EXPLORING GRADUATE STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCE
OF THE THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE
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The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore master students’ experience regarding the development of the therapeutic alliance with first clients over the length of the practicum experience.

The American Psychological Association (APA) emphasizes the importance of studies that identify factors involved in the therapeutic alliance. In the literature on the therapeutic alliance, there is a lack of qualitative research on the perceptions of graduate level counseling students regarding their ability to build and maintain a therapeutic alliance with their first clients during the therapeutic process. The problem in the counselor education profession is the urgent need of assessment procedures that evaluate the development of relational skills during the practicum experience.

The research instrument of this study consist of interviews provided at the end of the Fall semester 2013 to 2nd year Ed.S. practicum students in Marriage, Couples and Family Counseling (MCFC) program at University of South Carolina. Interviews aim to explore students’ understanding about the evolution of relational skills during their practicum, incorporating clients’ feedback in both clinical and supervision sessions.

Both theoretical and practical implications for pedagogy and supervision in counselor education profession will be discussed.