely to respond to the email inquiry were included in the
study. Therefore, individuals who are less likely to respond or possibly with less access to email
were not included and may represent a unique population. While these concerns are valid, this
type of purposive sampling provided rich data about an area that has not been studied in an in-
depth way.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since there is still a limited amount of research on dual relationships, many issues are still
unknown. For instance, future research could conduct a comparative analysis of successful and
unsuccesful dual relationships with a representative sample of master’s or doctoral students
from COAMFTE-accredited programs. Or researchers could investigate how the strategies and
characteristics discovered in this study will compare with a larger sample. Additionally, it would be helpful to study a greater number of cases in which the dual relationships were not successful to gain a better understanding of how these problems could be prevented.

Participants in this study have identified both the possibility for successful dual relationships and the manner in which they maintain them. This does not mean they were without difficulties. Difficulties did arise within these relationships, as with all relationships. However, with the strategies and the environments created in these relationships, when difficulties did arise, these dyads had the skills needed to handle the challenges and prevent them from causing harm. Consequently, it may not be the dual relationship, per se, that causes harm but rather how issues are handled. One way to address this concern is to explore how to recognize appropriate professional precautions to ensure judgment is not impaired and no exploitation occurs. This area of research is still limited and is not mature enough to help therapists and faculty identify exactly the professional precautions and when they are needed. How does one know her/his judgment is impaired and she/he are getting close to crossing the line? How does one know when she/he might be crossing the line into exploitation? Even if there were answers for these two questions, would the answers be in agreement across family therapy graduate students and educators in terms of the appropriate precautions and actions to be taken? This is another area of research that remains to be adequately addressed.

Clinical Implications

On the basis of these findings, participants have indicated that these relationships do exist and are not going to go away. This fact can also be seen represented in the new AAMFE code, which states,
When a dual relationship cannot be avoided, therapists take appropriate professional precautions to ensure judgment is not impaired and no exploitation occurs. Examples of such dual relationships include, but are not limited to, business or close personal relationships with students, employees, or supervisees (AAMFT, 1998).

COAMFTE-accredited programs have not yet had a chance to respond to this change in code. Consequently, training on dual relationships is still limited. The participants in the study predominantly indicated receiving some form of general education about dual relationships through their ethics class. Also, when interview participants were asked where they learned how to manage dual relationships, none of the participants indicated they received this knowledge through their academic training. The faculty highlighted that they learned how to manage these types of relationships through interaction with their own faculty during their training. Thus, students and faculty participants believe that there is a lack of knowledge and are calling for guidelines and more research to help them make choices on how to handle these complex relationships. Additionally, as the study participants explained, the field has a tendency to view these relationships from extreme perspectives, either avoiding them at all costs or not worrying about them. Both of these two extreme points leave students, future therapists, and faculty at a loss for learning how to work within these relationships to ensure judgment is not impaired and exploitation does not occur. Therefore, it is extremely important that faculty and students not only become educated about what dual relationships are but also learn how to navigate these relationships so both parties benefit and remain free from harm.

Training on dual relationships can be in the form of education in ethics classes, supervision, and/or workshops presented at conferences. The training would involve teaching the strategies revealed in the study through the use of role-plays. Practicing these strategies would
help create more comfort for both students and faculty so that they can use them when the time arises.

Additionally, training needs to focus not only on students receiving this knowledge but on faculty as well. Glaser and Thrope (1986) and Pope, Levenson, and Schover (1979) have illustrated the need for faculty to learn how to manage these relationships because students, who experience a violation of boundaries during their education, are being shown inappropriate behavior that can then be learned as appropriate by students. Thus, without preventive steps, students will not learn how to set clear professional boundaries; this puts them at risk for future boundary violations with clients, supervisees, and/or students (Biaggio, Paget, and Chenoweth, 1997).

Areas that should be addressed in dual relationship training should highlight the differences between the dual relationships of client/therapist and faculty/student. From some of the data collected, it seems that those who are fearful to the extent that they run from students in the grocery store are confusing therapist/client dual relationship concerns and faculty/student dual relationships. Additionally, training should focus on teaching students about recourses they have if an abuse of power occurs in a relationship between faculty and student. This education should not be limited to what they can do but should also address how to manage a dual relationship, what this might look like, how to acknowledge an abuse of power, how to explain the student’s rights, and how to outline expectations for student/faculty relationships. This type of training can limit the negative consequences and hopefully prevent further abuse from occurring.

Younggren and Gottlieb (2004) and Lamb, Salvatore, and Moorman (2004) have just published articles offering help to therapists in making decisions regarding dual relationships.
These models offer management of these relationships instead of avoidance management to help therapists avoid entering into exploitation of clients. As one can see, the field is starting to recognize that avoidance is not the answer and that learning how to manage these relationships is. Thus, the strategies discovered in this study may help lead the way for scholars to conduct research in client/therapist non-sexual dual relationships that investigates successful management of these dual relationships.
References


Miller, N.E. (19947)). *Psychological research on pilot training*. Aviation Psychological Program, Vol, 8.


Appendix A: Letter to Program Directors

Dear Director of Marriage and Family Therapy Program,

My name is Jennifer Lambert-Shute and I am a doctoral Candidate in Marriage and family Therapy Program at Virginia Polytechnic State University. I am currently working on my dissertation which is about the types of relationships between faculty and students in MFT programs. I am conducting Web surveys investigating strategies students and faculty members use to facilitate successful relationships especially when the faculty or the student occupies more than one role simultaneously.

I am hoping that you will forward the following message to your students and faculty in the Marriage and Family Therapy program.

Dear students and faculty members in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program. I am a doctoral candidate in the MFT program at Virginia Tech. I realize that you are very busy but I am hoping that you will be willing to give me 10-15 minutes of your time. I am conducting a study about relationships between faculty and students in MFT programs and I would greatly appreciate your participation. All you have to do is click on the link provided below and complete the following survey. The survey will be active until April 7th.

http://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1047736436761

The web link will automatically take you to the survey. This provides confidential and anonymous responses.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me by email at the above address or by phone at 540-231-7261. Also you may contact Dr. Piercy, my doctoral advisor at 540-231-4794 or piercy@vt.edu

Thank you

Sincerely,

Jennifer J. Lambert-Shute
Doctoral Candidate
Marriage and Family Therapy
Department of Human Development
366 Wallace Hall
Virginia Tech Blacksburg, VA 24061
## Appendix B: Selected Programs

### MFT Master’s Program List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arizona State University</th>
<th>Harding University</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Connecticut State University</td>
<td>Christian Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana State University</td>
<td>University of Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State University</td>
<td>Antioch New England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seton Hill University</td>
<td>Appalachian State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Carolina University</td>
<td>University of Oregon</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Rhode Island</td>
<td>Utah State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech University-Falls Church</td>
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</table>

### Doctoral MFT Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nova Southeastern University</th>
<th>University of Georgia</th>
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<tr>
<td>Iowa State University</td>
<td>Kansas State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse University</td>
<td>University of Akron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary's University</td>
<td>Texas Tech University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech University – Blacksburg</td>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
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Appendix C: Follow up Letter

Dear Marriage and Family Therapy Program Director

As you may recall, I previously emailed about forwarding a web survey to your faculty and students in the MFT program on dual relationships between faculty and students. I want you to know that I greatly appreciated your help in completing my dissertation.

I was hoping that you could forward the following reminder and thank you to all your faculty and students in the MFT program. Again thank you for your time and support.

Dear XXXX Students and Faculty,

I wanted to thank everyone who participated in my study, without your help I would not be able to finish this project.

If you would still like to participate in this study on types of relationships between faculty and students in MFT programs just click on the link provided below. The Survey will be open until April 7th.

http://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1047736436761

The web link will automatically take you to the survey. This provides confidential and anonymous responses.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me by email at the above address or by phone at 540-231-7261. Also you may contact Dr. Piercy, my doctoral advisor at 540-231-4794 or piercy@vt.edu

Thank you

Sincerely,

Jennifer J. Lambert-Shute
Doctoral Candidate
Marriage and Family Therapy
Department of Human Development
366 Wallace Hall
Virginia Tech Blacksburg, VA 24061
Appendix D: Email to Faculty

Dear Dr.XXXXX,

I am conducting a web survey on dual relationships between faculty and student. I have been asking program directors to forward this message to their faculty and students in the MFT programs. If you have already participated I want to thank you for your time and support.

Currently, the students have provided a wealth of information however, I am having difficulty getting faculty to respond. I was hoping that you could help me in completing my dissertation. All you have to do is click on the link provided below. The survey will be open until April 11th.

http://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1047736436761

The web link will automatically take you to the survey. This provides confidential and anonymous responses.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me by email at the above address by phone at 540-231-7261. Also you may contact Dr. Piercy, my doctoral advisor at 540-231-4794 or piercy@vt.edu

Thank you

Sincerely,

Jennifer J. Lambert-Shute
Doctoral Candidate
Marriage and Family Therapy
Department of Human Development
366 Wallace Hall
Virginia Tech Blacksburg, VA 24061
Appendix E: Informed Consent, Web Survey

Welcome MFT Students and Faculty Members,

Please help me by completing a 10-15 minute survey on non-romantic dual relationships in MFT programs. While this survey may look long, half of the questions are for faculty and half are for students. So again it should only take about 10-15 minutes

Your responses will be confidential. No response will be linked to an individual respondent. There will be no compensation for your involvement in this study and you have the freedom to withdraw from the project at any time without being penalized in any capacity.

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Submission of the inventory is evidence of your voluntary willingness to participate.

Should you have any questions or concerns about this research, its conduct, research participants rights, and/or in the event of a research-related injury, please contact:

Jennifer Lambert-Shute, Doctoral Candidate, M.S.
540-231-7201 (jlambert@vt.edu)

Fred Piercy, Faculty Advisor,
540-231-4794 (piercy@vt.edu)

David M. Moore, Chair, IRB,
540-231-4991/Office of Research Compliance
(moored@vt.edu)

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lambert-Shute
Appendix F: Web survey

Please indicate your gender

☐ Female

☐ Male

2. Please indicate your age


3. Please indicate your race/ethnicity

☐ Caucasian

☐ African American

☐ Hispanic

☐ Native American

☐ Asian

☐ other: ____________

4. Are you currently part of an AAMFT accredited training program?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other: ____________

5. What is your role in the program?

☐ Student

☐ Faculty

☐ other: ______________________

If you are a faculty member please skip to question 13. If you are a student continue to question 6.

Thank you

6. Currently, what degree are you working towards?

☐ Master's

☐ Post Master's certificate

☐ Doctorate

☐ Doctoral Intern

☐ Post Doctorate

☐ other: ______________________

7. How many years of experience have you had conducting Martial and Family Therapy (including training, Please round up to the nearest whole number)

[]
8. How many years of experience have you had supervising Marital and Family Therapy students (including training, Please round to the nearest whole number)

9. Please briefly describe a relationship with a faculty member that had multiple dual roles which was a positive experience.

In the above relationship indicate why it was positive? What were some of the benefits of being in this relationship? What were some of the outcomes of being in this relationship?

10. In the relationship you just described above, what strategies did you employ to keep this relationship successful? what did you do to keep this dual relationship from being harmful to your self or to the other person in this dyad?

11. While some people have positive multiple relationships with faculty others have had negative experiences. Please briefly describe a relationship that had multiple dual roles with a faculty member that resulted in a negative experience.
In the above relationship please indicate, why it was negative? What were some of the harms of being in this relationship? What were the outcomes of being in this relationship?

12. In the relationship you just described above, what could you or the other person in the relationship could have done differently to prevent this from being unsuccessful?

If you are a student please skip to question 20. There are only 4 questions left. You are almost done!

13. What is your current status?

☐ Assistant Professor

☐ Associate Professor

☐ Full Professor

☐ Adjunct/Consulting Faculty

☐ Visiting Faculty

☐ other: ____________

14. How many years of experience have you had conducting Martial and Family Therapy (NOT including training, Please round up to the nearest whole number)

[]
15. How many years of experience have you had supervising Marital and Family Therapy students (NOT including training, Please round to the nearest whole number)

16. Please briefly describe a relationship with a student that had multiple dual roles which was a positive experience.

In the above relationship, please indicate why it was positive? What were some of the benefits of being in this relationship? What were some of the outcomes of being in this relationship?

17. In the relationship you just described above, what strategies did you employ to keep this relationship successful? what did you do to keep this dual relationship from being harmful to your self or to the other person in this dyad?

18. While some people have positive multiple relationships with faculty others have had negative experiences. Please briefly describe a relationship that had multiple dual roles with a student that resulted in a negative experience.
In the above relationship, please indicate why it was negative? What were some of the harms of being in this relationship? What were the outcomes of being in this relationship?

19. In the relationship you just described above, what could you or the other person in the relationship could have done differently to prevent this from being unsuccessful?

Only 4 questions left. You are almost done!

20. Please indicate if you have had any training on dual relationships?

☐ Yes

☐ No

21. If yes, please describe what kind of training this entailed.

22. You were just nominated to develop a training program addressing the issue of non-romantic dual relationships. What would you tell MFT students and faculty that they should know or do that could help develop successful multiple relationships?

23. As a whole, how do you think the MFT profession views dual relationships between faculty and students?
Dear MFT students and Faculty, as part of this study I am hoping to interview a sub-sample of participants from this portion of the study. The interview will consist of a brief follow up phone interview. Those participants that complete the phone interview will be given a gift certificate of $10.00 to either Wal-Mart or Target. If you are interested please leave your name, email address, and a phone number where you can be reached in the spaces provided below. Again this information will be kept separate from your responses above.

**Name**

Email address

Phone number (please include your area code)

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete the survey. If you would like the results sent to you please leave your email address below. Your email address will be kept separate from your responses above. Again,

Thank you
Appendix G: Informed Consent, Interview

Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Project Title: Students and Faculty Members in Marriage and Family Therapy Programs: Navigate Successful Non-Sexual Dual Relationships

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Lambert-Shute, MS

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Fred, Piercy

1. I hereby agree to participate in an interview in connection with the project known as Students and Faculty Members in Marriage and Family Therapy Programs: Navigate Successful Non-Sexual Dual Relationships. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I will be asked about my experiences related to successful dual relationships.

2. I understand that I will be asked to participate in at least 1 interview, which will take no longer than 60 minutes.

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the project and the interview at any time without penalty of any kind. In the event that I withdraw from the interview or project, any tape made of the interview will be either given to me or destroyed, and no transcript will be made of the interview.

4. I understand that I will receive a $10.00 gift certificate to Wal-Mart or Target upon completion of the interview.

5. I understand that there are no known risks to participating in this project, and I will be discussing positive experiences. However if I feel uncomfortable at any time I can stop the interview. I also understand that the benefits of this project are great, as my experiences may help inform other students and faculty members in developing successful dual relationships and this knowledge will also be used to generate new theory and/or academic learning.

6. I understand the interview will be audio-taped. In the interview, I will be identified by a pseudonym so that I may remain anonymous in any transcript, tape, and reference to any information contained in the interview.

7. This project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

8. If I feel I have been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or that my rights as a participant in the research have been violated during the course of this project, I know I can contact Dr. David Moore, Chair, IRB, Research Division, Virginia Tech, or Dr. Fred Piercy, Faculty Advisor, Educational Research and Evaluation, Virginia Tech, at the phone numbers listed below.

9. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and agree to be interviewed according to the terms outlined above. I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</table>

Should I have any questions about the research project or procedures, I may contact:

Jennifer Lambert-Shute Dr. Fred Piercy Dr. David Moore
Principal Investigator Faculty Advisor Chair, IRB
540-231-7261 540-231-4794 540-231-4991

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OR DUPLICATE ORIGINAL OF THIS CONSENT FORM
Appendix H: Email to Students for Interview

Dear XXXXX,

My name is Jennifer Lambert-Shute and I recently sent out a survey to MFT faculty and students about multiple relationships between faculty and students. You indicated that you might be willing to participant in a phone interview about successful dual relationship between you and a faculty member. I am emailing you first to thank you for your participation and secondly, to find out if you are still interested in being interviewed.

I am planning on starting interviews the week of April 21st. I am attaching the informed consent so that you can have a chance to look over the document before you decide if you would be willing to set up an interview.

If you do participate in the interview a $10.00 gift certificate to either Target or Wal-Mart will be mailed to you for being involved in the interview.

If you are interested in participating please email me back by April 17th. I am flexible about the day and time of the interview. The interview should last only about an hour.

If you agree to be interviewed I will email you an attachment which includes the interview guide. This will give you an idea of the questions that will be asked during the interview. As always, you do not have to answer any question(s) and can discontinue the interview at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me by email at the above address by phone at 540-231-7261. Also you may contact Dr. Piercy, my doctoral advisor at 540-231-4794 or piercy@vt.edu

Thank you

Jennifer Lambert-Shute
Doctoral Candidate
Marriage and Family Therapy
Department of Human Development
366 Wallace Hall
Virginia Tech Blacksburg, VA 24061
Appendix I: Email sent to Faculty for Phone Interview

Dear Dr. XXX,

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in my research and support me in this endeavor. I am hoping that you are still willing to participate in a phone interview about successful dual relationships. I would like to conduct the interviews on May 12th. Please let me know the day and time that you will be available for the interview. If this week will not work please let me know when would be better.

If you do participate in the interview you will receive a gift certificate to either Target or Wal-Mart for $10.00.

Once you have agreed to participate in the interview I will email you an attachment which includes the informed consent and the interview guide. The interview guide will give you an idea of the questions that I will ask during the phone interview. As always, you do not have to answer any question(s) and can discontinue the interview at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me by email at the above address by phone at 540-231-7261. Also you may contact Dr. Piercy, my doctoral advisor at 540-231-4794 or piercy@vt.edu

Thank you

Sincerely,

Jennifer J. Lambert-Shute
Doctoral Candidate
Marriage and Family Therapy
Department of Human Development
366 Wallace Hall
Virginia Tech Blacksburg, VA 24061
Appendix J: Interview Guide Students

Go over informed consent (main pts) ask if have any questions and then if willing to go ahead with the study. If they say yes, then tell them I am starting the tape and begin recording. When I start recording I am going to ask you again if you are willing to participate in the study so that I can have your permission recorded.

**Demographic Information**

1. In what year were you born?
2. What is your age?
3. Where are you currently, in your graduate education (doctoral, masters, first year)?
4. What is the focus of your program (research, clinical, diversity)
5. About what is the population of your school?

For the following questions I would like you to think about one person that you have had the most successful (in your opinion) dual relationship with who is a faculty member. A dual relationship for this study is any one who played more than one role simultaneously.

1. What is the gender of the person in the dual relationship?
2. What is the current position of the faculty in the dual relationship?
3. How long have they been a faculty member?
4. What is the approximate age of the faculty member?

**Dual Relationship Questions**

Tell me about your relationship with this faculty member?

**Prompts:**

1. How did it begin? What roles did they play? Can you paint me a picture or provide a snapshot of what this relationship is like?

You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question
2. What were the indications for you that this relationship was successful?
3. Now I want you to think about a dual relationship in which it was not as successful what was or is different?
4. What do you think were the most important strategies you employed to have a successful dual relationship? What strategies did they employ?
5. Again thinking of a relationship that was not so successful, which strategies did you use that were different that you think helped to lead you to success. What was different about the faculty and they way they behaved or strategies they used?
6. Which role has been the most difficult to maintain successfully in this relationship?
7. Tell me about the times in which there were difficulties or you felt uncomfortable in this relationship. These were instances or times when it could have gone badly. Can you give me an example?
8. How did you get through these times, what did you do, what did they do to move past this?
You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Power
The literature on dual relationships discusses the negative impacts that power differential can have on these relationships. What was your experience?

Prompts
1. Tell me about a time when you might have felt that you were in a inferior position during this relationship? (an example might be you held something back because of repercussions,)
2. Tell me about a time when you might have felt that you were in a superior position during this relationship? An example might be (you were able to be more honest than your peers with this person)
3. When you were in this relationship what did you do and what did they do that helped alleviate or decrease the hierarchy?
You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question
Reflections
Many people in the survey commented on the fact that their relationship was successful due to having good or clear boundaries. Why do you think this is?

Prompts
1. Was this also true in your relationship?
2. If yes, what type of boundaries existed in your relationship?
3. If so how did you negotiate this?
4. What did they do?
5. What did you do?
6. How did this help to have a successful relationship?

You told me …..is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Some people also mentioned that a benefit of being in this relationship was being mentored. How was this person a mentor to you?

You told me …..is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Training
What helped you be successful in negotiating or preparing for this type of relationship?

Prompts
1. Have you had any training concerning dual relationships?
2. If so, what did the training entail?
3. Was the training helpful?
4. If you could provide training on dual relationships what would you include?

You told me …..is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Context
What do you think other people in your program think about your relationship?
Prompts
1. Do others know about this relationship?
2. Do you talk with others about this relationship?
3. What do you think the MFT profession thinks about dual relationships?
4. What do you think influences your beliefs about dual relationships?
You told me …… is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Future Dual Relationships
I would like you to reflect on this dual relationship you had with the faculty member. Describe what you will do in future dual relationships that will help them lead to success?
1. How is this similar or different than the relationship that you had?
2. The literature says that the person in power (the faculty member) should be in charge of creating a safe and positive relationship between student and a faculty member. What do you think?
3. If there was one thing that you could tell others that they should do to have a successful dual relationship what would it be?

Is there anything specifically, I should know which would help me understand, why your dual relationship was successful?

Thank you, Before we end I just need to ask if you want the gift certificate to target or Wal-Mart and I will need your address so that I can send it to you.

Lastly I was wondering if you would be contact the faculty member you discussed today to see if they would be interested in participating in my study. If they are interested in talking with me about how you were able to have this successful dual relationship you could contact me to let me know or provide them with my email address to contact me. I would be asking them similar questions to what I asked today and again would focus on how the relationship you have has been successful. Also that the interview we did today and what we discussed will remain confidential.
Appendix K: Interview Guide Faculty

Go over informed consent (main pts) ask if have any questions and then if willing to go ahead with the study. If they say yes, then tell them I am starting the tape and begin recording. When I start recording I am going to ask you again if you are willing to participate in the study so that I can have your permission recorded.

Demographic Information

1. In what year were you born?
2. Where are you currently, in your career? (assistant, associate, adjunct, full)
3. What is the focus of your program (research, clinical, diversity)
4. About what is the population of your school?

For the following questions I would like you to think about one person that you have had the most successful (in your opinion) dual relationship with who is a student. A dual relationship for this study is any one who played more than one role simultaneously.

Dual Relationship Questions

Tell me about your relationship with this Student?

Prompts:

1. How did it begin? What roles did they play? Can you paint me a picture or provide a snap shot of what this relationship is like?
2. What is the gender of the person in the dual relationship?
3. Where is the student currently in their graduate education (1st year masters student, doctoral student)
4. How long have you worked/known this student
5. What is the approximate age of the student?

You told me …….is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question
9. What were the indications for you that this relationship was successful?
10. What do you think were the most important strategies you employed to have a successful
dual relationship? What strategies did they employ?
11. Now I want you to think about a dual relationship in which it was not as successful what
was or is different?
12. Again thinking of a relationship that was not so successful, which strategies did you use
that were different that you think helped to lead you to success. What was different about
the faculty and they way they behaved or strategies they used?
13. Which role has been the most difficult to maintain successfully in this relationship?
14. Tell me about the times in which there were difficulties or you felt uncomfortable in this
relationship. These were instances or times when it could have gone badly. Can you give
me an example?

15. How did you get through these times, what did you do, what did they do to move past this?
You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the
next question

Power
The literature on dual relationships discusses the negative impacts that power differential can
have on these relationships. Knowing this, how did you navigate the power in this relationship
successfully?

Prompts
4. What did you think the student did do help navigate the power in this relationship
successfully?
5. Do you have any thoughts in general about how faculty power and dual relationships with
students?
6. Tell me about a time when you thought it was important to alleviate or decrease the
hierarchy in this relationship?
7. Tell me about a time when you purposely put yourself in a more powerful position when
you were in this relationship?
You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the
next question
Reflections
Many people in the survey commented on the fact that their relationship was successful due to having good or clear boundaries. Why do you think this is?

Prompts
7. Was this also true in your relationship?
8. If yes, what type of boundaries existed in your relationship?
9. If so how did you negotiate this?
10. What did they do?
11. What did you do?
12. How did this help to have a successful relationship?

You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Some people also mentioned that a benefit of being in this relationship was being mentored. How were you a mentor to this person?

You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Training
What helped you be successful in negotiating or preparing for this type of relationship?

Prompts
5. Have you had any training concerning dual relationships?
6. If so, what did the training entail?
7. Was the training helpful?
8. If you could provide training on dual relationships what would you include?

You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Context
What do you think other people in your program think about your relationship?

Prompts
5. Does your relationship with the student create any problems with other students or faculty?
6. Do you talk with others about this relationship?
7. What do you think the MFT profession thinks about dual relationships?
8. What do you think influences your beliefs about dual relationships?

You told me ……is there anything else you would like to say about this before I move onto the next question

Balance
How do you let students know who you are but still maintain a sense of professionalism?
(Example: how do you invite student into your life but not cross over the line)

Development
How has your relationship changed with the student over time or how has your relationship with students changed over time?

What have you learned about dual relationships and how to handle them since you first started working with students?

Future Dual Relationships
The literature says that the person in power (the faculty member) should be in charge of creating a safe and positive relationship between student and a faculty member. What do you think?

Is there anything specifically, I should know which would help me understand, why your dual relationship was successful?

Thank you, Before we end I just need to ask if you want the gift certificate to target or Wal-Mart and I will need your address so that I can send it to you.
Appendix L: Field Note Exert

Summary Note of Phone Interview

Date: June 5th 2003  
Name: Faculty Sam  
Minutes Start: 249
Time: 11am  
Phone #: XXX-XXX-XXXX  
End: 103
Total Time: 136 min.

Long Standing Dual Relationship (15 years) started in masters till current (ABD) in which personal component is present and has been present. (like an uncle to her children) dinner with husband and wife. All know each other

At first tired to limit dual relationship and place boundaries especially during the time as a masters student. (Notes: Once graduated then boundaries looser and more personal (move to collegial relationship.)

Strategies: discuss with wife and her husband. (Notes: Both used internal checking and others to help check the relationship. More group then just one on one. Group sever to decrease intimacy and limit use of hierachal power so less chance of abuse (witnesses). Protection for both. Keep in mind that male (professor) female (student).)

Ground rules: communication, expectations (for self and student), awareness

Provided examples of how manage the dual relationship and how trust is a key factor in their relationship or as he call it (benefit of the doubt).

Very aware of how a dissertation changes the relationship becomes like a third entity which has demands and places demands on the relationship which influences the relationship. So then he describes this as a dual relationship in and of itself since it changes the dynamics in the system already established. Need boundaries on how to handle the demands of this (“mistress”) will be dealt with otherwise can cause chaos in the relationship.

“High information exchange”, (uses great terms to describe what he does)

view on relationship between self and student is one of person (others have mentioned this idea) he states that trouble occurs when try to deny you are a person and only have a professional relationship. Like if a therapist thinks only have a professional relationship with client that when will get hit in the face with the truth that it is also a personal relationship and describes two events of people thinking professional denying personal and ending up therapist/faculty member abusing power with student/therapist.

Another strategy that other report maybe all of them is internal checking. Check self and check in with student to see how going. (Note: Make sure you are not doing anything to harm. Have to be open to hearing it if you are otherwise no point. Otherwise if student says something and defensives or deflect or deny then student leans fast not safe to do so)
Discuss challenges: had several challenges: with dissertation and other roles. However got through these challenges. (Note: both report had challenges and were able to move past them because of trust?)

Remark that stuck with me “have to be willing to deal with complexities” when working with humans have to be willing to deal with complexities otherwise don’t show up

Influence by other mentors and how he works in therapy. Theoretical orientation drives way interacts with students (others have yet to discuss this aspect)