

CREATIVITY IN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING: CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL
COUNSELORS' PERSPECTIVES

by

AMY VIRGINIA KUZNIAR

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION: COUNSELING

2024

Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

Doctoral Advisory Committee:

Michael Chaney, Ph.D., Chair
Lisa Hawley, Ph.D.
Libby Lewis, Ph.D.
Jennifer Matthews, Ph.D.

© Copyright by Amy Virginia Kuzniar, 2024
All rights reserved

I dedicate this to the one and only Claudette. Thank you for your presence in my life. Try to always finish what you start if it is meaningful and makes you proud. I will always be in admiration of you and your strength.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my loving family and friends who have been with me on this astounding journey. Thank you for your support and understanding during the time it took me away from you. We have lost several beloved people during the span of time that it took me to complete this endeavor. I imagine them as I write this now. I would like to thank Dr. Robert Fink, who started this journey with me. His creativity, knowledge, and commitment to the field are immeasurable. I thank him for the support and mentorship he gifted me. This project continued beyond his retirement. I would like to warmly thank Dr. Mike Chaney, who continued the challenge. I hold gratitude in my heart for his patience. He was one of my early professors at OU who engaged in creativity in his classes, which will always be memorable to me. His knowledge, commitment, and advocacy for counseling are admirable. Thank you to Dr. Lisa Hawley, Dr. Libby Lewis, and Dr. Jennifer Matthews, who make up the rest of my dream team committee members. The wisdom, guidance, and kindness offered in this process have been crucial to my continued development as a researcher. I am also deeply grateful for the participants in this research study, who reminded me that the work is meaningful and is something to be proud of.

Amy Virginia Kuzniar

ABSTRACT

CREATIVITY IN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING: CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS' PERSPECTIVES

By

AMY VIRGINIA KUZNIAR

Advisor: Michael P. Chaney, PhD

The study of creativity has been a far-reaching research interest in many industries for over a century. The study utilized a grounded theory approach to explore the depth and perception of creativity within counseling. Limited research focuses on licensed professional counselors who are in practice and use a creative approach as part of their counselor identity. Reviewing several meta-analyses, the literature suggests that counselors in practice participate the least in counseling research. This qualitative study adds uniquely to the counseling literature that focuses on counselor approaches and methodologies. This study concentrated on the direct perception of the professional counselor's creative approach, the development of their creative identity, and the meaningful processes that occur within their counseling relationships in practice. Twenty-one participants met the criteria and were interviewed to learn about the counselors' perceptions and ensure their voices were heard. The results of the study led to the development of a new theory for Expressive Counseling. The implications for counselor education and training and areas for future research are provided.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Study	3
Significance of the Study	4
Research Questions	5
Research Design	7
Theoretical Framework	7
Definition of Terms	10
Chapter Summary	11
CHAPTER TWO	
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	13
Complex Creativity	13
Defining Professional Counseling	17
Roots of Creativity in Mental Health	19
Domain-Specific Creativity in Professional Counseling	21
Guidance for Creativity in Counselor Education	23
Creativity for Mental Wellness	28
A Secure Base for Creative Counseling	30
Creativity in Professional Counselor Practice	31

TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

Professional Counselor Identity	33
Methods for Creative Counseling	40
Chapter Summary	42
CHAPTER THREE	
METHOD	45
Research Design	46
Grounded Theory Approach	47
Participants	48
Sample Recruitment	48
Instrumentation	50
Informed Consent and Confidentiality	50
Qualifying Questionnaire	50
Semi-structured Interview	51
Data Collection and Analysis Procedures	51
Data Analysis	53
Trustworthiness	57
Researcher Positionality	57
Peer Debrief	60
Member Checking	60
Chapter Summary	62
CHAPTER FOUR	63
RESULTS	
Defining Creativity in Professional Counseling	65

TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

Clinical Interactions in the Creative Space	65
Creativity is Part of Human Experience	70
Creative Counseling Development	72
Established Creative Practitioner Before LPC Status	73
Creative and Counselor Training Concurrent	74
Desire For More Creative Counseling Training	77
Creative Counseling Client Engagement	80
Client Response to Creative Intervention	80
Positive Engagement with Creative Technique	81
Client Aversion to Creative Intervention	85
Creative Counseling is Skill and Training	86
Dependent	
Multicultural and Intersectional Considerations	90
Client-Led Interactions for Learning	91
Counselor Cultural Humility	93
Requires Multicultural Training	95
Engagement During the Global Pandemic	98
Hard Transition	98
Clinical Growth	101
Empowered Clients	103
No Change	104
Chapter Summary	105

TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

CHAPTER FIVE	107
DISCUSSION	
Expressive Counseling Theory	109
Expressive Counseling Orientation	113
Expressive Counseling Clients	114
Expressive Counseling Methods	116
Implications for Counseling Training and Practice	117
Limitations	122
Future Research	124
Chapter Summary	125
APPENDICES	
A. IRB Approval	126
B. Consent and Qualifying Questionnaire	130
C. Recruitment Script	137
D. Interview Guide	139
E. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample	141
REFERENCES	143

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

*I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say
any other way... things I had no words for. - Georgia O'Keeffe*

Finding literature that agrees on a significant and universal definition of creativity for any profession can be challenging. The search for a concise explanation of creativity has become a wide-ranging research interest in many professions for decades (Plucker et al., 2004; Simonton, 2012). For the field of psychology, the history of creativity research reveals a nebulous web of varied definitions for various clinical or colloquial contexts (Simonton, 2012). In the field of professional counseling, research on creativity also has a presence. Some research included promoting the importance of creativity (Carson et al., 2003; Gladding, 2021), the characteristics needed for creativity (Duffey et al., 2009), and suggested factors that helped or hindered creativity (Smith, 2011).

Little research on creativity within the counseling field has captured how professional counselors define it or describe how it functions in their practices with clients (Rouse et al., 2015). One promising study surveyed professional counselors to learn how creativity functions within their counseling practices (Rouse et al., 2015). However, it did not yield the intended outcome as the primary researcher admitted that adding an arts-based element to the methodology and a small sample size somewhat diminished the primary goal of gaining a specific definition of creativity by counselors. No subsequent study has been found by the researcher and with similar participants on the topic currently.

This qualitative study adds uniquely to the literature because it resulted in the development of a professional counselor-generated theory of Expressive Counseling. The research sheds light on factors that professional counselors maintain in their professional identity as creative counselors. Gaining the perspective of counselors could enhance future training, methodology, explore client engagement, and increase knowledge from the counselor's perspective (Rouse, 2015).

To date, the topic of creativity in counseling has been explored, implemented, documented, and proposed by researchers over the years. Gladding (2021) wrote about creativity in counseling and suggested many reasons for its usefulness. He determined in many ways that it gave counselors opportunities that helped clients in positive ways. Creative methods helped clients move toward self-integration; promoted energy in the process; increased personal focus; brought with it a greater awareness of self; allowed a tangible record in the therapeutic process; promoted growth of insight for the client; engaged cooperation; and was a multicultural endeavor in treatment (Gladding, 2021).

In his research, Gladding was a proponent of the approach because “creativity involves spontaneity and novelty that is useful, purposeful, or meaningful” (Gladding & Henderson, 2000, p. 246). He wrote that creativity resulted from moving around elements of an identified problem and coming up with an entirely new product or process (Gladding & Henderson, 2000). It has been difficult to cross reference Gladding's belief in the vital utilization of creative approaches in counseling today because little research has directly engaged the counselors who describe such methods with clients.

Overall, the literature that explored many areas of the field of professional counseling specifically showed that professional counselors had participated the least in

studies spanning over a decade. According to the results of five separate meta-analyses across three major counseling research journals that examined author and article characteristics of publications, it was noted that authorship and participant levels of practicing counselors, from non-academic settings are the lowest percentages in all of the reviews (Anderson et al., 2021; Boswell et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2022; Prasath et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). In the discussion sections of the articles, the authors similarly noted a decline in collaboration between universities and the counseling professionals working in the communities in the 15 years of literature. This current study would help lessen the collaboration divide by engaging and gathering perspectives from professional counselors about their creative approach and their relationship with it in therapeutic relationships.

Purpose of the study

Limited research focuses on licensed professional counselors who are in practice and see their creative approach as part of their counselor identity. In review of several meta-analyses, researchers point out that counselors in practice are a faction of the professional counseling domain that engages less in research overall. This study adds uniquely to the counseling literature that focuses on counselor approaches and methodology. It also adds to the literature that explores creativity in counseling that includes creativity as part of a professional identity. It created a forum where the counselor's perceptions and voices are heard. Learning about the professional counselor's creative approach, the development of a creative identity, and meaningful processes will beneficially inform professional counseling practice and training. It is the hope to

generate the further pursuit of counseling practitioners' participation in professional counseling research.

Significance of the Study

Research on creativity in counseling exists, but minimal research outlines the specific perceptions of professional counselors in the discipline. Much of the conversation about counseling has been gleaned from the universities that educate counselors. In the last four years, several content analyses have been published in professional counseling journals that included articles from the *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* (JCMH) (Boswell et al., 2021; Prasath et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023), the *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation* (CORE) (Johnson et al., 2020) and the *Journal of Counseling Development* (JCD) (Anderson et al., 2021) about the characteristics about the various publications spanning 15 years from 2005- 2020.

Overall, the concern that authorship outside the university voice has been minimal and remained consistent over the 15 years. The implication of a seemingly absent professional counselor voice is a concerning trend. The unique perception and approach of practitioners working in the field of counseling, beyond university training, is essential to both research and practice of the counseling profession moving forward (Anderson et al., 2021).

Boswell et al., 2021 focused on JCMH articles that reviewed creative methods in counseling practices and found that 92.2% of the generated research was conducted by counselor educators in university settings, compared to 7% of the data generated from clinical, nonprofit, or school district settings. This finding pointed to a gap in the research

about non-university-based professional counseling practices across the country, specifically for the targeted professionals using creative methods in their practice.

The research revealed that professional counselors have minimal participation in conducting research or contributing as research participants. It can be assumed that the professional counselors working on the ground level in community agencies, schools, and other job sites have yet to establish a vehicle to report and discuss their creative work in their practices. It could also reflect on the role overload with maximum client cases and minimal time to generate research about their work. Johnson et al. (2020) found similar scale percentages in the CORE articles of university-affiliated authors versus practitioners in the field, noting, "counseling scholars should partner with practitioners to conduct meaningful field-based research that enriches practice and evidence-based interventions. These initiatives can help include and celebrate the practitioner's voice in counseling research; practitioners' varied perspectives can help drive innovation in counseling research and practice" (p. 142).

This research study aims to fill a gap in the domain-specific (Baer, 2012) based definition of the creative approach in professional counseling practice, the developmental process to acquire a creative approach, and how creativity is utilized with clients in meaningful ways.

Research Questions

An interview guide (Appendix D) was developed that included the three main research questions with correlating subsequent questions to accomplish the theoretical sampling goal (Foley et al., 2021). There was an initial qualifying questionnaire (Appendix B) that potential participants completed. The goal was to gain limited

demographic information and substantiate professional counselor status who identified as creative counselors in their practice. With the intention to develop a domain-specific theory of the creative approach used by professional counselors, three areas of interest emerged.

The following questions are the focus of the current research:

R1: How do professional counselors define creativity?

R2: How do counselors describe their development as an identified creative counselor?

R3: What types of creative techniques or interventions do professional counselors use that have been most engaging for clients?

The first area of focus for the interview was to learn how counselors define themselves and their creative approach for their practice. The second focus was to learn about the developmental pathway and training counselors have undertaken to arrive at identifying as a creative counselor. The third focus was on the creative processes they mostly rely on in their professional counseling practice with clients. Participants were asked to elaborate on what techniques clients found most engaging and how their creative approach takes into consideration clients' multicultural and/or intersectional identities. Lastly, participants will be able to share how the creative interventions and their practices were modified during the global pandemic.

The interview guide (Appendix D) highlights the three research questions with additional subsequent questions that aim to add depth and detail to the participant narrative with the ultimate goal of theoretical sampling (Foley et al., 2021).

Research Design

A qualitative research design utilizing a grounded theory approach was used in this study. Grounded theory has been defined as a qualitative systematic analysis process where a theory is built from data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The topic of creativity will be understood by both the researcher and the participants, which will establish a co-constructivist approach inherent in the interviewing and data-gathering process (Charmaz, 2014). Prior knowledge places researchers in a position that may be helpful in being in tune with conditions that differences and uniqueness surface and are described (Charmaz, 2014). Although this study began with purposeful sampling, it merged into theoretical sampling. One research goal was to develop a domain-specific emergent theory of creativity explicitly used in professional counseling by the participant counselors in practice. The unique experiences of each participant shed light upon the developmental processes undertaken to arrive at their chosen professional identity as creative counselors. Participant data was collected individually via interviews that underwent a coding process. Reflexive journals were kept in the interview process by the researcher to better analyze and map similarities and differences found in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A new grounded theory for Expressive Counseling in professional counseling was developed from the research data and adds uniquely to the literature in the field.

Theoretical Framework

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) developed a systems model of creativity. His research focused on creative activity in professions supported by an interaction of systemic elements. Creativity can be viewed as a complex phenomenon that happens when many

components in practice are engaged, asserting that in a contemporary study, "we need to abandon the Ptolemaic view of creativity, in which the person is at the center of everything, for a more Copernican model in which the person is part of a system of mutual influences and information" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 336). The phenomenon arises from the dynamic interaction of "a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 6).

Csikszentmihalyi organized his systems model into three parts: Domain, Field, and Person. The counseling profession has an established system in which the education and training follow specific standards, competencies, and licensure ethics that define the profession's domain. The counselor educators, supervisors, and scholars in the *domain* determine successful learning, effective counseling with clients and oversee as gatekeepers to the *field* of professional counseling. The licensed counselors, or *persons*, working in their practices with clients, have accomplished the standards mandated within the domain and maintain their careers in the field. When creativity is part of the counselor's professional identity, it is a separate set of skills that are to be acquired either simultaneously within the *person's* education and training or later in the career.

When framed within the theoretical framework of Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity, the origin and development of the creative skills of professional counselors can be understood and generate knowledge undiscovered in the literature. Often creativity is designated as an approach used by a counselor in practice, so it will be informative to learn at what stage it was launched from the support within the system of

counseling, or lack thereof. The primary focus of this study will be on the person within the tri-fold framework of the systems model.

One of the big questions in counseling-based creativity research and theory is the degree to which the skills that generate creativity can vary by the domain of work (Baer, 2012). The theoretical framework of domain specificity for creativity developed by John Baer (2012) may be applied to professional counseling to uncover the current skill set needed for a professional counselor to practice within client treatment. Research on such a categorical look at domain specificity of creativity is offered by Plucker et al. (2004), stating, "Creativity is the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within some social context (p.90)". The creative processes used in counseling sessions with clients are specific to the counseling relationship and not a general creative skill transferable to another domain of work or even another solitary relationship (Baer, 2012; Duffey et al., 2016).

Further, given the changes in counseling practices due to the global pandemic in response to Covid-19, it emerged that skills evolved even more concerning the creative approach when counseling in telehealth sessions. Research on the professional development of counseling explored the challenges of relating online shared by both client and counselor alike (Shklarski et al., 2021). Transferring the expected and required ethical standards and competencies (ACA, 2014; Ratts et al., 2016) that the professional counselor must maintain when practice vanished from working in person together to the office space in the digital ether must have been also challenged inherently. The data provided by participants in this current study also provides information on the adaptations

experienced by professional counselors during the historical time of the global pandemic. The research to learn about the lived experiences of professional counselors in their practices today has never been more critical, given those changes that have occurred to the fundamental way counseling practice continues to evolve.

Definition of Terms

Creative Counseling: An approach in counseling where spontaneity and novelty beyond traditional talk therapy utilizes diverse media or activity that is useful, purposeful and adds a level of meaningful processing of perspective, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by the client for greater self-awareness (Duffey et al., 2016; Gladding 2008, 2021; Gladding & Henderson, 2000).

Domain Specificity: Specific skills are used in one context. "Creativity is the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within some social context" (Plucker et al., 2004, p.90). A construct for creativity can be developed to fit the needs and contexts of a discipline of work (Baer, 2016).

Creative Metacognition (CMC): Recognizing and knowing the level of personal creative self-efficacy or lack thereof plays a role in developing a creative self-identity needed for continued development and growth in a specific context. CMC is considered a crucial element to develop alongside the typical domain-based skill-building in one's field (Kaufman et al., 2016).

Professional Counselor Identity: The career-long attention and integration of personal and professional development through a commitment of continued skill and knowledge attainment within counseling practice, ongoing self-development, and

professional advocacy in the domain of professional counseling (Cashwell & McKibben, 2018).

Professional Counseling: A clinical relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. Professional counselors are similar to professionals working in allied mental health fields but are different because the clinical work to overcome obstacles and personal challenges that clients are facing are conducted with a mental health professional that works from within a lens of human growth and development (ACA, 2014; Gale, & Austin, 2003).

A new term and definition of *Expressive Counseling* was developed from the participant data retrieved in this research study:

Expressive Counseling: A specialized counseling orientation conducted by a Licensed Professional Counselor who is educated and trained in specific creative and multidisciplined areas of professional counseling to meet the needs of consenting clients of all ages, abilities, cultures, and honors the intersectionality of individuals forming the authentic relationships in their practices. The methods used are creative in nature and motivated by the needs of the client who may feel empowered by the multitude of intervention options offered in the counseling experience that stretches beyond strictly traditional and verbal counseling methods.

Summary

Reviewing the literature and developing decent assumptions for the best conditions for creativity in counseling is possible. However, the opportunity to define creativity in the literature by professional counselors has proven difficult. To define

creativity by a professional counselor whose practices include creativity will contribute uniquely to the literature. Limited research on the specifics of the creative approach in counseling practices created the current void in understanding the development of the skill set and beneficial interventions. It was important to qualitatively study these developmental factors of professional counseling practice from the primary source working in agencies currently in the US. This current qualitative grounded research focused on filling the void in this research area and allowed counselors to alternatively define Expressive Counseling based on their perceptions and lived experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Complex Creativity

The term creativity originates from the Latin word "creō," which means to form or to create (Niu & Sternberg, 2006). Creativity has been considered a complex behavior used to elevate the personal, professional, and social experience in most areas of life, including healthy emotional and psychological functioning (Kerr & Gagliardi, 2019; Rouse et al., 2015; Runco, 2004; Plucker et al., 2004; Runco & Sakamoto, 1999). Creativity has been valued as an attainable developmental skill that can be "taught, learned, practiced, and improved" (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012, p. 4). Despite that, there have been challenges in clarifying a universal definition. Many researchers agree that creativity may contain originality, contextual appropriateness and adds value to society, worlds of work, and personal lives (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012; Beghetto & Kaufman, 2013; Conner et al., 2016; Duffey et al., 2009; Lawrence et al., 2015; Plucker et al., 2004; Simonton, 2012).

Historically, research on the topic of creativity, in general, revealed a multitude of definitions, disagreement on appropriate ways to quantify it, and agreement that "a universal definition for creativity is impractical" (Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010; Kerr & Gagliardi, 2019; Plucker et al., 2004; Plucker & Makel, 2010). To underscore the breadth of research in the area of creativity, a recent search in PsychINFO using the general search term "creativity" revealed more than 20,000 papers written on the topic in the last decade. Plucker, Beghetto, and Dow (2004) found that when they chose 90 different journal articles with creativity in the title, they found that only 38% defined creativity in

explicit terms. Researchers believe that such a wide-ranging interpretation of creativity needs to be more precise, pointing to the overarching disagreement of the research on the topic itself (Plucker et al., 2004). To boldly define creativity across disciplines may be risky because it has too many overlapping connotations that may have become diluted in everyday language. The need for a cohesive definition of common elements of creativity has been debated. Simonton (2012) stated,

"Trying to make scientific advances in our understanding of the phenomenon is futile if we cannot even reach a consensus on what is meant by a "creative idea." After all, the creative idea is an essential component of what we mean by the "creative process" (which generates the idea), the "creative person" (who produces the idea), and the "creative product" (which contains the idea). Moreover, if any consensus is reached, it is preferable for researchers to settle on the best definition possible." (p.103)

Some researchers believe defining a domain-specific skill of creativity within a profession is necessary and worthy to define for stakeholders in the domain (Baer, 1998; 2012; 2016; Plucker, 1998). Creative skills in a professional counseling practice differ from those in another professional setting. Therefore, determining the specifics of creativity used in counseling is essential rather than assuming it would require a general approach and context for the use of creativity.

Kampylis and Valtanen (2010) reviewed the definition of creativity by 42 different creativity researchers and outlined specific overarching themes to the wide-ranging term. The commonalities found in the literature were that creativity could be an important individual ability, was an intentional activity that can occur in a specific

environment and may result in a tangible or conceptual product perceived as novel and appropriate for specific circumstances or domain of industry. Additionally, Walia (2019) further established that creativity is a dynamic process built from awareness of an imbalance where focused attention is exerted on the target to work toward a desired goal, emotionally or physically. This dynamic view of creativity asserts that it is a process allowing growth and change. The ongoing experiment of creativity in the context of creation will need to be filtered through dynamic processes of all that are at play, "person, environment, and society, product and persuasion, and various interactions within each of these" (Walia, 2019, p.8). Despite the lack of a universal definition, creativity, and creative people, are deemed necessary enough that generating the skill set in multiple sectors of work has become a pivotal component for growth, competitiveness, disaster prevention, societal and economic hardships across the globe, and has developed into a multi-million-dollar industry (Dumas & Dunbar, 2016; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg, 1999).

Beghetto and Kaufman (2013) outlined five different aspects of creativity that were crucial to consider its viability within a domain-specific profession. The factors are a general overview to be considered for many areas of work but should be applied within the lens of the specific discipline's framework or inner workings. The first aspect is that original thought and creative innovations must remain goal appropriate within the overall task of the work (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2007). Working creatively within a specific domain has various levels and limits to what is appropriate to the task or goal. To reach that goal, context matters for each professional domain to incorporate and value creativity therein. Because of its spontaneous nature, creativity can be associated with positive and negative risks. Lastly, creativity should occur when it makes sense, is valuable, and has

the capacity for ambiguity. When applied to a specific discipline, creativity is conducted within its parameters in a specific holding environment (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2013; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2007; Plucker, 1998).

The research on such a categorical look at the domain specificity of creativity is offered by Plucker et al. (2004), stating, "Creativity is the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within some social context" (p.90). In defining the construct of creativity for a specific domain of work, a cloud of uncertainty alleviates the struggle of what skeptics consider a crisis of legitimacy in creativity research (Plucker et al., 2004).

Another aspect of creativity researchers pose is that the value placed on the appropriate response to a problem can equal the novel response (Amabile, 1996; Kaufman, 2009; Sternberg & Lubart, 1996). Amabile (1996) theorized a definition of creativity that has two essential components,

“A product or response will be judged as creative to the extent that (a) it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic.” (p.35)

For the purpose of this study, creative counseling will be defined as an approach that involves spontaneity and novelty beyond traditional talk therapy utilizing diverse media or activity that is useful, purposeful, and adds a level of meaningful processing of perspective, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by the client for greater self-awareness (Duffey et al., 2016; Gladding 2008, 2021; Gladding & Henderson, 2000). In addition, mind-body processes found in Complementary Therapies (CT) utilize a wellness and

holistic approach to expand, conceptualize, and process mental health and have been creatively integrated into counseling practices with success and popularity (Nichols, 2015). Based on the literature found in counseling-specific journals, the creative counseling has been described by researchers who are leaders in the field and counselor educators who have educated or supervised current professional counselors in practice.

While the established counseling research on creativity has been helpful, the lack of studies where professional counselors theoretically define their creative approach has yet to be found. The current study is focused on gathering such information from professional counselors that currently utilize creativity in their practice. Most likely, the counselor participants learned from those leaders or educators or have studied the research on creativity. The participants in this study will be interviewed about their creative approach and the origin of professional development for their creative approach. No such data variable has been located in the literature to this date.

Defining Professional Counseling

To develop a definition of creativity in counseling, a definition for counseling itself must be established. The distinctions between disciplines in the mental health professions are outlined only sometimes in public unless there is a need for specific services. To align psychologists with only testing and evaluation, social workers with systemic resource finding, and counselors with career building is a disservice to each domain of work. In an effort for professional counseling to establish its domain specificity within the mental health disciplines, it was determined by counseling researchers that a succinct public definition was needed. The initiative spanned over a half decade to develop.

In 2014, an updated definition of counseling was established by delegates from 31 counseling organizations (Kaplan et al., 2014). The definition states, “Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals” (Kaplan et al., 2014, p.92).

The overall goal of the Delphi study was to establish a domain-specific and consensual definition to convey a meaningful explanation to the general public without a professional counseling background. The motivation for such a needed action was altogether protective and promotional,

“The rationale behind this effort was based on the fact that if professional counselors, in a nonpolitical atmosphere, did not come to a consensus on what counseling was, then others outside the profession would define counseling, most likely in limiting terms and to the detriment of counselors. In addition, counselors needed to unite in legislative and consumer initiatives and attract bright and caring individuals into the field” (Kaplan et al., 2014. p. 371)

The need for consensus on a definition of counseling was a critical element in the development of professional practice. One specific need for such advocacy was motivated by counselors to be named in legislation for medical billing and insurance paneling in many states. The use of creativity in counseling is unofficially designated a popular specialty, but not a competency at all set by the discipline's educational governing body Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2024). The road to a creative competency in counseling has yet to

be fully established in the research. The roots of creativity research, however, in allied fields are longstanding.

Roots of Creativity for Mental Health

Professional counseling has long been considered a creative practice at its core. It is process-oriented within a relationship between a client and counselor who form a collaboration for problem-solving the areas of concern in treatment through the lens of human growth and development (Carson & Becker, 2004; Duffey et al., 2009; Gale & Austin, 2003; Gladding, 2021; Heppner et al., 1994; Rouse et al., 2015). Much conceptual scholarship has been produced on the topic of creativity in counseling. However, the empirical research to define it is limited and is implicated for future research in many articles (Arnout & Almoied, 2020; Lawrence et al., 2015; Rouse et al., 2015).

Creativity in professional counseling developed its roots from within the allied fields in the mental health disciplines. Creativity exploration may date back to 1876 with French psychiatrist Paul Max Simon who published drawings of the "insane," to Cesare Lombroso in 1887, who theorized about creativity as synonymous with madness, and to Freud's (1923) clinical use of free association and dream work with patients. In dreamwork, it was determined that unconscious desires and wishful thinking were being processed through dreams while sleeping. Freud believed that recalling dreams and speaking about the images in therapy sessions would free the dream into consciousness and become the focus of work in sessions (Freud, 1923).

Jung (1957) further theorized the collective unconscious and self-discovery, where universal cultural archetypes exist in symbols and were explored in dream

interpretation. Early study of artistic creativity for coping and personal expression was also seen in the collections of psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn's (1972) archives from institutionalized mental health patients in Germany. He wrote that the art was not much different than what would be seen in museums, but more so a means for expression, an emotional release of inner conflicts and needed for symbol formation in an effort toward what he called configuration (Esman, 2006). Another example would be the Bauhaus artist Friedl Dicker-Brandeis who, during WWII, worked with children held in the concentration camp of Terezin in German-occupied Czechoslovakia (Volavkova, 1993). Before being deported to Auschwitz, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis filled two suitcases with about 4,500 children's drawings and put them in a secret place in Terezin. The artwork and poems are part of the permanent exhibition in the Holocaust Museum in DC. They depicted their life in captivity and served as a creative emotional outlet during the time that the chaos and horror endured.

One pivotal and motivating event to increase creativity research in the mental health disciplines was seen in the 1950 American Psychological Association presidential address by J. P. Guilford, who called out to the members to conduct research in the field of psychology (Sawyer, 2012; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Simonton, 2000; Sternberg & Lubart, 1996). Guilford urged them to look at creativity as a cognitive and social process as well as factoring in personal traits among higher intellects (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012). The request was met with great interest that spread across psychological and social research areas. The areas of focus were mainly in cognitive development, clinical, social, and industrial/organizational and across other disciplined fields such as architecture, science, economics, education, and the arts (MacKinnon, 1962; Kaufman & Beghetto,

2009). Despite the historical overlap of specialty, training, and partial title with other disciplines, professional counseling has prevailed to develop its own collective identity as a solitary mental health discipline where the underlying foundation of human growth and development is often explored through the use of creative methods in practice (Duffey et al., 2016; Gale & Austin, 2003; Gladding, 2008).

Domain-Specific Creativity in Professional Counseling

Professional counseling also has had a long history of the use of creativity to expand clinical knowledge in work with clients. Carl Rogers (1961), who was integral to the development of counseling as we know it today, worked to theorize creativity in practice, where he sought the need to outline "the nature of the creative act, the conditions under which it occurs, and how it may constructively be fostered" (Rogers, 1961, p. 347). He defined the creative process as "the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other" (Rogers, 1961, p. 350). The results of the creative process in counseling could either be socially valued as good or bad, having more or less creative energy attached to the product and more to the growth experience of the client in the collaborative relationship (Rogers, 1961). Akin to the necessary conditions for client change seen in the person-centered therapy model, the motivation for creativity had conditions that should help advance toward a self-actualizing tendency for clients. Rogers believed the roadmap for a search for true self-expansion could be boundless and naturally occur in the social environment surrounding the individual. According to Rogers, the three necessary internal conditions for creativity to occur are a personal openness to experience, an internal locus of control, and the

ability to experiment within the spectrum of one's life (Rogers, 1961). These can be ensured when one has constructed the external states of psychological freedom and safety. In his theory, there is another worldly place to head to where the individual in his social world moves freely without the barrier of evaluation in building opportunities for symbolic expression. The person-centered relationship in counseling was a strengthening and supportive space where creativity could be freely explored confidently (Rogers, 1961).

Rollo May (1975) theorized that the creative and therapy processes were similar in that they both stage an encounter where the journey to a self-satisfying solution is decidedly achieved. This process cannot be forced and may not be comfortable. However, it is an "encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his or her world" (May, 1975. P. 49). The bulk of the work in counseling with clients is considered a dynamic process-oriented interaction within a developing relationship at the core (Carson & Becker, 2004; Duffey et al., 2009). Researchers purport that creativity and counseling fundamentally overlap, arguing that the specific characteristics in the work of creativity and counseling are synonymous (Carson & Becker, 2004; Duffey et al., 2009; Gladding, 2008; 2014; 2021; Rouse et al., 2015). Counseling and creativity are considered alike in that an issue is identified, experimented with, and analyzed to develop solutions to meet a functional need and navigate through it all using convergent and divergent thinking (Carson & Becker, 2004; Rouse et al., 2015).

Gladding (2008) stated, "Creativity has contributed to counseling theories as well as to other areas of society. In fact, without creativity, there would not be counseling, and it is likely there would not be other helping professions either" (p.99). Gladding has

written widely on using the expressive arts in counseling and thought counseling's future would depend on the continued use of creativity in the domain. His texts on the creative arts in counseling have been used in counselor education coursework to expose counseling students to the idea that beyond foundational counseling skills, creativity can be attained (Smith, 2011). He found that the practice of "creativity involves spontaneity and novelty that is useful, purposeful, or meaningful" (Gladding & Henderson, 2000, p. 246).

In using creative expression in counseling practice, the experiential activity may produce a cooperative, more energetic, multicultural engagement serving as an aide to clients in their move toward self-integration (Gladding 2021). The creative methods used in a counseling relationship could become a vehicle for increased personal focus or exploration, a new way for emotionally expressive communication, and a personal coping strategy to help examine difficult life experiences. Gladding wrote, "creativity is considered to be the arranging or rearranging of elements so that a new and productive process or product is formed" (Gladding & Henderson, 2000, p. 246). His research using the SCAMPER model, in which the acronym for the process is to *substitute, combine, adopt/adapt, modify, put to other uses, eliminating, and reverse/rearrange*, was a teaching model adopted from Eberle (1972), originally used to ignite a creative brainstorming lesson for school children that brought to the surface a puzzle-like concept.

Guidance for Creativity in Counselor Education

This study is relevant to understanding the breadth and type of creativity in professional counseling practices. If counseling is synonymous with creativity, as Gladding (2008) wrote, the extent of such skill development is in question. To quantify

such a measure, the origin and development of the creative approach should be a factor to explore. One aspect to understand is if the counselor has had prior experience with being creative in their life or if it was a new, domain-specific, creative skill learned and practiced in the graduate program they attended.

Gladding and other researchers have advocated for using creativity in counselor education programs that train and prepare for the future in their professional counseling practice (Lawrence et al., 2015; Rouse et al., 2015). When creativity is part of the early instruction, students may learn complicated concepts more successfully (Lawrence et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2021). The learning becomes more interactive, promoting divergent thinking skills while learning more about the self, others, and the world (Bradley et al., 2008; Carson & Becker, 2004; Gladding, 2021). A successful counselor relies on listening deeply to clients, and the "micro skill of question-asking is instrumental in the acquisition of counseling skills" (McCarthy, 2018. p. 312). To gain insight into creativity in counseling practice today, it would be essential to find out if they had the opportunity to explore creative practices while learning the foundations of the field in their graduate school program.

The training and educational pedagogy, theory, and techniques for the future counselor appear algorithmic in their foundational coursework set by CACREP. The standardized checklist of competencies for counseling students is accomplished through the required coursework offered in university counseling departments. The instructors and supervisors serve as gatekeepers for the profession, who teach the coursework through their theoretical lens, approach, and style. Their approach may include creativity but is not guaranteed.

The most recent CACREP Standards have six sections outlining all minimum requirements for accredited programs in the domain of counselor education and student supervision. The 2024 CACREP Standards were updated to ensure quality in graduate counseling programming and promote a unified counselor identity. It is noted that innovation is encouraged in terms of information delivery but appears optional at the institutional level. Graduate programs must address the following areas: the learning environment, professional counseling identity, professional practice, evaluation, entry-level specialty areas, and doctoral standards for counselor education and supervision (CACREP, 2024). When creativity is experimented with within coursework, it may challenge students to expand their thought processes and examine their own lives. It is ultimately up to the instructor's discretion whether it becomes an element of instruction.

Researchers have long written about the importance and need for the discipline of counselor education to develop more ways to incorporate creativity skills into counselor training and supervision (Carson & Becker, 2004; Lawrence et al., 2015; Ziff & Beamish, 2004). McCarthy (2018) suggested that creative thinking and creative problem-solving should be included in counseling program curricula:

“(a) counseling and its theories are creative endeavors; (b) counselors are creative role models to clients and students; (c) creative problem-solving mirrors the counseling process; (d) creativity is at the forefront of wellness; (e) creativity may be a bonus to professional identity; (f) creativity spans cultures as well as the lifespan; and (g) counselors are question experts.” (p. 307)

According to CACREP standards (CACREP, 2024), the development of an identity and theoretical orientation should begin to form during graduate training and education. If

becoming a creative counselor were to be a part of that identity, it may be important to integrate the approach in those initial steps of training. However, it is still being determined where innovations may be applied when the curriculum standards are specific. Counseling students in graduate programs are inundated with core theoretical pedagogy focused on foundational skills. The new core skill and counseling theory to master would seemingly take precedence over experimenting or innovating with creativity (Rouse et al., 2015). The question of when and where the commitment toward a creative approach originates for a counselor in training is only known if researchers inquire.

Nonetheless, research suggested areas creative methods can be inserted into the foundational curriculum for counselors in the CACREP graduate programs. For instance, Reilly (2016) specifically conceptualized how mindfulness as a creative activity can be directly infused into each core area of the CACREP standards for the first-year graduate student. Mindfulness is not a core pedagogical concept typically utilized in counselor education but rather considered an adjacent creative intervention in practice utilized often to reduce stress (Lindsey et al., 2018). Mindfulness was implemented to address elements within the CACREP areas of professional development, prevention, wellness, group work, helping relationships, and social and cultural diversity coursework (Reilly, 2016). The benefits of its use included increased personal awareness, lowered stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as a tangible practice of self-care for students to practice in the future.

Smith (2011) found the benefits of expressive counseling and suggested that it be included in counselor training. Exposing students to creative methods early in their

program gives them exposure and freedom to develop a creative approach within the course content. Doing so may allow a safe forum to practice self-awareness, understand the dynamics of group cohesion, and engage in reflective learning with interactive processing (Smith, 2011). Other research addressed specific concepts in areas of counselor education programming such as in theory coursework (Wood et al., 2021) and supervision (Amundson, 1988; Deaver & Shiflett, 2011; Graham et al., 2014; Hinkle & Dean, 2017; Ishiyama, 1988; Neufeldt, 2007; Newsome et al., 2005; Shepard & Guenette, 2010; Shiflett & Remley, 2014; Stone & Amundson, 1989; Ward & House, 1998). A content analysis acknowledged that creativity added to counselors' education and increased professional counselors' competency development (Prasath et al., 2021). The research showed four key findings, the first of which was that most authors were women counselor educators from universities. The second finding was that most articles were conceptual and non-experimental, exploring creative ways to engage students. Thirdly, the connections to CACREP standards mainly took place in the area of helping relationships and in the clinical coursework, such as counseling theories, techniques, skills, diagnosis, and psychopathology.

The study's most representative courses were clinical classes. Practicum and internship, typically offers direct experience with reflective practices and creative approaches that help heighten clinical communication with clients and problem-solve clinical impasses within the counseling relationship. Topics included elective classes focused on 'addictions, suicide, dream analysis, Play Therapy, psychopharmacology, rural integrative behavioral health, couples, and family, expressive and creative arts modalities, and trauma' (Prasath et al., 2021. p.10).

As with any intervention or theoretically based approach taught in counseling programs, it is ethical to practice within developed competence based on education and training (ACA, 2014).

Researchers found that using creative methods in counseling education courses helped counseling students build competency to develop a creative approach early on (Davis, 2008; Waliski, 2009; Carson & Becker, 2004). However, it is understood that the multilayered traditional curricula and performance evaluations are at the forefront of acquiring competency during graduate programming. There is no creativity competency set by CACREP or ACA, so it is not a guaranteed part of the graduate-level experience or even a post-graduate expectation for practice. However, some researchers write that creativity should be foundational in early coursework and not a particular skill to wait to acquire strictly post-graduation (Carson & Becker, 2004; Gladding, 2021; Lawrence et al., 2015; Smith, 2011). However, the lack of research regarding professional counselors working in the profession currently, beyond graduate school, who utilize creative methods has yet to be established. The current research study will fill the gap for such a counselor-based inquiry looking at professional counselor development with creativity at the forefront.

Creativity For Mental Wellness

The popularity of creative nonverbal and symbolic communication to soothe everyday life struggles can be seen in the emergence of adult coloring books in the last decade. There is limited scientific data on how coloring with pencils can reduce depressive and anxiety symptoms for adults and children (Flett et al., 2017). Art Therapy methods have been successfully applied to school-based treatment to strengthen

interpersonal relationships, well-being, sleep, emotional, and behavioral concerns (Moula et al., 2020), linking children's mental health to affecting learning processes.

Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) have increased in use for managing stress and behavior of school-aged children (Emerson et al., 2020) as well as with the treatment of substance and behavioral addictions (Sancho et al., 2018). Expressive writing with cancer survivors (Craft et al., 2012; Jenson-Johansen et al., 2013) has been another area where creative methods have been utilized for distress and effective symptom relief. Krause-Parello et al. (2019) researched the success encountered by older adults with the use of Human-Animal Interactions (HAI) to relieve symptoms of loneliness, depression, and physical inactivity. Kriegel et al. (2022) researched how Musical Interventions (MI) in a public therapeutic landscape gave participants creative and inclusive experiences with art and music and offered a positive opportunity to explore their history and experiences with trauma in their lives. A shift from the typical clinical therapeutic space allowed a public space to inhabit therapeutic creativity with openly expressed music and art with strangers and witnesses engaging with the same creative methods (Kriegel et al., 2022).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, mental health practitioners transformed typical practice with telehealth, which was a drastic and forced pivot for many clinicians during the global public health crisis (Bolton et al., 2021). Therapists working with child populations intentionally inserted creative and developmentally appropriate ways to maintain attention with the clients by adopting various methods of play into their online practice (Bolton et al., 2021). Mental health therapists had to address other spiritual and existential needs in response to the pandemic, where a shared public trauma affected therapist and client alike (Bell et al., 2020). The status of mental health therapists

transformed into essential workers to attend to and service suffering clients online (Fejit et al., 2020). The tradition of using creative methods to extend expressive thought beyond verbal methods for mental wellness has a solid research foundation with practitioners outside of professional counseling. This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by investigating, with a domain-specific lens, the use of creativity in the practices of licensed professional counselors.

A Secure Base for Creative Counseling

A pivotal moment for the professional counselors who utilize creativity in counseling was in 2004 when the 19th Division of the ACA, *Association for Creativity in Counseling (ACC)*, and its corresponding journal, *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health (JCMH)*, was developed as a result of the growing body of practitioners with interest in the established use of creative methods in counseling. The journal was consolidated from three previous publications: *The Psychotherapy Patient*, *Journal of Psychotherapy in Independent Practice*, and the *Journal of Clinical Activities, Assignments, and Handouts in Psychotherapy Practice* (Boswell et al., 2021). Similar to the APA Division 10: Society for the Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts, the ACC is committed to interdisciplinary scholarship, both theoretical and empirical, encompassing the visual arts, poetry, literature, music, and dance. The association's focus is framed by a contextual and relational basis that uses creativity to resolve problem-solving within the counseling relationship with clients. The theoretical basis is grounded in Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) (Jordon, 2001; Miller, 1986) which mainly focuses on heightening self-awareness and strengthening growth-fostering relationships with others. The aim is as follows:

“The Association for Creativity in Counseling (ACC) was created with a philosophy that promotes creativity as an experience that thrives in a growth-fostering environment, one where authenticity and mutuality are valued. Additionally, creativity is best generated when differences exist, when contributions are shared, negotiated, and worked through. In that spirit, ACC is committed to promoting diversity and growth-fostering relationships through creative means. As a result, identifying ways in which creativity can be responsibly accessed and practiced, particularly with respect to the promotion of relational development and inclusive practice, become salient issues” (Duffey, 2007, p. 48).

The association's website includes a document highlighting the potential development of a task force to develop a code of ethics for using creativity in counseling. There has yet to be a concrete and agreed-upon definition or scope of practice that delineates what creativity is in terms of ethical use in practice. Additionally, ACC has not published literature regarding competency guidelines for creativity in counseling to date. However, interest in creativity in counseling remains constant, as it has been a standard component of ACA conference programming in educational sessions, round tables, and posters that explore creativity and creative interventions. ACC also holds conferences yearly and webinars several times a year that address topics aligned with its mission and creativity in mental health interest networks (Duffey and Kerl-McClain, 2007).

Creativity in Professional Counselor Practice

One challenge in the research process that became a primary concern for this current study was discovering what had been published about creative counseling by and

about licensed professional counselors. Research promoting creativity in counseling exists, but minimal research outlines the specific perceptions of professional counselors as participants or researchers (Rouse, 2015). Much of the conversation about counseling has been gleaned from the universities that educate counselors. In the last four years, several content analyses have been published in professional counseling journals that included articles from the *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* (JCMH) (Boswell et al., 2021; Prasath et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023), the *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation* (CORE) (Johnson et al., 2020) and the *Journal of Counseling Development* (JCD) (Anderson et al., 2021) regarding the characteristics of the various publications spanning 2005- 2020. Overall, the concern that authorship outside the university voice has been minimal and remained not heard over the 15 years. The implication of a seemingly absent professional counselor voice is a concerning trend. The unique perception and approach of practitioners working in the field, beyond university training, is essential to both research and practice of the counseling profession moving forward (Anderson et al., 2021).

Boswell et al., 2021 focused on JCMH articles that reviewed creative methods in counseling practices and found that 92.2% of the generated research was conducted by counselor educators in university settings, compared to 7% of the data generated from clinical, nonprofit, or school district settings. This result pointed to a gap in the research about non-university-based professional counseling practices across the country, specifically minimally including the targeted professionals using creative methods in their practice. The research revealed that professional counselors rarely contribute as research participants. It can be extrapolated that the professional counselors working on

the ground level in community agencies, schools, and other job sites have yet to establish a vehicle to report or discuss their creative work in their practices. It also may be a commentary on the role overload with maximum client cases and minimal time to author or participate in research about their work.

Johnson et al., (2020) found similar scale percentages in the CORE articles about university-affiliated authors versus practitioners in the field, noting, "counseling scholars should partner with practitioners to conduct meaningful field-based research that enriches practice and evidence-based interventions. These initiatives can help include and celebrate the practitioner's voice in counseling research; practitioners' varied perspectives can help drive innovation in counseling research and practice (p. 142). This research study proposes to help fill a void in the research that will focus on professional counselor narrative and perspective. The data collected will shed light on how creativity is used in community counseling practices.

Professional Counselor Identity

Professional counseling is considered a clinical relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. Professional counselors are similar to professionals working in allied mental health fields but are different because the clinical work to overcome obstacles and personal challenges that clients are facing are conducted with a mental health professional that works from within a lens of human growth and development (ACA, 2014; Gale, & Austin, 2003). The definition is a broad generalization for the entire domain agreed upon by delegates from 31 counseling organizations (Kaplan et al., 2014) to ensure a professional distinction for the public.

In their research, Calley & Hawley (2008) focused on the professional identity of counselor educators and found less than a collective counseling identity and more so individualistic by the training, credentials, organization membership, and varied theoretical orientation each associated with. The theoretical orientation of participants revealed that although most aligned with the typical counselor-based tradition within the humanistic and constructivist orientations, some also aligned with cognitive behavioral theory and psychodynamic, as well as integrating more than one of the theories or answered in the "other" category (Calley & Hawley, 2008). The study did not intend to be generalizable and predictive but a comparison today to the resulting counselor educator professional identity data reported over a decade ago would be fruitful to discover if anything shifted. The current study will ask the professional counselor about professional identity, which may reveal a spectrum of skills, orientations, and alignments shaping their practices.

The profession has long debated whether the individual counselor's theoretical orientation, training, education, and specialty define their practice and identity or whether a collective professional identity should suffice (Gale & Austin, 2003; Mellin et al., 2011). Research needs a more comprehensive grasp to determine what trumps the other. However, interest is high in capturing more information in either area to further define professional counselors' professional identity. For this study, professional counselor identity is defined as the career-long attention and integration of personal and professional development through a commitment of continued skill and knowledge attainment within counseling practice, ongoing self-development, and professional advocacy in the domain of professional counseling (Cashwell & McKibben, 2018).

Mellin et al. (2011) also conducted research to gain information about the professional identities of counselors and asked the participants to differentiate counseling from the other professions of psychology and social work. The results produced a unifying professional identity and addressed it within three areas: counseling roles and services, counselor training and credentials, and a wellness and developmental focus. Boswell et al. (2009) looked at the relationship between orientation choice and personality factors that identified differences between levels of open-mindedness, intuitiveness, flexibility, neurosis, and levels of self-awareness that reflect an attitude in their work with the clients in their practice. Given the multitude of mental health theories surveyed in graduate-level coursework, it is plausible that the orientation most developed today is integrative without mastery in just one area of theory (Boswell et al., 2009; Lampropoulus & Dixon, 2007). This may also include the professional counselor who includes a creative approach to their identity. It will be essential to learn how their personal competency in creativity was developed in their career, as there is a gap in the literature.

Among other disciplines, counseling shares characteristics with the allied field of Art Therapy, where creativity is the sixth ethical principles required of its practitioners. The final principle of creativity stands along with autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, fidelity, and justice, which can also be found in the code of ethics in professional counseling ethical code (AATA, 2013; ACA, 2016). The principle states, "Art therapists cultivate imagination further to understand self, others, and the world. Art therapists support creative processes for decision-making and problem-solving, as well as meaning-making and healing" (American Art Therapy Association (AATA), 2013, p.1).

The research to identify professional counselors who may identify as creative in their practice may reveal the level of it as a staple to their practice. Creativity is not a requirement of ethical practice for counselors who apply the creative approach, unlike Art Therapists, but may continue the conversation and protection of counseling being synonymous with creativity (Gladding, 2008). In many graduate programs that have Art Therapy programs, students can pursue a dual major in either art education or mental health counseling along with Art Therapy (Feen-Calligan, 2014). Through this research inquiry it will be possible to learn from participants who are professional counselors and are also Art Therapists.

Recognizing and knowing one's self-efficacy or lack thereof also plays a role in developing the identity of a counselor who uses a creative approach. One concept that addresses the self-reflective identifier attached to creativity is known as Creative Metacognition (CMC). CMC is considered a crucial element to develop alongside domain-based skill-building in one's profession. CMC has been defined as a measure of creative self-knowledge, thereby recognizing the limits to personal creative strengths and knowing the context where it deems appropriate in their personal and professional lives (Kaufman et al., 2016).

In professional areas of education and business, where creative success demands high levels of motivation, self-efficacy, and positive results, feedback is given in the form of evaluation or approval from an authority in the same profession (Amabile, 1996, 2012; Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Hennessey & Amabile, 1988). For instance, feedback within supervision as a new counselor can forge a complex and pivotal crossroad that can lead

practitioners on a path to positive self-efficacy or the opposite, leading to self-doubt depending on the positive or negative result (Borders et al., 2017).

In terms of creativity in counseling, the optimal self-evaluative component for a counselor building their professional identity who also strives to be a creative counselor would have to simultaneously be building a positive CMC with levels of feedback on effectiveness (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2013). In looking at the research history of creativity, it is understood that the new knowledge builds upon the established knowledge and is a dynamic process but also an adopted attitude (Schank, 1988; Walia, 2019). No recent research has focused on professional counselor identity and their creative capacity in their work. This study will examine the complexities of how professional counselors view their CMC and the ways it continually strengthens it in their practice.

Fortunately, creativity can be a versatile companion to practice within a chosen theory or an integrative approach developed by the counselor in practice. Degges-White & Davis (2011) compiled a collection of theory-based expressive arts for professional counseling practice. The comprehensive collection included 11 orientations used in counseling which each included an overview of each theory's development and core concepts, followed by conceptual curricula of many interventions to apply within each theory as follows: Adlerian (Graham & Pehrsson, 2011); Solution Focused (Gillen, 2011); Cognitive-Behavioral (Meyer, 2011); Choice (Portrie-Bethke, 2011); Existential (Mannion, 2011); Feminist (Trepal & Duffey, 2011); Gestalt (Mistler, 2011); Person-Centered (Luke, 2011); Narrative Approaches (Patrick, 2011); Integrative (Atkins et al., 2011); and Clinical Supervision (Casado-Kehoe & Ybanez, 2011). The interventions are intended to address the notion that although they were not exposed to the methods of

creativity and expressive arts in their education, they could master their creative capabilities beyond graduate school in practice with the theoretical orientation they choose in their professional counselor role (Degges-White & Davis, 2011). Further, utilizing a creative approach in sessions with clients could provide opportunities to accomplish client goals based on treatment planning with the client paired with the theoretical approach of the counselor in practice.

Duffey et al. (2009) conducted a grounded theory study to uncover how Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) (Jordan, 2001; Miller, 1986) and the creative approach of the counselor may intersect. The researchers asked professional counselors' perceptions of RCT in practice and how it interplayed with creativity applied in sessions with clients. The study allowed a voice for professional counselors in the theory development of competency for RCT, creativity and investigated the perception of power balances in the developing relationship with clients. Data revealed that counselors defined creativity as central to their practice, and pointed to the reciprocity between RCT and creativity. When relationships were perceived as growth fostering, the creative freedom to explore in collaboration with clients increased (Duffey et al., 2009).

Another inquiry of professional counselors in practice was found in the Rouse et al. (2015) qualitative grounded theory study. The purpose was to uncover how personal creativity informed counseling practice with clients and the implications for counselor training and professional development. Researchers reported one similar finding to Duffey et al. (2009), where the counselors perceived that the strength of the relationship built in the counseling was the catalyst for creativity in practice. The strength of the counseling relationship was typically evidenced by the willingness of the client to freely

explore their world in sessions with the interventions the counselor introduced. When the counseling relationship has supported the client in attaining goals and increasing insight, the outcome for the client was seen in positive changes to their symptomatology or presenting issues. Techniques in that process were secondary to spontaneous and intuitive creative interactions with clients. Notably, participants reported that the skills of creative counseling were secondary in their education and training to mastering required CACREP competencies in graduate programs.

One such fundamental competency embedded in counselor identity is the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competency (MSJCC) (Ratts et al., 2016). Like the ethical standards, the competencies are a mandate, an orientation, and serve as a blueprint for clinicians to continually build awareness (ACA, 2014). Awareness about oneself as a person with history and culture and also as a counselor who works with others who also hold their history and culture, in a developing therapeutic relationship. The counselor should continually strive to recognize and explore the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1998) of cultural identities in counseling relationships.

Intersectionality theory in its current orientation has expanded upon the primary roots of marginalized African American women, class, and ethnic/racial identities. Intersectionality theory also includes marginalized religious faiths, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability (Nash, 2008; Chan et al., 2018; Al'Uqdah et al., 2019). The multicultural and social justice exploration includes the dissection of power dynamics, privilege, and oppression that may impact the counseling relationship on many levels. The attainment of MSJCC for professional counselors extends beyond graduate training and is a career-spanning endeavor that involves a commitment to address and explore,

with fidelity, the counselor's self-awareness, the client worldview, each counseling relationship, and continual counseling and advocacy that affect the field and clients being served (Ratts et al., 2016). The professional counselor who participates in this study may have insight as to how multiple dimensions of culture, identity, and marginalization, are explored in their counseling relationships utilizing their creative approach in their practice.

Methods for Creative Counseling

Strictly verbal methods in professional counseling practice may develop a limitation that denies a client greater access to unconscious material, or unformulated experience, that may have the power to build a map to a deeper understanding of why and how choices are being made in the counseling relationships (Stern, 2003). When a person engages in artistic or creative activity, the brain engages in multiple ways and areas (Malchiodi, 2012).

Creativity allows reflection in the counseling relationship (Gladding 2020). Griffith and Frieden (2000) defined reflective practice as “the active, ongoing examination of the theories, beliefs, and assumptions that contribute to counselors’ understanding of client issues and guide their choices for clinical interventions” (Griffith and Frieden, 2000. p. 82). When reflective practices are engaged, the counselor can momentarily move away from the necessary theoretical, pedagogical, and clinical dialogue and begin to work from the inside to attach meaning to their responses to creative stimuli.

Metaphors are often used to bridge various concepts in sessions conceptually, promote clinical change, help broaden the exploration of self, case conceptualization

skills, and further understand the therapeutic process in general (Young & Borders, 1999; Guiffreda et al., 2007). Attaching a metaphor to an experience can be informative and, at times ego protective, giving another layer of thought to awareness. The use of metaphor has the power to pull at the conscious idea yet brings with it unconscious processes in the deliberate focus of an event or surfacing emotion with visual imagery. It allows "divergent thinking patterns by assisting clients in the development of alternative conceptualizations of situations in their lives" (Young & Borders, 1999, p. 139). Divergent problem-seeking and solving are at the heart of creative and reflective counseling practice.

The literature focused on creative methods in counseling to address clinical issues that heighten processing in sessions that served to provide opportunities for multicultural interventions, advocacy and learning for the client and counselor alike. Specific studies where creative methods were applied and researched included foci of grief and loss (Rafaely & Goldberg, 2020; Beauregard, 2020); residential treatment for substance use disorder (McCormick et al., (2021); couples counseling (Hinkle et al., 2015); intersectionality (Ali & Lee, 2019; Shannon, 2020); mind mapping (Pillay et al., 2020); clinical mistakes (Patrick, 2020); and, a recent systematic review focused on therapeutic writing for disordered eating (Ramsey-Wade et al., 2021). Photovoice originated from the research team of Wang & Burris (1997), is an advocacy tool and participatory action research (PAR) method that uses the creative means of photography, story, metaphor, and community for therapeutic growth. It is the largest area of recent literature found that engages counselor and client creativity and is intentionally client-led (Haugan et al., 2019; Stickl Haugan et al., 2021; Mayton and Wester, 2019; Reyes et al., 2020; Sackett &

Dogan, 2019; Sackett and Jenkins, 2015 Sackett, et al., 2018 Sackett et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2020). Photovoice also is an area where multicultural counseling addresses marginalized populations and advocates for social justice, concluding it as the fourth force in counseling competency (Erguner-Tekinalp and Harper, 2011). Inherent to counseling identity is the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016) and it is assumed to be embedded in the treatment when working with all clients regardless of the use of creative methods.

The empirical research in this area is limited and is needed further to identify the outcome of creative methodology in counseling practices. It was suggested that the qualitative findings show some beneficial intervention factors for clients, such as the ability to release emotions, form positive group cohesion, and "decentering from experience" (Ramsey-Wade et al., 2021. p. 73). Despite the studies described, there is still a more significant gap in the research data detailing the counselor's voice rather than the academic researchers. It would be essential to learn more from the professional counselor about creative interventions and the approaches used in their practice that are specific to the domain.

Summary

Based on the above scholarship related to creativity in professional counseling practice, gaining a current operational definition of creativity in professional counseling is difficult. However, the research interest surrounding creativity is revered for many aspects of life and in many industries. Some research shows that it is impractical to generalize the context for creativity (Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010; Kerr & Gagliardi, 2019; Plucker et al., 2004; Plucker & Makel, 2010). The context and systems within different professions can limit the possibilities with a universal definition. Creativity is

not simply a general skill suitable for all professions. The domain specificity of creativity in various professions is necessary to be able to form appropriate and meaningful results (Baer, 2016). The focus of this study is to ascertain the domain-specific definition of creativity for professional counselors who utilize the approach in their practice. The information gleaned will form a theory based on the data, and it will fill a gap in the literature where professional counselors are often excluded as participants.

To become a licensed professional counselor, there is a training and education period with competency requirements. CACREP (2024), along with specific national and state counseling specialization organizations and licensing boards, guides the foundation for counselor education graduate programs across the US. Given that there are scheduled courses in the curriculum, it may be up to the professors or supervisors to expose creativity into the learning process. If counseling students have yet to have prior exposure to creative methods or experienced it in their graduate programs, they will likely gain the experience after graduation. This study focuses on uncovering the career development that leads them to their creative approach and practice.

The types of creative techniques or interventions that professional counselors use often in practice have been difficult to learn as little research has been generated in the domain. Research on creativity in counseling has been written about for many decades from various mental health perspectives, including professional counseling. Yet, the scholarly research that exists lacks a domain-specific clinician perspective including professional counselors. The perspective of counselors who work within a scope that includes multicultural and social justice counseling competency will also give insight to how the creative approach uses methods that work with clients using an intersectional

approach. This area of focus in the current study will gain valuable information about these processes, which will be valuable for future training and counseling practice.

In review, creativity for counseling practice was not defined operationally by the ACC or ACA. However, the research conducted by counseling scholars shows support for growth in creative approaches. Professionally identifying as a creative counselor could include CMC, where counselors feel self-efficacy in their creative process. Licensed professional counselors in practice have had limited opportunities to describe what a creative approach entails for themselves and their practice in the discipline. The current study supports an impactful opportunity to fill the gap in the research inquiry.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Counseling has often been considered synonymous with creativity (Gladding, 2008). Still, more current research is needed to give a voice to counselors who self-identify as creative in their professional practice. This research study was intended to gain a deeper understanding and perspective from licensed professional counselors regarding creativity and its use in their practice. Semi-structured intensive interviews were conducted with licensed professional counselors for this qualitative grounded theory study. Participants were selected after they successfully completed the qualifying questionnaire (Appendix B), met the professional criteria for the study, gave consent for participation in the study, and were interviewed online. The interviews were recorded and transcribed via the Zoom platform. Data gathered from the participants was intended to generate a domain-specific definition (Baer, 2016) for creativity in counseling practice achieved via purposeful sampling. The theory developed from the data further substantiated the value of creative approaches in counseling. However, adjustments were made based on the gathered data, and a more inclusive and succinct term of expressive counseling was established.

The application of grounded theory utilized a constructivist framework (Charmaz, 2014) and guided the data collection and analysis. The research design, participant recruitment plan, informed consent, and data analysis methodology are all addressed. The following questions are the focus of the current research:

R1: How do professional counselors define creativity?

R2: How do professional counselors describe their development as self-described creative counselors?

R3: What types of creative techniques or interventions do professional counselors use that have been most engaging for clients?

Research Design

Qualitative research is a study system designed to capture the participant's information and use their thoughts and experiences with the subject matter of interest (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The data paradigm is designed systematically in the process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Creswell (2014) defined qualitative research as the following:

“Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change (Creswell, 2013. p. 66).

Qualitative research allows a less rigid dynamic to the study design, execution, and discovery of findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The data provided a look into how creativity fits into their personal and professional lives. Among other things, learning the

counselor's perspectives on their training and development provided a commentary on the strengths and limitations of creativity in counseling while training in CACREP programs. The methods used for this study allowed important topics to emerge that add to the literature regarding professional counselor identity.

Grounded Theory Approach

The grounded theory approach is a qualitative systematic analysis process that builds theory to help explain and organize concepts based on accumulated and analyzed participant data (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Chun Tie et al., 2019). The constructivist grounded theory process was used in the research design for this study. The constructivist approach is pragmatic and relies on the participant interviews and the knowledgeable perspective of the researcher to co-construct meaningful results (Charmaz, 2014; Thornberg et al., 2015; Chun Tie, 2019). Accordingly, the use of creativity in counseling has been experienced by both the researcher and the participants in their professional practice. The specialized knowledge helped to establish a co-constructivist approach to the information discussed in the interviewing and data-gathering process (Charmaz, 2014). Established prior knowledge was inherent to the research process, allowing the researcher to be in a position that may supports an awareness of the unique qualities of the approach when discussing creativity with the participants (Charmaz, 2014).

The overall goal was to develop an emergent theory for how creativity sustains growth in professional counseling practices. The unique and similar experiences of each participant shed light on the careers and developmental processes they had undertaken to arrive at their chosen professional identity as self-described creative counselors.

Subsequently, the study initiated recruitment with purposeful sampling, eventually merging into theoretical sampling, where data saturation became evident. Participant data was collected individually via interviews that underwent a coding process.

Reflexive journals were kept in the interview process by the researcher to better analyze and map similarities and differences found in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The journal includes notes that were taken before, during, and after the interviews and served to manually highlight sections of interviews that would be important in the data review. They also included subjective notes that captured emotional responses, and specific technical notes about transmission of the online interview.

The framework of the grounded theory developed in this study was directly built from responses generated by the participants who self-identified as creative counselors, who have used a creative approach and are currently in professional counseling practice. An interview guide (Appendix D) was developed for the three main research questions with correlating subsequent questions to accomplish the theoretical sampling goal (Foley et al., 2021). The participant interviews were the foundation of the knowledge gained from the perceptions, meaning and trajectory of creativity in counseling today.

Participants

Sample Recruitment

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling. The initial sample recruitment sample (Appendix C) was sent to professional counseling and Art Therapy group members through email. The professional groups were identified as the Association of Creativity in Counseling (ACC); Counselor Education and Supervision Network (CESNET); American Art Therapy Association (AATA); Michigan Association

of Art Therapy (MAAT); American School Counseling Association (ASCA); Michigan School Counseling Association (MSCA); American Counseling Association (ACA); and Michigan Counseling Association (MCA).

The participants needed to meet specific inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. The participant must be a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) or the equivalent in their state. (ATR-BC, SCL, or other allied fields can be included, but they must hold a current LPC or its equivalent in their state).
2. The participant must identify as a professional counselor and align with the professional organization's definition of ACA. The professional counselor also self-described their approach as creative. They incorporate various expressive interactions and interventions beyond traditional verbal therapy. The professional counseling practice could include working with individuals, families, couples, groups, or students, and it is part of their practice currently and an approach developed over time.
3. The participant must have attended and graduated from a CACREP-approved counseling program.
4. Participants must consent to participate and must be over 18.

Initial engagement in the Qualtrics survey included 34 people; however, 23 individuals completed the entire response process. Two respondents did not meet all criteria, so the final number of participants was 21 (N=21). They were spread throughout the country and represented the West, Northwest, Midwest, South, and Eastern states. Participants comprised 18 female, two male, and one non-binary individual. The ethnic identity

comprised 16 White, two Hispanic, two Black, and one Native American. The ages ranged from 27 to 65 years old ($M = 44$). The years of professional experience of the respondents spanned six months to 29 years in practice. ($M = 9.3$). All 21 participants were Licensed Professional Counselors. Additionally, there were three registered play therapists, three board-certified art therapists, and one licensed school counselor. There were ten participants who were dual or triple-certified, and seven were counselor educators. All participants self-described as creative and central to their professional identities and practices. Included are the Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (Appendix E).

Instrumentation

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

This Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved study (FY2024-20) (Appendix A) began by introducing participants to the study in an email that included a detailed recruitment script and informed consent (Appendix B). The consent document outlined limits to confidentiality, details about the study, and the expectations/limitations of participants in the study. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from participation at any time.

Qualifying Questionnaire

When consent was granted, participants were led to the qualifying questionnaire (Appendix B). The Qualtrics qualifying questionnaire included an introduction to the study and inquired about personal and professional demographic information and requests for contact information for setting up the interviews.

Both the completed consent and questionnaire data was compiled in a digital spreadsheet that was secured on an encrypted external hard drive.

Semi-structured Intensive Interview

The individual interviews were conducted in Zoom meetings. A business subscription with Zoom was maintained and allowed transcription services as well as cloud storage. The interviews were downloaded from the cloud and stored in the encrypted external storage drive. The interviews were intentionally standardized. However, the participants were free to add to the subject matter as they saw fit. Participants were introduced to each guiding research question, followed by the open-ended sub-questions they were to answer to accomplish the theoretical sampling goal at the time of analysis (Foley et al., 2021).

The researcher took reflective notes during the interview that were analyzed alongside transcripts. The notes taken were brief reflections on emotive content during the interview. They also served as markers for any points in the interview that were deemed important or the beginnings of data saturation. Consultation with the research dissertation chair was conducted prior to the onset of the first interview to review procedures and gain insight for potential problem-solving. The interview time was flexible and varied, allowing participants the time needed to extrapolate their unique narrative in each response (Seidman, 2006). The interviews ranged in duration from 16 minutes to 49 minutes.

Data Collecting and Analysis Procedures

When the application was approved by the Oakland University IRB (FY2024-20) (Appendix A), recruitment began. All invitations for participation were sent via email to

the various Professional Counseling and Art Therapy organizations identified. The correspondence outlined inclusion criteria with a link to a questionnaire to confirm eligibility. During the recruitment process, the Qualtrics survey data was continually reviewed by the researcher, focusing on positive responses that identified the participant as eligible. When participants met all requirements for inclusion, an interview via Zoom was scheduled via email correspondence. The interviews were set up with each participant through email provided. Over the course of five months, interviews were conducted. At the beginning of each interview, the participant was asked for consent to record and document the Zoom meeting.

Such intensive interviewing allowed the researcher to follow the structure of the research questions but also explore points when explanation of areas was deemed necessary (Charmaz, 2014).

“Intensive interviewing is a flexible , emergent technique that combines flexibility and control, opens interactional space for ideas and issues to arise, allows possibilities for immediate follow-up on these ideas and issues; results from interviews and interview participants’ co-construction of the interview conversation. ” (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 58-59).

Simultaneously, researcher memos were handwritten in a logbook during each interview. The recordings and transcriptions were stored on an encrypted external drive. The external drive and logs were stored in a locked and secured file box in a locked office in a private residence. The transcripts ranged from six to 14 pages of interview data, totaling 174 pages of transcripts.

Data Analysis

Data was collected via semi-structured, in-depth, intensive interviews (Charmaz, 2014), with each participant eliciting their definitions, perceptions, and reflections on their creative practice in counseling. Each interview was reviewed and cross-checked with the transcription and video recording audio. When the interviews were successfully completed, recorded, transcribed, and notes reviewed, a coding system was administered. The process was interactive and rooted in a mutual understanding of theoretical perspectives regarding the symbols and language of creativity in counseling practice (Charmaz, 2014). In constructivist grounded theory, it is known that the researcher is not only a scientific observer but also part of the process during the data-collecting interview (Charmaz, 2014; Thornberg et al., 2015; Chun Tie et al., 2019). Constructivist grounded theory is developed through an iterative analytic process that begins with initial coding, moves to more focused coding, and develops into theoretical coding.

The early data was studied and highlighted, with written labels that identified the actions that occurred in the counselor's responses. This began the iterative coding system that continued into a distillation process of the data (Charmaz, 2014). The initial coding process relied on the constant comparison technique, looking for consistent, similar, or different responses from the participants and allowing the researcher to enter the interactive analytic space with the interview responses (Charmaz, 2014; Chun Tie et al., 2019).

The coding process was intended to analyze the responses of the five questions grouped individually, with all respective data reviewed line by line. Coding spreadsheets

were established to distinguish the process of the theory in development (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The initial coding began with word-by-word coding which allowed attention to be paid to images and meaning (Chamaz, 2014). Important phrases, words, and processes were highlighted. Followed by line-by-line coding, which surfaced the events that described the implicit concerns and explicit responses of the participants. The flexible strategies in the process allowed

“Breaking the data up into component parts or properties; defining the actions on which they rest; Looking for tacit assumptions; explicating implicit actions and meanings; crystallizing the significance of the points; comparing data with data; and, identifying the gaps in the data” (Charmaz, 2014. P. 125).

The initial open coding entailed manually highlighting simple words or phrases that reflected actions in the interview data (Charmaz, 2014). Open coding names or summative phrases were created and used to group data, which started to form the categories, supporting the relationship between codes that initially began to organize the theory being discovered (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2014).

Secondary coding approached the data to discover tacit assumptions, implicit meanings, and gaps in information while remaining neutral, avoiding critical analysis (Charmaz, 2014). While the coding emerged, the researcher engaged in constant comparison of the terms or summative phrasing chosen (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Scott, 2004; Creswell, 2013). The focus was placed on one participant data source at a time and each singular research question’s responses were reviewed in each section.

The next coding phase engaged a focused process that emerged into the theoretical coding that has given the foundation for the theory of this research. Charmaz (2014) developed the grounded theory using a constructivist approach where the process is more flexible and not reliant on any one approach. The analysis also progressed to include a phase of in vivo coding where common or repetitive phrases used by the participants were flagged while framing the data trends (Charmaz, 2014).

The data from the interviews guided multiple coding procedures for the findings that produced the discovered theory. The complex and prolonged engagement with the data engaged a persistent observation from the researcher that was uniform with each element. Data was organized in a logbook binder separated by sections dedicated to each participant. The book served as a helpful way to organize, conceptualize, and analyze data in the entire research process which was crucial to the analysis and theory formation. Another element of this study's grounded theory approach was reflexive journaling. Reflexive journaling addressed the emotive qualities found in the participant and researcher process (Seidman, 2006).

Digital spreadsheets were created to organize data for all data gathering. Sheets focused on survey data that included demographic information, consent agreement, and coding logbooks. The coding spreadsheet had pages for each sub question where columns were created for each phase of coding: initial, intermediate or focused, advanced or theoretical coding. The theme and category development were seen as transforming the fractured initial and more refined intermediate data to create the conceptual picture of the theory built (Chun Tie, 2019). There were also descriptive participant quotes included on each page. For example, the first research question (R1-A) started with 61 initial in vivo

codes that were then consolidated into 20 selective codes. The data began to form in repeated concepts or saturation of the responses for that question. The first result was the development of five overall themes for research question one. The additional coding review consolidated into three themes for that particular question. The constant comparison of the data and code determination underwent a standardized process for each question.

The spreadsheets were printed out and reviewed manually to physically be immersed in the information. Theoretical sorting of the categories was used to integrate the overall findings. The physical spreadsheets provided a conceptual map of the data that formed the analytic framework for the emergent theory for this current study (Charmaz, 2014). Relationships between concepts were organized nonlinearly to support theory development and lead to data saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A theoretical sampling of response data eventually led to a saturation of ideas, which was expected in this study with the subsection of professional counselors who use a creative approach in their practice.

Looking for outliers in the suppositions about creativity in counseling was conducted through the process of negative case analysis, which led to an evaluation of the many dimensions of the creative approach in counseling. The analysis included a specific filtered review for referential adequacy from previous literature and data recorded in reflexive journaling (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). All the procedures entailed in this study may allow a comprehensive look at the data elements so that, if audited, a clear picture of the research process is revealed. It must be noted that it became evident that there was an overlap with terms. Creativity, expressive arts, self-expression, creative arts, and

expressive processes began to be seemingly interchangeable within the interviews with creative counselors. The realization stuck out as the use of terms was evident when discussing the findings with the participants in the member checking discussed later in this chapter.

Trustworthiness

The theory resulting from this current grounded theory study is a dynamic, interactive, and relevant phenomenon that fills a discovered gap in the professional counseling research literature. One aspect of the methodology for this study was the use of constant comparison, where the data collection and analysis were concurrent. In qualitative research, this element of the research design is vital for the rigor of a study and to safely generalize participant viewpoints (Hays & McKibben, 2021).

Researcher Positionality

Positionality defines where the researcher stands in relation to their research. In constructivist grounded theory, the researcher's perspectives and worldviews surrounding the subject, including their assumptions, are considered. Researchers must be ready to learn ideas that may challenge their assumptions or unknown factors that emerge as they have a unique understanding of the community they are investigating.

“Constructivist grounded theory leads researchers to concentrate on what is happening in the research field, acknowledge that they are part of it, remain flexible, follow empirical events, attend to language and meaning, and take on moral responsibilities arising through their research, which can bring researchers into the public sphere. (Charmaz, 2020, p. 165)

The researcher arrived at this study with over 20 combined years of experience as a multi-media artist, an Art Therapist, a School Counselor, an LPC, and a Counselor Educator. Creative expression was central to the researcher's personal life, professional identity, and practice to date. In the researcher's mental health practice in agencies or schools, creativity was seen as a process-orienting experience that is intentional and grows in the therapeutic space with time. It is an important and inherent belief that creative expression served as a catalyst for positive growth in the interaction that occurred in all stages of the many therapeutic experiences. To self-identify as a practicing creative practitioner in mental health, time, education, and focused training are crucial and mandatory to acquire appropriate credentials and licensure.

As a certified and licensed professional who has worked in the field of education and mental health for over two decades, the creative approach has been experienced as a successful and necessary intervention that helped to learn about and support clients and students alike in practice. One area that informed this research was the observation that coursework in the doctoral counselor education program attended had a minimal focus on creativity. Instructors who included the creative processes in their instructional process were limited. The popularity of using creativity was evident in writing by counseling scholars in journals, professional conferences, and specific invitations for the researcher to lecture on the topic at the university. It became a curiosity to understand where and how counselors originated and sustained their creative approach if they self-described as creative counselors.

As an educated White, Cis female mental health professional who had at times chosen to work in lower socio-economic areas of cities where service for mental health in

agencies or schools were in high demand, the engagement inherently included the exploration of creative expression to explore intersectionality found in the counseling space with clients. Creative methods were intentionally inserted in many aspects of practice with all ages for its salient pathway to client self-expression about the various differences found in that space. It was an important aspect of the relationship-building process to examine and address cultural ideology. Such active exploration brought with it personal awareness that strengthened the relationships and promoted unfiltered communication about relative topics on social justice or racial identity and also pride in the process. In reflection, it was deemed important to include inquiry with participants about aspects of their practice with a specific focus on multicultural and intersectional identities. It was a great opportunity to learn from others in various areas of the US to learn about the fidelity of multicultural competence in creative counseling practices.

The global pandemic changed counseling practice across disciplines. The researcher worked at an urban public school during that time. It was a difficult time while in the middle of it. It was a public health crisis worldwide that uncovered a lot of vulnerable community challenges that were not seen if you were not living in or involved in them (Abbas et al., 2021; Xiong et al., 2020). For example, the digital and food insecurities of families in urban public schools and the poor treatment of our older persons in cities became overwhelming to some states. Looking back, it was also a time of ingenuity and adjustment. The importance of hearing how others in the field adjusted seemed relevant and missing information, specifically in the creative counseling community.

Peer Debrief

To add dependability to the study, consultation with the dissertation chair was implemented during various research phases. Peer debriefing is often engaged in research to heighten the validity of qualitative findings, but little guidance exists about the methodological consideration and uniformity of conducting peer debriefing (Barber & Walczak, 2009; Spall, 1998). A PhD colleague who is an LPC was consulted to conduct the process of peer debriefing to review the purpose of the research, the coding process, findings, and analysis. The researcher explained the focus and intent, theoretical assumptions, and potential preconceived notions about the research results. Research questions and sub-questions were discussed. Transcripts were provided for review. The entire coding procedure was outlined, and the coding spreadsheets were reviewed. Feedback and constructive criticism were received for areas in the categories. The analytical discussion resulted in an integration for concision in one data category. In the categories for research question three, sub-question A, there was an additional one for *Client Surprise*. It was agreed that it better correlated to the *Positive Engagement with Creative Techniques* category, so it was eliminated and applied within that category. Consensus was met after the notation and the change was made.

Member Checking

The standard requirements for trustworthiness in qualitative research rely on credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability to determine the authenticity of the research lens engaged (Nichols, 2015). The credibility was ensured by the engagement of competent consultation with the dissertation chair, a peer debriefer, and subsequent member checking with participants from the study. Participants were invited

to attend a member-checking Zoom meeting to review the findings, which included participant quotes for accuracy. Members provided feedback on the findings of the research and the congruency with regard to their experience with creativity in counseling (McKim, 2023).

Two participants participated in the 40-minute member-checking Zoom interview. Both were LPCs. One was an ATR-BC and the other was a RPT. Before the start of the meeting, the members were asked for consent to record the Zoom meeting. A power point was presented that outlined participant data, transcription information, the coding process, preliminary coding reviews, and reintroduced the three overall research questions with five sub-questions. For each sub-question, the themes were presented with descriptions and direct participant quotes. They were asked if they agreed with the content and invited to make any additional observations with regard to the themes. Feedback included that from the lens of an art therapist and play therapist they related to the perspective where those areas came up. In general, they agreed with the coding process, themes, and felt represented by the results.

One crucial discussion point addressed the notion that the initially agreed-upon study definition did not appear to correlate with the breadth of practice that the counselor participants described in the data. It was discussed that the creative approach was clearly represented, but not all practicing counselors utilized what was traditionally seen as creative processes. For example, one creative counselor might use art making media with clients, while another uses videos or nature walks with clients in sessions. The distinction was made that while there was creativity used beyond traditional verbal counseling, perhaps what they were doing didn't fit within a specific creative framework as what

Gladding (2021) would define as creative arts in counseling. It was discussed that evidence of a common emergent goal for the creative process in the counseling relationship was elevating client self-expression. It was deemed relevant to consider those creative approaches within a specific and unifying approach called Expressive Counseling.

Summary

The qualitative research design utilized a constructivist grounded theory approach. This particular design was chosen because the researcher has similar qualifications and competence of the study participants. This research study was intended to gain a deeper understanding and perspective from licensed professional counselors regarding creativity and its use in their practice. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with licensed professional counselors for this qualitative grounded theory study. Participants were selected after they completed the qualifying questionnaire (Appendix B), met the professional criteria for the study, and gave consent for participation in the study; all were interviewed online.

The interview data of videos and correlating digital transcripts were downloaded and cross-checked while replaying the recordings. The reflective journal and transcripts were secured. The constructivist grounded theory analysis process was used to code and categorize the data. When the categories and themes were developed, a meeting was held with the project chair for review. To ensure trustworthiness, a peer review and member check were conducted and met with consensus. The results from the analysis are found in Chapter Four, with a discussion of the findings included in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This study was designed to learn the perspectives of Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) regarding their creative approach to their professional work. The participants explored their perceptions about their creative counseling approach. They discussed how their specific Council for Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2024) training played a role in that creative approach development. They were asked about engagement with their clients in counseling. Specifically, they were asked how considerations for multicultural or intersectional identities play a role within the interventions and or relationships with clients they serve. Lastly, they were asked about how their creative practice changed during the global pandemic. This chapter presents perceptions, thoughts, and ideas that resulted from the interviews. The research questions are listed below, along with the themes that were developed through the coding process to highlight the overall ideas for each research question.

Research Question 1: How do professional counselors define creativity?

Sub question R1A: Explain how you consider yourself a creative counselor.

Theme 1- Clinical Interaction in the Creative Counseling Space

Theme 2- Creativity is Inherent to Human Nature

Research Question 2: How do Counselors describe their development as an identified creative counselor?

Sub question R2A: What kind of training in your CACREP program did you receive related to creativity in counseling?

Theme 1- Established Creative Practitioner Before Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) Status

Theme 2- Creative and Counseling Training Were Concurrent

Theme 3- Desire for More Creative Counseling Training

Research Question 3: What type of creative techniques or interventions do professional counselors use that have been most engaging for clients?

Sub question R3A: How have your clients responded to the creative techniques you have used?

Theme 1- Positive Engagement with Creative Techniques

Theme 2- Client Aversion to Creative Intervention

Theme 3- Creative Counseling is Skill and Training Dependent

Sub Question R3B: How do your creative interventions take into consideration client's multicultural and/or intersectional identities?

Theme 1- Client Led Interactions for Learning

Theme 2- Counselor Cultural Humility

Theme 3- Requires Multicultural Training

Sub Question R3C: How did you adapt or change your creative techniques, interventions, and practice during the global pandemic?

Theme 1- Hard Transition

Theme 2- Clinical Growth

Theme 3- Empowered Clients

Theme 4- No Change

The results of the qualitative grounded theory study are presented in this section. The descriptions of the themes, with verbatim quotes from participants are included with an assigned number to maintain their anonymity.

Defining Creativity in Professional Counseling

To fill the gap in the research, it proved important to look at creativity through the lens of a creative counseling approach. The themes that emerged from participant's responses in the first research question area provided information about an inside view of how the counselor and client interact in the creative counseling space. First, the use of creativity for self-expression in counseling was seen as intentional, person-centered, collaborative, and incorporated multimodal interventions that were beyond strictly verbal communication. Second, the notion that creativity is innately part of human nature was an emergent theme with participants. In creative counseling, the client can be offered the opportunity to explore their natural ability with creativity to practice for their benefit.

Clinical Interaction in the Creative Counseling Space

It was once noted that counseling was inherently creative (Gladding, 2021). If this were true for all counselors, creativity would be easily operationalized within the field of counseling. In past research, it has been difficult to grasp a succinct distinction; however, the participants in this study who self-described as creative counselors shared their perspectives on their individual work. Overall, it was learned that the intentional use of creativity in the counselor's practice was enacted at differing levels throughout the relationships with their clients. When a creative approach was utilized in counseling practice, the client was provided an experience to explore creative and expressive methods with support from the experienced creative counselor in a clinical space.

For the creative counselor, an office may be set up like an art studio with abundant art supplies for expression. **Quote P14:** “My office is an art studio, and it's full of all kinds of art supplies.” The client is offered the choice and control to engage in self-expressive methods that included physical processes with various media that went beyond words and helped them ease into verbalizing difficult things. The physical, creative process allowed a mind-body interaction where stress derived in the brain was decreased by movement and focused on the art making (Malchiodi, 2012). It was reported that this occurs visibly for children with success in practice.

Quote P1: “My creative counseling focuses on children, and they love to have the control to make choices with their art materials... I have one little girl who paints. We paint every session, and it is mostly just colors, but I can tell that it is relaxing for her. She is able to verbalize a lot more when she is painting.”

The creative interactions that occurred in participants' counseling sessions were often based on the opportunity provided at the onset of entering the counseling space.

Quote P16: “I have lots of toys, art supplies, chalkboards, paper to draw, and figurines for different means of expression. As a creative counselor equipping your space with different tools for people to communicate with you and for you to also communicate with clients has a lot of value.”

The next aspect of creative counseling is that it is person-centered. The focus stayed on the individual needs of the clients. People typically seek counseling at times of difficulty in their lives. A significant goal of the creative approach was to support the exploration of the client's world in the counseling space. Creativity allowed freedom and openness within the client's choices in sessions. While it could be assumed that

counseling relies mainly on verbal communication, the creative counselors challenged that idea and perception by providing different nonverbal experiences of relating and relaying personal narratives in their clinical space.

Quote P9: “I use expressive arts, which is a field in and of itself really, that combines various layers of creativity. We call it multimodal, so it's rarely ever just one form. Clients may do a writing activity, and then we reflect on it with visual art and then body movement in response to that. I use creativity as a way to help people access things that they maybe don't have words for. I help people who have trouble making a decision. A client may feel, ‘A part of me feels this way, and a part of me feels this way.’ Going into that creative part of the mind helps people to sort through things.”

The client chose their own pace regarding creative and expressive counseling interventions, and engagement with these methods occurred within its unique timeline.

Quote P1: “The creative process is something that will continue over a number of weeks and other times it will just be during that one session because that's what the client would be most helped by at that moment. So, it could be one session focused on one thing, or it could be grouped over many sessions indefinitely.”

The creative counselors found that they served as advocates for the specialization. It was observed that clients often sought out the creative counselors because of the differing approaches to traditional talk therapy they offered. Creative counselors often have a professional identity that is initially formed by their personal identity. The creative counseling space was viewed as collaborative in nature.

Quote P4: “I am providing support and collaborative spaces for people as they explore their worlds. I very much go into my own creative and intuitive spaces because it's more useful. Creativity is humor or metaphor, bibliotherapy, a poem or a song lyric, or something that's incorporated into the session, as well as Art Therapy interventions, games, puppets, stuffed creatures, or sand tray miniatures that get brought into the session to demonstrate things.”

In addition to the knowledge of creative expression, the specific diagnosis expertise of the counselor informed the interventions in the counseling space.

Quote P8: First, I am an artist. I feel that I represent the complexity and the nuance of what I'm trying to express best through artistic mediums and metaphor. That's just a core part of who I am. I have dyslexia. I mentioned that because I know a lot of neuro-diverse folks who come from a creative framework, and within the literature, people with this identity describe themselves as really thinking through images. We are excellent storytellers, as it comes first through the image rather than through verbal expression. A creative counselor is really one who recognizes that most of what we express and communicate is through the body. We need multiple mediums to be able to connect and build rapport with neuro-diverse clientele. And to just say, I'm only going to have a verbal exchange feels prejudicial. I consider myself a creative counselor because it's a core part of who I am as a person. and it's a core part of who I am as a practitioner. I can't separate myself from the idea of creativity.”

Participants also identified creativity as a personal coping skill and a method for self-care. Similarly, creative counselors encouraged and supported clients to explore expressive and creative ways that fit into their everyday lives.

Quote P3: “I think overall professional counselors tend to equate creativity to only visual or expressive arts, and while I love that domain of creativity, and I myself engage in artistic creativity. I also engage in a lot of different domains of creativity and not just that expressive arts piece. It's focusing on everyday creativity with my clients and promoting those forms of creativity for them as well. I think we all use adaptability in everyday creativity. For example-The road on my commute to work is blocked, so I need to adapt. I need to change the route. I need to think about the other ways I can go. Maybe you're out of coffee in the morning, or you only have one piece of toast, and so you have to figure out how to still eat or how to solve these little problems. And I think that's all forms of adaptability. And when we work with clients, often that's what it is. I hold a belief that my clients have the ability within them to overcome their struggle and their difficulties. My goal is to help them learn how to take the skills they have and adapt them in a new way. Teaching creativity in counseling as a skill or goal for clients to walk away with learning creative skills, is not only for therapy but also for life.”

Overall, it was learned that the participant's collaborative creative counseling incorporated varied verbal and nonverbal modes of self-expressive communication, relating, exploration, and learning into the counseling space.

Quote P4: “I would, say the longer I am providing support and collaborative spaces for people as they're exploring their worlds, I go into my creative and intuitive spaces because it's more useful. The intuitive element is just sensing or feeling the person. Having the abductive leaps happen in the brain to connect A to Z without really any in between.”

Creativity is Part of Human Experience

Participants noted that creativity could be seen as inherent to human nature. While every person may be innately creative, it might need to be ignited or recognized by a trained professional who supports the client utilizing the creative approach in counseling.

Quote P10: “I think human beings come up with their own creative ways of dealing with their issues. I think creativity is inherent to human nature and psychotherapy. I think any good therapist is being flexible or coming up with novel ways of interacting with clients that are in sync or attuned to who the clients are and what's going on for them. I also have a specialty in sand tray therapy. I see creativity in two different ways. Creativity is a good quality that I think goes right alongside Roger's core conditions in counseling.”

Participants mentioned that they believed everything a person needs to heal emotionally is already within that person. The creative counselor offers an experience to access emotional content that transverses the strictly verbal conversations typically had in counseling. Clients are supported by the creative counselor to explore the tangible objects created spontaneously that reflect an extension of the self and their emotional energy.

Quote P14: “I believe everybody is creative. Everyone has that innately in them. I tell everyone you know everything you need to heal yourself is already within

you, and it comes in the form of your creativity. It's an energy and what we do with that energy, whether we use it destructively or creatively is a choice. And I'm there to just support and be witness to what is created based on dealing with the client's trauma, healing, and growth and so on."

It is understood that some individuals are more comfortable with the idea of exploring creative or expressive counseling interventions or not. If a client is never given the chance to explore such creativity in practice with the support of a specialized and experienced creative counselor, it could be a missed opportunity. According to participants, counseling was viewed as the witnessing of the human experience, and creativity was seen as part of the human condition. Therefore, counseling can enhance, enlighten, and highlight human experience through creativity in counseling.

Quote P8: "Being a creative counselor is to be an artist. It is to be someone that has resources, who was able to get on a particular educational path that led to this place where I can call myself a creative counselor. But at the core of that, I value the arts, and that I don't see them as separate to the verbal processing experience. To me, it's a part of it because that's what it means to be human. That does not negate or discredit in-depth practitioners who go into Art Therapy or Dance/Movement Therapy. But just to say that I really brought this broad umbrella, because I really see it as central to my own personal work, as is doing anti-colonistic self-reflection. What here is about me and what here is about the system? But most of all, how do we help clients? That should be the core of any professional identity."

A creative counselor has the training and expertise to help share their knowledge about the gifts that emerge from creativity with others in their work. **Quote P15:** “I consider myself a creative human, first and foremost. I think humans are inherently creative and some of us are a little more comfortable with that idea or in tune with that idea, whether on purpose or not.”

A common thread in the counselor perspective was that the role is to be at service in support of another individual within the therapeutic milieu. It also entailed that counselors believed in their work and placed value on the work in practice.

Quote P20: “I think my personal value is that everything is an act of creativity, which seems very general and huge. I became an art therapist because that's a metaphorical expression of it. I see every dialogue and conversation as a co-creation. I think that the life force is creation. Healing and transformation are all wrapped up in that. Being a counselor, for me, is an inherently creative act. I keep trying to ground myself in that. Being a counselor is finding creative ways to see things nestled in the soul, the mind, and the human experience. Again, in my view, life is creation. Counseling is to help with life. How can it not be creative?”

Creative Counselor Development

The participants discussed the timeline for the development of their creative approach. One question was whether they received exposure while they were developing the skills and education in the CACREP counseling program. The findings were divided into themes, beginning with participants sharing that they were established creative practitioners before their Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) status, that the creative

and counseling training they received was in a concurrent learning pattern, and that they expressed a desire to receive more creative training in counselor programming.

Established Creative Practitioners Before LPC Status

Some of the participants were Art Therapy or Play Therapy certified professionals or were previously an art teacher or an artist in addition to their LPC status. They came into the counseling profession with the creative approach and skills already established. Some of the participants were practicing artists, crafters, gardeners, and valued creativity for its use in self-care. It was learned that creativity was integrated into the personal part of professional counselors' lives.

Quote P1: "So, in my CACREP program, It did not have a ton of creativity, to be perfectly honest, but prior to that, I already had a master's in Art Therapy. And then I was an art teacher for 20 years before I moved into counseling. I'm also an artist myself. I think all of those 3 parts really have informed my counseling practice from the very beginning."

It turns out that many of the participants had similar stories regarding engaging and re-engaging in the educational process of higher education. The observations of counselors who returned shared that there were others like them and may have been received with some disorientation as well.

Quote P4: "My original master's program for Art Therapy and counseling was not CACREP approved. My doctorate came from a CACREP institution... there were other people who had done the same thing in the same cohort. Most of us were creative practitioners who had been practicing for five, 10, 15 years, and they didn't quite know what to do with us."

The progression and history of licensure for art therapists is long and storied, unlike today where many Art Therapy programs are embedded in counselor education programs in higher education where they can be on the licensure track. Thirteen states have stand-alone Art Therapy licensure and eight through related professions and/or title protection currently (AATA, 2024).

Creative and Counselor Training were Concurrent

For the non-art therapists and play therapists, participants independently procured training prior to or during their CACREP programs. Many took advantage of classes offered in the coursework for Play Therapy or Art Therapy in CACREP counseling programs. At times, special classes focused on children and adolescents, grief, trauma, and practical coursework, such as internships, which had some focus on engagement with creativity. Often professors who identified with a creative orientation in programs became mentors and continued contact in their career path.

For some participants, there was minimal experience where the concepts of creativity in counseling were of attention in the CACREP programs. However, in some programs that did not include such training, counselors found ways to engage in creative training methods by spending extra money and time outside of their graduate programs. Often, when concurrent training was provided within the CACREP counseling programs, students experienced different outcomes. Some were frustrated while learning the new skills, and others were excited at the opportunity to explore the approach. **Quote P14:** “They're so woven together. I got my master's in Art Therapy, and the very first internship hired me part-time. I worked there part-time for the rest of grad school. When I graduated, they hired me full-time”

Despite the changes in programming in various graduate level counseling programs that do include expressive arts, little awareness or advocacy for each program educates students as to what experiences they will have access to and what licensure tracks are available in the respective programs.

Quote P20: “I was concurrently doing Art Therapy and Counseling at the same time. As I was in Art Therapy, I did expressive therapy courses. I think there was no specific stuff about creativity other than like when we studied Natalie Rogers in my counseling training because the program, I was at had Art Therapy courses as electives.”

Some creative counselors noticed that exposure to concepts that include creativity and other nontraditional integration of therapeutic interventions from varying theories produce different outcomes by peers in graduate programs. However, exposure to such concepts was valuable and not typically the norm in CACREP counseling programs, but possible when in independent study coursework.

Quote P13: “I was very lucky to be able to take some of the Play Therapy courses that they had. They had a certificate program through my program. I didn't take all of it, but I did take some of the expressive arts classes, and that was really enlightening. You know there was that art aspect, of course, where you traditionally think of creativity. But I think it was more than that, because, you know, sitting there with a bunch of other training counselors, learning about different aspects of expressive arts and creativity, and counseling. It was so interesting to see how each person approached it and interpreted it differently. Each person had a different outcome. I think that in and of itself also taught

creativity. For one person in the class, it was a really frustrating experience because they weren't used to thinking outside the box. And for some people, it was really exciting. It was allowing flexibility”.

Participants spoke of certain professors who exclusively provided their exposure to creative methods in their experience in CACREP programs. When said professor left, there was little continuation of such creative influence.

Quote P5: “My doc program had a school counseling course, and the professor was a registered play therapist. She opened that door to finding different modalities for communicating with clients and we had several tapes from her that reflected doing something beyond talk therapy with children. She really trained us at that time within the Play Therapy paradigm because she was a registered play therapist. She took us on field trips to see different agencies or practices that had creative and expressive formats. I wouldn't say that they were all Play Therapy but they all used different creative approaches to working primarily with children and adolescents. She left the end of the program, so I didn't have another exposure to that for a long time.”

Despite mere mentions of being creative in coursework assignments there was little to no attention put on the parameters of what the creative approach should look like.

Quote P12: “ My trauma class professor started out as an art therapist and that sort of drove it home. Adding room and grace to really expand beyond CBT or DBT and a structured program.”

When there were Play Therapy classes or the child and adolescent focused courses in the CACREP programs there was lectures on creative methods as a vehicle for

engagement. It often was somewhat unexpected where and when the creative concepts were included in coursework.

Quote P21: “There was no explicit course or creativity programming. I most recently finished a doctoral program for counselor education and supervision. And in that I took a qualitative class. Photovoice and different creative approaches to research were definitely covered in that class. Outside of that, it was kind of more of an unspoken, nonexplicit prompting that there is always more that is possible. As far as creativity goes I took a grief class, and there is quite a bit of attention to different ways of working with people who are experiencing grief, including some traditionally defined creativity. Such as art-based interventions and things of that nature. So, just a little bit, not a ton.”

Some participants shared that they often received overview training at conferences where the idea of using a creative approach had well-attended sessions. Participants reported that it was often explored in practicum, internship, and supervision hands-on courses where the experienced and non-university affiliated supervisors mentored the training counselors in simple methods for the creative approach with clients.

Desire for More Creative Counseling Training

Participants believed that because it was not a CACREP focus, learning creative approaches in their programming was never guaranteed. CACREP standards were specific and mandated. It seemed difficult to carve out a specific placement for it. No competency for creativity has been established to date. Some participants believed that the programs emphasized the opposite of creativity, where foundational skills take

precedence, and the ability to veer from that structural basis comes later, post-graduation, and with more experience. Creativity can be considered an obscure and often intimidating concept to some, so it was not always well received and established within counseling programming.

Quote P16: “Individual faculty used creative means to communicate about the material. The program emphasized the opposite of creativity. The internship site supervisor was an extremely creative counselor to this day. She's still someone 10 years later, and when I feel stuck, I reach out to her. And that's where I first learned about sand tray. That's where I first learned about the value of setting up the clinical space. I don't think I learned any of those things in my program. It's needed.”

Outside training from personnel at was at times the only option for some counselors who desired such training in programs that had no focus on creative approaches or methods included. Some professors may have appeared to be using the nontraditional methods yet left it ambiguous and undeclared. It was noted that oftentimes there was no special attention paid to how creative methods could be adapted or introduced for use with adult or family populations for engagement.

Quote P3: “I don't really think there was any creative training in the program. I think that's a big part of the reason I think this study is really important for awareness. It was mostly encouraged in my child and adolescent counseling class to do what you needed to do to get the children engaged and involved in a session. I have always found it interesting that it wasn't promoted more for adults or older

clients or families. But I found ways to try to make those connections personally, because I identify as a creative.”

The reality and danger of using a tool/intervention a counselor was not fully trained in can lead to ethical breaches, as it is part of counseling ethical guidelines. If an untrained professional utilizes creativity to explore past trauma with a client, for example, that counselor should be equipped with the knowledge of how to support the client, process the discovery, and recover from the loss of containment in a session. Perhaps it may also lead to secondary trauma for the counselor undetected.

Quote P7: “I think part of what makes Art Therapy threatening is that there's not a deep understanding within counseling of what it is and how it's different than just coloring sheets. If there were an understanding or a competency there would be more of an understanding. But there are so many CACREP standards that we can't add one more class. You just have to integrate it into the culture of your program.”

It was discussed how it was not clear why the concepts of creativity and its positive qualities were not spread across the CACREP curricula and standards. Additionally, missing was the lack of fit in coursework or the effort to meet the interests of students and the counselor community at large.

Quote P8: “Where does it fit? This is the sad part. There's no carved-out area. Students have to use more money to pay for training and the sad part of all of this is overwhelming. I'm always overwhelmed when I go to residency in the online program. We do breakout groups, and there's so much interest in creativity. I am constantly looking and feeling out in the professional world to see where there are

places to connect because there hasn't been anywhere within CACREP. They don't really highlight creative approaches even in the standard revisions. I think there is a small connection coming through now around being anti-racist, looking at anti-colonistic practices, and how we create inclusivity with the arts. But beyond that it, it's so minutia, you know, and so you have to be independently motivated to find folks who are excited about using the arts and counseling.”

Participants believed that creativity was seen as a universal client application process and would always be up to the client to agree to explore the opportunity. Further, training in creative approaches could become a great opportunity for collaboration within Art Therapy, Play Therapy, and counseling programming to explore the boundaries of what the expressive qualities creativity can bring to counseling. Awareness building of the creative approach could bring opportunities abound for the training counselors, clients, and the community where the agencies exist.

Creative Counseling Client Engagement

Client Response to Creative Intervention

Some of the licensed professional counselors (LPC) in the study had dual or triple licenses or certifications and professional roles that created multifaceted professional identities. Having multiple ties to allied specializations often forces a professional identity role shift when working in different capacities. In whatever role they were in, the counselor had to shapeshift the creative method to be used in practice to meet the particular needs of the individual or group in front of them. For example, an LPC worked as a school counselor, a counselor educator, and also served in an adult psychiatric

agency. The emergent needs of clients or students differed and forced a shift in the engagement.

In an exploration of client engagement with regard to the use of a creative approach, participants were asked about interventions they have used with clients in their practices. The focus of the findings became more on the quality of the engagement found in their creative approach. Some clients met the approach with either a positive engagement or a negative engagement and brought up the recognition that creative counselors had a unique skill and were dependent on specific training for the specialization.

Positive Client Engagement with Creative Technique. The many different media and processes ranged from the use of artistic materials to creative ideas and emotionally expressive communications between the counselor and client. Often creative interventions may use the five senses and the whole body. The creative approach relies on the neuroscience occurring while engaged in the process. Changes occur in the brain while problem-solving during the intervention process. While conducting creative and expressive interventions, intuition played a large role in the client's making choices and the counselor's witnessing or observing of the choices.

The goal was to utilize the methods on the path to positive client counseling outcomes. Self-expression with creativity was described as successful in treating perfectionistic tendencies, promoting self-discovery, interlocking identities, healing, authenticity, and insight, and simply that creative and expressive methods can be personally enjoyable. Every dialogue was viewed as a co-creation. Creative interventions were also often used to enhance traditional counseling techniques.

Quote P17: “ I think creativity is something that can be used to help with promoting change. It also can help with healing, and it can also help with creating interlocking identities. And it really helps with discovery to find out who you are. We're promoting authenticity. What I like about creativity is, it helps me to use different forms of expression and modalities. You can use poetry, storytelling, music, dance, visual arts, and even psychodrama. It is something that can help promote insight, change, and can also help with connection.”

The participants revealed that they believed the creative approach could be used to meet the client needs of most ages, including children, teens, families, and adults. It is up to the client to choose whether to engage with the methods. When the client is engaged, it includes the experience of psychic flow and emotional grounding.

Quote P2: “An engaged client during the process is sometimes revealing what I see called flow. Sometimes, the creative process causes the state of flow where the client loses sense of themselves, and time and their defenses come down, and I can tell by the way either the talk therapy portion is just more open or they're totally engaged in art making and the creative processes. They lose inhibition and then they just begin to trust and open up. In Art Therapy, it's a tripartite relationship. It's the client and me and creativity. That's also a holding environment, whatever the creative process. So there's 3 entities in the therapy session at least and all the relationships and everyone else that comes into the process.”

Art making and creative processes leading to self-expression can be enjoyable for some clients, whether in the creating process or with the resulting product. Positive

engagement is seen in outcome surveys, client reviews of counseling agencies, or on social media.

Quote P8: “Using creativity within my counseling practice, clients have overwhelmingly enjoyed it. But I feel like that it's my bias right? And so if they've enjoyed working with me, I always use the arts. I mean, there's never a session that there isn't. I'm not using movement or mindfulness, art is a core part of any process with me... they really enjoy it. That's the feedback that I've gotten both verbally and in writing.”

Clients often respond and engage positively when the energy can be focused on things other than problems and diagnoses. The creative interventions promoted openness, spontaneity, playfulness, inventiveness, and often surprise. Clients are surprised when allowed to look at things differently through the lens of a creative approach. With interest, investment, and positive rapport, hesitant clients may come to embrace the creative interventions in counseling.

Quote P5: “I think it surprised them. My private practice work has been just as a counselor. I'm advertised as a counselor. When I mentioned to clients that I'm also interested in creativity, and I have training as an art therapist. Some of them have been very receptive to that. Others could take it or leave it, because I think that can be intimidating for them. People have been very receptive, and I will say people who have come with an interest in art, and they find out that we can do that in therapy, have really embraced that.”

The creative approach went beyond words and embodied the client's emotional world in artistic, creative, and expressive forms. Mindfulness-based practices and

bodywork also played a role in the creative counselor's practice. Giving the client space and time to communicate with objects or imagination helped build the relationship in counseling and simply encouraged engagement as individuals.

Quote P18: "For the most part it's usually positive responses. I feel like I can turn any board game or card game into a therapy game. At this point, just from my experience working with younger kids means doing something physical and doing an activity. I've turned learning about thinking errors into a relay race or incorporated improv games into therapy. And for the most part, even those grumpy teenagers usually respond pretty well."

Some clients enjoyed the process for the mere fact that it broke down the counseling barriers and formality of traditional verbal therapy methods. Technology can be integrated easily to explore relative concepts to engage, support, and empower clients. A participant described often using short film videos to illuminate her clients' diagnoses and treatments. They were primarily used for educational purposes that together helped them engage visually and actively learn about the counseling process.

Quote P11: "I also work in the psychiatric unit at our local hospital. Some clients really like it and some clients just kind of go through the motions. You're working with people in crisis who end up at the hospital. I think some patients really like the fact that we're not just sitting and having to rehash our problems, and we're using something else. For example, one thing that I enjoy utilizing is the cinema therapy YouTube channel. It's a licensed therapist and a film director who discuss therapeutic themes within movies. Our younger patients in their twenties and thirties tend to really enjoy it. We see a lot of people with the diagnosis of

borderline personality disorder. We saw a 30-minute video on borderline personality disorder, looking at it from following the story of Darth Vader in the Star Wars series. Anakin's personality traits show that he has a borderline personality disorder.”

Practices have remarkably changed regarding the options for counseling care since the global pandemic. Some counselors who were once in person have continued to conduct counseling online as an option. The engagement is different. One participant was reminded of the physicality of her former in-person counseling mode, which naturally aided the positive engagement with clients.

Quote P13: “When I was working in person, right now I work almost exclusively online, there were some really beautiful moments of people really breaking open and opening up and moving through difficult things when we were able to use our hands, whether that be like coloring or drawing different things. Doing timelines was something that was really powerful for a lot of people. But also engaging more of the body, in a mindful somatic experiences. Having creativity as a tool to do expressive arts helps to pull things out with more than just words.”

The goal is ultimately to have clients respond with positive engagement, however that may not always be the reality.

Client Aversion to Creative Intervention. It was not uncommon for clients to dismiss the less structured and open-ended experience of creative and expressive methods with a counselor. When a decision by the client was made, the counselor honored it and utilized the concepts of their creative approach in other ways for the client. ***Quote P3:*** “Not all clients really like doing expressive hands-on interventions. I try to promote other

ways of getting creative thinking going and problem-solving.” At times, beyond simple hesitation, other psychological concerns may be indicated by the nature of their response to the invitation to engage in creative methods. For example, when a client has texture aversions, the negative response is immediately seen. When a negative or avoidant response was seen, the counselor pivoted and relied on their training and processing skills to support the client in the moment.

Quote P5: “There was a client that didn't respond well, and they were quite older.

Another one didn't like the texture of the sand. I know now that came along with some other identifiers. I also had a student at one time who was trying to use some creative, expressive formats and she had a play bag. Her client was a senior citizen. That client had a hard time shifting into that expressive modality. I don't know if there could have been different reasons or other organic issues going on, other diagnoses, or health issues. These are really the only two that I've ever known that didn't respond well, and I would say that both of those responses may be from outside components that just speak to them. There is a need to be flexible and understanding when connecting with your client. When they say, ‘I can't go there’ be flexible to do it in a different way.”

Sometimes, clients found it hard to shift from verbal communication to going deeper emotionally via expressive counseling. Being creative also seemed intimidating for some clients. Perhaps the client needed more structure in the session. The professional counselor must be cognizant that this approach to counseling may not be for all clients. To that end, counselors must monitor their own biases and assumptions so they do not

advocate for the creative approach with all clients. The approach must always begin with client preference.

Quote P2: “Maybe the creative process is a little overwhelming if clients are not ready to share. Sometimes the creative process used in counseling is not right for all clients. You have some clients that want straight, you know, cognitive behavioral based therapies. And I think it's important to understand that.”

It was understood that counseling should be primarily person-centered. A counselor who utilizes a creative approach with clients must have the appropriate knowledge and skill set to work ethically in that specialization.

Creative Counseling is Skill and Training Dependent. When an experienced counselor uses their creative approach with clients, it is an experience for clients to assert their control within the interventions. Children are often powerless in life at times, and gaining control in counseling sessions is a valuable practice. For individuals who may be neurodivergent or struggling with an eating disorder, it becomes crucial to also provide options for client control, choice, and safety that can be supported and sustained within the counseling relationship that is being developed.

Quote P1: “Sometimes it needs to be more structured. I had one little boy who had some developmental delays, and we were working on executive functioning skills. He and I created a book that took several sessions and that really helped him remember what we talked about. He was able to go back and review and that was helpful both in an expressive way and in an executive functioning skills way. It really supported his short-term memory and really helped him learn his strategies.”

The quality of the relationship should involve trust, rapport, and may allow encouragement by the counselor for the client to explore topics that may be hard to face at times. Often creative and expressive interventions allow a respite for the strict focus on client conditions and serve as an alternative to mainstream Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). It could provide a space for unformulated emotional reflection when the client is not ready or physically healthy for strictly verbal interventions.

Quote P6: “It was connecting with them in ways that they wanted and needed to connect rather than another adult sitting with them in a cold, sterile room, asking them to talk about symptomology. Doing sand tray with them. Different ways of working is just what they needed. That's how they could tap into what they were struggling with and what they needed support with, moving forward in their eating disorder recovery. They can't possibly do cognitive interventions. It's just perfectly unethical and incompetent. Many people that do cognitive based interventions with malnourished youth, whose brains are offline because they haven't had proper nourishment for so long, shouldn't. The creative interventions, such as sand tray or play are useful when you take into account some of them had regressed with trauma, anyway. So it really, depends on just what their physical needs are as well.”

Creative counselors often encourage clients to bring creativity home into their daily lives through self-care and simple rituals and to help reframe a negative personal outlook that gets in the way of strengthening their unique selves. Clients can practice self-empowerment while exploring creativity in sessions with the supportive counselor.

Quote P13: “I work with a lot of people now who are neurodivergent, with ADHD, or ASD. Creativity gives them the ability to find what they need, what they're looking for, to feel, to let go of some of that feeling like they're on the outside. Finding what works for them. Having those Aha! moments of ‘You know I can eat healthy if I make it simple,’ and ‘I can make it accessible for myself’ or ‘It doesn't have to be a constant struggle or a constant shame.’ ‘I can focus on my work because it doesn't have to be so hard,’ and ‘I don't have to line all these things up,’ and basically finding their own individual ways of doing those things. Practicing trial and error, and allowing themselves to not have to fit into the box.”

For the client to be engaged positively, the professional counselor must believe in the creative approach they introduced to clients. Additionally, when a positive rapport within the relationship was present, it allowed the welcomed integration of creative interventions that became part of the client's growth process.

Quote P3: “I think clients tend to respond really well to art. Really getting hands-on. Most of the reasons that that works is because it helps them break down the barriers and the formality that counseling sometimes has, which allows people to feel a bit safer and tap into their unconscious a little bit more. People don't always know what they want to talk about. They just have that urge to share, and that awareness that something is difficult, but they can't identify it. Sometimes the arts help them do that. In my practice, I've had clients respond really well to doing some activity that is completely unrelated. Just a way to break down, and warm up with an ice breaker type activity that gets their hands moving. A coloring page

or a mandala drawing or building with blocks. Then often tying into ‘how does this creation parallel, what you're struggling with or what you've encountered?’”

Professional sharing and consultation with other professional counselors who use a creative approach is key. Unfortunately, it does not happen often enough, and there seems to be little access to such a forum. Training in the use of creativity, art methods, expressive modalities, and play is a must and should be maintained throughout one’s career while in practice.

Quote P3: “The challenge I have come to see is that I am not certified in Art Therapy or Play Therapy, which is a limitation. It’s something that's not communicated well enough within the profession to use those types of creative interventions, and there really needs to be specific training. And you know, people shouldn't be doing Art Therapy unless they are truly trained to do Art Therapy. Understanding the difference between bringing in those creative interventions, whether it's Art Therapy, music therapy, or Play Therapy. When I've witnessed problems, it's been my challenge to know how a certain technique may connect”

The creative counseling approach takes time, consideration, and all effort to be mindful of the client's world and how the counselor may develop appropriate interventions that support them.

Creative Counseling Client Engagement

Multicultural and Intersectional Considerations

Counseling practice requires adherence to the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) (Ratts et al., 2016) while in training and beyond in

professional practice. The MSJCC focuses on counselor awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions to deliver competent, culturally relevant interventions to culturally diverse clients. Participants were asked about how they approached their interventions and considered multicultural and intersectional identities in their practice with clients. It was discovered that the best way to learn about a client's culture was through client-led interactions, that learning is most successful when a stance of cultural humility is enacted, and growth relied on continued multicultural training.

Client-Led Interactions for Learning. When learning about the client's history, story, and world, the counselor placed the client as sole narrator without interpretation. The client's openness to and honor of their decision to share with the counselor could reflect trust in the relationship. It was acknowledged that most, if not all, cultures in the world have forms of creative expression. Learning about creativity's role in their client's lives was also valuable. It was important to have empathy when learning the narrative about the client's life, which included the joys, struggles, and trauma they had experienced.

Quote P8: “ As a relational cultural therapist, I don't even think you can meet and connect with somebody without fully understanding who they are as cultural beings first. That includes thru an artistic lens as well. I am consistently doing assessments to ask, check in, coming back and doing my own research. It's a very cyclical nature of understanding how to best meet client needs. I see it as a tool to be inclusive. We also have to be mindful about how we're using the arts and what practices and know that they are very much culture bound.”

Clients determine if they are ready for the creative approach. In response, each process with clients would be individualized and adaptive to their needs. When creative interventions were introduced and executed and, in turn, allowed the open-ended time to process, they were experienced as a supportive element for the client. It was considered crucial to allow flexibility in the learning process with clients, as it was noted that historically counseling did not originate with the concepts of multicultural and intersectional identities in theory. It was important to the creative counselors to know that the growing counseling relationship contained reciprocal respect. It was crucial to meet the clients where they were and to be mindful of the counselor's positionality and intersections of their culture as well.

Quote P15: "I like the creative interventions, because there's there seems to be more flexibility, where you can tailor them to certain populations. Whereas our traditional counseling theories didn't have culture and diversity and intersectionality in mind when they first formulated those ideas. It's been tacked on later. I try to think about intersectionality with any client or any student I'm working with, and have it woven into everything I'm doing. I am a transgender individual. And I think that helps me remember that intersectionality piece, because I'm also a white person, and it's easy to have blind spots and not know of my privilege sometimes, so I work very hard to so."

Less structure in sessions supported and empowered clients in their creative intervention choices and options offered by the counselor. Often, clients brought in objects and ideas that tell their stories in various ways. The overall goal was to give the client space to illuminate their inner experience, perspective, and preferences in the

counseling relationships. The client was seen as the main cultural expert and cultural being in the growing counseling relationship.

Quote P17: “When I think about clients’ multicultural or intersectional identity, I definitely think about their salient identities, whether they are members of specific populations of people such as LGBTQ, homeless, black, a different spiritual identity, and even from a stigmatized group and at increased risk of suicide. I think about what steps I might take and what kind of tools that can be used. I am very careful when selecting the media to not select something that's going to be oppressive and more colonizing to the individuals. I really have to think about that enhanced understanding of the client's background. I must be able to hear their stories. I do not just assume because I read it in a textbook. I like using narratology for research. So, it's all about that the client is the expert. And it is important to promote self-awareness in that reflectivity.”

The stories clients brought to the counseling relationships were received with an open mind for learning as the main focus of relating to each other.

Counselor Cultural Humility. Many of the participants were clear about the importance of understanding personal cultural viewpoints and awareness of implicit biases. One common area was the activation of cultural humility. Cultural humility is a continual learning process embodied in actions with clients that are led with a personal stance of self-reflection, cultural sensitivity, and cultural awareness of others' experiences and narrative (Danso, 2016; Zhu et al., 2023).

Quote P2: “I base a lot of the multicultural competence on cultural humility and understanding your own cultural viewpoints and implicit biases. Understanding

what role creativity has played in a client's life before and how they've expressed creativity, without even maybe realizing it, is also important to understand.”

Another focus was on being culturally humble in your counseling environment from the onset of when a client entered the space. It was seen as important to have available supplies, materials, and resources in the office that were culturally relevant.

Quote P6: “Have toys and miniatures from various cultural backgrounds, gender identities, body shapes and sizes, etc. The toys, the resources, and the materials from the onset are set up in a way that aligns with diverse needs and abilities. Having a really diverse playroom and resources available so there's representation so clients can connect with various miniatures or toys, and can project onto them. They can do the internal work that they need to, and then all the while through the process of cultivating a culturally humble and responsive space for various clients.”

It was understood that the clients knew their identity best. It was crucial for the counselor to avoid being egotistical in the learning process by making assumptions or stereotypes about culture.

Quote p15: “Being open, flexible, and adapting to the client’s needs. It's a big part of honoring intersectionality and trusting that clients know their identity better than you. Making sure we're not being too egotistical and leading with humility when we endeavor to do these things.”

Tapping into the collective unconscious or collective knowing allowed the counselor and client to map out similarities and differences that helped reveal the areas of

intersectionality in the professional relationship. At the same time, the counseling relationship was given the time it needed to grow.

Quote P4: “So I think that one of the things that is helpful about creativity- whether it's humor, or metaphor or imagery or word imagery, is that some of that stuff can tap into the collective unconscious, or just the collective knowing, and that crosses some of the boundaries that we've erected as humans. I also think that one of the ways that you are able to engage creatively with people is when you have a solid relational connection and that you build over time. I think we try to rush things so much that we lose out on the potential of having these really meaningful dialogues and connections with others about each other.”

Constant attention was paid to facilitating awareness through learning about self and the other in the relationship was important. This powerful process was a distinct collaborative process. Counselor responsiveness was key to relating, learning, and growing in the professional relationship with clients.

Quote P10: “I think the creative approach is really one of the more powerful approaches, depending on how the clinician theoretically approaches it. I'm just talking from a humanistic point of view and see that it's a flexible process. I use it no matter what's going on. I am trying to facilitate an awareness process through exploration and discovery. And I think it just works well for people, because it gives them an open-ended space and they bring themselves in with them.”

When awareness was seen as a constant process, it allowed the counselor to be cognizant of possible blind spots. Counselors stayed curious and continually learned from the client and knew that it helped grow a relationship and create the foundation for action. **Quote**

P16: “I do a lot of asking and kind of trying to come from a place of curiosity when I'm trying to build some sort of creative framework for us to play in.” The creative approach promoted a space where all input was welcome and had the ability for growth in the process.

Requires Multicultural Training. The skills of the culturally competent counselor include awareness and knowledge about the self and other's cultural identities and backgrounds. It was crucial to understand the diverse needs and cultures in the communities the counselors served for better responsiveness in the counseling relationships. The importance of knowledge of cultural diversity includes the awareness of those affected by the oppressive systems and the dangerous conditions that have been created historically by racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, and all stigmatization based on hate. Counselors explored the concepts at the client's pace when rapport was established with clients when appropriate moments emerged.

Quote P13: “I consider myself not just creative, but also a feminist therapist. An Intersectional feminist therapist comes with the theoretical orientation of recognizing the systems in place that make living hard sometimes, and it is a relief for a lot of people that allows a lot of pieces of themselves to say, ‘It's not just me’. There's a kinship in it. There is a system that is organized to push back against people who identify in this way or that way. I think that allows recognition and space to talk openly, asking- now, what do I want to do about it? How do I want to interact with it? How do I want to react against it?”

Participants wished to encourage other counselors to seek continual training on being culturally responsive when using a creative approach, especially within the treatment of

trauma. It was seen as imperative for counselors to learn, research and reflect on what is being shared by clients to the benefit of the relationship. The creative interventions should be applicable to client needs and not counselor assumptions and preferences.

Quote P21: “One way that I think that I account for that is that I, as the clinician, look for interventions, learning and reading and observing things from people across different cultures and identities. I also am very rooted in the idea that interventions need to be applicable to the individual client and to always account for where they're at and how they see themselves in the world. And if an intervention can assist with them working through skills, development, or something more existential, then I would use that. I hadn't really considered how that may or may not show up in the interventions that I'm using. There's no one size fits all, and I think that there's a danger in that. ‘Okay, this is the intervention to use’. I suppose that's the general perception of the counselor. In that case, that doesn't leave any space to account for what's going on for the client with their culture, identity, or other identities, and intersections of those identities. I think flexibility, awareness and responsiveness is helpful to account for those different aspects coming together.”

Some participants lived and worked in largely homogeneous communities in the US. They recognized that their practices do not have a diverse clientele, but they are aware of the diversity in the communities that they may serve in the future, so they still prepare and learn.

Quote P18: I don't know that it's something that has been on the forefront of my mind. I am here in rural country, and it's not particularly a diverse state, at least in

terms of different races and ethnicities and things like that. We do definitely try and find different things that fit with working with maybe a Trans youth or LGBTQ. We do have a pretty high Spanish-speaking population here. I find ways to incorporate and be really cognizant of those things. It is something that I try to do.”

When the tools of intersectionality are brought into the counseling space there are ways to learn about differences about the self and the other. The exploration is worthwhile even in cases where similarities appear on the surface of another person.

Creative Counseling Client Engagement

Engagement During the Global Pandemic

Participants were asked about their experience in their practice while the world and the counseling profession shut down and pivoted during the global pandemic. At times emotion emerged in recollection of the time in the world that all were affected by in various ways. Notably, the nature of creative counseling practices changed and evolved. Some of the participants experienced it as a time of hard transition at first that evolved as time went by. Some found it to evolve into a time of clinical growth with all of the adjustments. Many found that they were partnering with clients that empowered the clients with more clinical insight and direction while online. A couple participants experienced no real changes in their practices either due to defying state orders or the setting they worked in did not change the level or location of care.

A Hard Transition. Many creative counselors lost the hands-on interaction of their creative approach while transitioning to online platforms, to their disappointment.

Quote P1: “I had just started seeing clients individually during the beginning of Covid,

and it was hard because you're not with them, and you don't have that hands-on interaction right there together.”

It was a struggle to work with children online, as their attention span and engagement diminished. Moving from the physically interactive practice to digital format resulted in less creative and expressive interventions. Participants experienced difficulties with the transition, including having to close a fifty-year-old, longstanding community mental health agency.

Quote P4: “One thing that I did during the pandemic at the front end was close a 50-year community clinic forever, as we couldn't financially support it. When everything came to a standstill, I was clinical director for one of the alternatives to the state-run board mental health facilities. We don't have a ton of options here. We were one that served people from three states. Some would just drive to have appointments because they liked their provider. It's not easy to close one when you can't have face to face conversations with people. Our telehealth platform was real crappy. I found myself relying on telephone sessions more because I could get more nuance from that than fighting with the Internet.”

There was the confusion of not knowing what to do in the difficult transition. Many felt a type of loneliness working in isolation for the first time in their practices.

Quote P9: “So I actually was in my graduate program during the pandemic. So that was interesting. I did all of my expressive arts training remotely, which was super difficult. I think all of us were feeling pretty lonely around the time of the core ending. I had also just moved to the middle of nowhere. Very, very rural. Right before Covid hit. So I didn't know a lot of people. Everyone was in their

little pods, which I didn't have, because I just moved there. easier to adapt in person. Way, easier to be like, 'Oh, yeah, I can see how this would be done in person'. Especially when it comes to sound. But I would say that it was a plus that during Covid I got a lot of experience of how to do expressive arts remotely, which it seems like clients are choosing that more often than not now, because it works better in their schedule. They can choose a specialist that lives farther away. Rural areas are better served. So many people are choosing remote counseling is the downside lately. Currently, yeah, I'm currently seeing all remote clients."

The loss of attunement with clients was hard to get over and adjust to the change.

Quote P15: "I found myself frustrated with the online aspect because I couldn't be close to my clients. I couldn't connect with them the way I was used to with the space and the energy in the room. And I found myself really leaning into the computer getting so close."

Technical issues at the start proved to be a challenge. The computer lagging, internet issues, and online platforms proved to be an obstacle at first but became easier with time. **Quote P9:** "We tried doing instrumental things remotely, but the delay and sound on zoom was not filtering out background noise, which is your instrument. It still is delayed, so you can't play along with a beat. Hard to do." Participants overall held a personal bias against telehealth then and now, but some stay online as a lucrative option. The memory of it was unsettling and some still felt it during the interview. **Quote P8:** "Oh, my gosh, what? That was! wow! It was so intense. I mean, I just... I'm feeling all of that in my body again."

Clinical Growth. Many of the participants described that their experience during the pandemic pushed them to pivot their creative counseling skills and transition into multimodal and expressive adaptations despite the virtual challenges. Some used creative themes that framed the online sessions. Art Therapy based assessments were adapted for online use. Participants learned how to transform meditation, movement, breathing exercises, and scavenger hunts to meet the needs for client engagement. The hard transition became part of the growth that has enhanced their practices to this day.

Quote P2: “So I was working with children with autism, children with children with neuro rehab issues, and also children with complex pain issues. I had to adapt and make it more multimodal to keep children engaged virtually. I would build sessions around themes, whether they were individual or groups. I enhanced my view of Art Therapy and counseling sessions because I began working with children in the hospital’s care. I also worked with adults virtually online at another organization at the same time. Sessions would center around a poem or a story or animal figurines, or we brought in things like contour drawings, portraits of each other, and a lot of things to promote engagement to embrace the virtual platform. I still used Art Therapy assessments. I used a lot of creative movement with music. Once we went back in person, I continued using some of these tools in sessions. Mindfulness, meditation, and a lot of things online. So I grew from the pandemic.”

Instead of providing the supplies, miniatures, and media, clients found personal items in home environments to participate in the interventions. The creative counselors developed games and directive visualizations for client interventions. The very distinct

Art Therapy concept of the ‘third hand’ theorized by Edith Kramer (Kramer, 1986) was adapted to become a ‘virtual third hand’.

Quote P4: “So it was different because I couldn’t hand somebody a sand tray and let them go wander through the miniature cupboard, but I certainly can ‘third hand’ a sand tray. So it was constructive online. I’ve taken therapeutic games and kind of tweaked them so that maybe we do a card component. But we don’t use the board, or we do something else with it. That isn’t really in the manual, but it works. I think I have really leaned into bibliotherapy a lot more as a result, which is pretty cool. I’ve had some really amazing bibliotherapy groups that have come out of having this online practice and I ran one this morning. We had people in 3, from at least 3 different counties in 3 different towns. Now we couldn’t do that as easily if they all had to get in their buggies and come over right?”

It was revealed that social media and professional list serves were utilized for resources and consultation opportunities more than ever during that time. Creative counselors learned, adapted, developed new skills during this global time of transition. Some used telephone for sessions due to HIPPA regulations and essentially developed new questioning skills for more descriptive conversations. The virtual process allowed more flexibility in the practices. Counselors learned to witness and engage visually more with avoiding the interpretation of process. Participants had to think more creatively about materials and processes in the transition. Many counselors sent supplies to clients at their homes and often utilized an online sand tray application. Some gained a better awareness of countertransference, as the experience was a shared public trauma.

Consultation became key to practices and clinical growth during the global pandemic. Creative counselors seemed to lean into the changes.

Quote P8: “We used different tools online to make music or make art use the whiteboard like all these things that I hadn't really considered before, because I was, you know, land based for all of these things related to my work. And now, it's my area of passion. And I'm really developing like a whole world around. AI, VR, AR, you know, using technology as an art tool. So very positive but very challenging. I actually think online can be better at facilitating process. I ran some of the best counseling groups I have ever run in my life during that period.”

Empowered Clients. Participants spoke about walking clients through the process of empowering themselves to engage in the clinical process more at that time than ever before. The process often included creative homework between sessions for insight building.

Quote P13: “There are some silver linings that came out of it. Part of that was the accessibility that people now know that they have, and the ability to kind of strengthen the ‘let me walk you through it. You are capable of this.’ Empowering people to take on some of their own healing in between therapy sessions. It was really important.”

Some creativity came in the form of encouraging clients to practice creative spontaneity using Gestalt concepts to normalize the experiences of the pandemic while dealing with their remaining anxiety that was expectedly heightened during that time.

Quote P16: “I remember the first time I said to a client, ‘What do you think it would be like if Covid was something that you could see in the air’? This

particular client had had anxiety. We had been working together before the pandemic, but then, the anxiety intensified. And she's like, 'What do you mean if you could see the molecules?' I was like, 'just imagine you could see the Covid virus. And if you had that information, do you think that would help your anxiety? Do you think it would raise your anxiety?' A couple of weeks later, she said, 'you know, when you asked me about it, if it was a visible thing that I could see, it really changed it in terms of how I was thinking about it and how I was experiencing it'."

No Change. Some participants experienced no professional change other than the reality of the global pandemic reaching their communities. Psychiatric hospitals didn't close, so the slight change came into play if the patients tested positive for COVID.

Quote P11: "The hospital didn't close. And when it came to that work, I didn't have to change anything. When people came to the ER and if they were COVID-negative they could come up to our psychiatric unit. If they were COVID positive they went to Med surge to be more isolated and protected. I would talk to those individuals over the phone and give them resources to read through more independently."

One participant defied their state's rules and stayed in person for counseling while abiding by mandates to wear masks and social distancing.

Quote P19: "I was the naughty counselor that through the global pandemic, when they said, 'You have to go home and do virtual', I refused. I stayed in my office with people face to face. There's another counselor in my building who did all virtual. I did all in person. So, if someone wanted virtual, I sent them to her, and if

they wanted in-person, she sent them to me. Counseling is in a room with the person. You got to be able to read all their body language. I gained clients because they were even driving hours to get here because, to them, online was not counseling. That's not what they needed. I provided what I felt was best for the people.”

Summary

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty-one licensed professional counselors who identify as creative in their counseling approach. The responses to the interview questions produced data regarding how the LPCs came to call themselves creative counselors. They were asked how their specific counselor education played a role in that development. They were asked about engagement with their clients, specifically how multicultural or intersectional identity considerations play a role in the interventions and or relationships with clients in mind. They were also asked about how their creative practice changed during the global pandemic.

The three overall research questions were substantiated by five sub questions that were asked in interviews that took a span of four months to complete. The transcripts ranged from six- fourteen pages of interview data, totaling 174 pages of reviewed transcripts. The multi-step coding process resulted in the development of themes under each area. To validate and review the coding process, themes, and initial findings, meetings were set up with consultants: the study’s dissertation chair, a peer debrief with a Ph.D. scholar who is an LPC, and two participants from the study to undergo a member check. The findings from the interviews are detailed below and were reported in the current chapter:

In Chapter Five, these results will be discussed, implications for counseling training and practice, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to learn about the creative approach that specialized Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) utilize in their practice. Of interest was their personally prescribed approach to creativity. Professional counseling has long been considered a creative practice at its core (Gladding, 2021). It is process-oriented within a relationship between a client and counselor who form a collaboration for problem-solving the areas of concern in treatment through the lens of human growth and development (Carson & Becker, 2004; Duffey et al., 2009; Gale & Austin, 2003; Gladding, 2021; Heppner et al., 1994; Rouse et al., 2015). In many cases, the creative counselors came to counseling with a preexisting relationship with creativity in their lives. Some could study within their counseling programs through Art Therapy or Play Therapy specializations. Some had mentor professors who had expertise in the area. Whether it was housed in their educational training programs or not, the participants had been developing their professional identity with creativity as a big part of it.

Commonalities surfaced in that many expressed passion in support of advocacy for the creative approach in counseling training and teaching. Dedication to the clients they serve was a common area. The creative work that these counselors described often included the need for training new counselors. It was thought that creativity could be embedded into counselor education programs across the country in some way. Many believed that it would serve to meet the needs of an expanding profession who have interest in the creative approach used in counseling. The creative disciplines within

counseling can only grow if it is sustainable within the larger counseling system (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Research in the area of creativity in counseling has shown an interest and desire for continued integration and inclusiveness of methods for the approach within counseling (Thomas, 2020). The allied fields of expressive and creative arts therapies have touched the counselors in this study either by direct membership in the field or training in ways to extend mental imagery with clients. Support for the development of the specific professional counselor use of the expressive approach could also take place at the organizational and institutional levels of counseling training. However, the current research did not uncover a thriving creative community at the university level. The participants who are also Counselor Educators do the advocacy work, in most cases, independently in their departments.

One of the big questions in this counseling-based creativity research was shedding light on the creative skills that the participating LPCs acquired and practiced in their specific professional counseling work (Baer, 2012). The theoretical framework of domain specificity for creativity developed by John Baer (2012) was a lens applied to the LPC skill set needed for practice with counseling clients. The domain specificity of creativity is offered by Plucker et al. (2004), stating, "Creativity is the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within some social context (p.90)". The following definition of creativity in counseling that was initially provided to the participants stated,

“An approach in counseling where spontaneity and novelty beyond traditional talk therapy utilizes diverse media or activity that is useful,

purposeful and adds a level of meaningful processing of perspective, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by the client for greater self-awareness” (Duffey et al., 2016; Gladding 2008, 2021; Gladding & Henderson, 2000).

The process of data collection and analysis began to reveal that the definition was too limited and lacked additional elements that stood out in the data results. It lacked a mention of the client in the clinical relationship as central to the process. This recognition correlates with the creativity literature that surmises the impracticality of defining creativity with one succinct definition for professional use in a field (Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010; Kerr & Gagliardi, 2019; Plucker et al., 2004; Plucker & Makel, 2010).

Throughout the interviews with participants, the terms, styles, experiences, and emerging processes showed nuances of the approach beyond simply maintaining a creative approach. All of the counselor's efforts in support of the clients eventually led to the main results of the process—did the clients express themselves? Therefore, it was decided that an updated term, Expressive Counseling, would be used to operationalize the multifaceted approach found to be used by the participants in this study. This chapter will use the term in place of creative counseling and the theory will be discussed in the following sections.

Expressive Counseling Theory

The realization of the inadequate term of creative counseling for the processes described in the data for this study began early in the conceptual development of this project. It was reinforced during the interview phase as the derivative forms of the term ‘expression’ kept surfacing in conversation and also in the reflective journal memos. As a matter of curiosity, the term ‘express’ was used as a search term in all of the interview

transcripts and the term surfaced over 100 times. It was used in various ways to describe the personal process undertaken by the clients or the clinical process that was occurring in the counseling space. For example, repetitive terms of self-expressive, self-expression, expressive arts, and expressive modalities often surfaced in the interviews. An example of the usage and meaning was seen in the following participant quote,

Quote P17: “What I like about creativity is that it helps me when it comes to using different forms of expression and modalities. You can use poetry, then use storytelling. You can use music, you use dance. You can use visual arts. You can even use psycho drama. And for me it is something that can help with promoting insight. It can help with change. And really this is something that can also help with connection.”

The final consultation that solidified the thoughts about the challenge of terms occurred during the member checking for consensus in the data analysis process. It was determined that perhaps an altogether new term for the creative approach for LPCs could be applied. The term “Expressive Counseling” was discussed and agreed upon to encapsulate what was discovered in the data. The question that emerged was about the few terms that participants used to describe the approach. One member stated, “There is an overlap between the term creative or expressive and experiential. And then, of course, play, or these other kind of specific versions of it.” The other member agreed, and the discussion led to simplifying the overall term for the approach,

“I’m wondering about the definition of creativity because you have counselors that see themselves as creative but don’t use creative methods as you define them. I’m wondering if there will be some confusion over

that term. I saw that where you tied all of those terms together, and expressive counseling is not a bad term to encompass it all. I've never heard it before.”

A look into several scholarly databases showed that there is no research on Expressive Counseling exclusively. Based on the current ground theory research findings, it was most advantageous to redefine the original terms of creative counseling to create an inclusive way to describe and accommodate the many differing approaches and professional identities found in this study's participant sample.

The use of creative arts (Gladding, 2021) and expressive arts (Degges-White & Davis, 2011) in professional counseling has held a presence in the literature for decades. Through engagement with creative arts media and expressive self-exploration, clients could safely experience their inner feelings, doubts or conflicts with symbol-making to learn about themselves within the creative process (Degges-White & Davis, 2011). In this study, participants shared their perceptions that expressive and creative arts are just part of what they do and who they are. Some discussed that they have worked on their skills to make their lives and practices better filled with the creative and expressive practices for many years. A unifying and unique element to this study is that they are all Licensed Professional Counselors, and they focus on supporting their clients in the process of self-expression using various means.

Expressive Counseling involves more than the application or therapeutic toolbox filled with expressive arts interventions, experiential activities, and creative problem-solving. It also involves a collaborative counseling relationship that encourages expressive opportunities to practice developing skills and a creative mindset for use in the

counseling space, which, with time and practice, would transfer out into the personal lives of clients for well-being. For example, mindfulness skills can be practiced in counseling and incorporated into personal coping skills (Brown et al., 2015).

Clients may be informed and oriented to the use of expressive practices and give their consent prior to engaging in the various activities. Multicultural and intersectionality are crucial in any counseling relationship, and they are no different to an Expressive Counseling relationship. The professionals who conduct such counseling are specifically trained and use a multimodal approach, and they have experience using each method they introduce.

The following is the definition of Expressive Counseling:

“Expressive Counseling is a specialized counseling orientation conducted by a Licensed Professional Counselor who is educated and trained in specific creative and multidisciplined areas of professional counseling to meet the needs of consenting clients of all ages, abilities, cultures, and honors the intersectionality of individuals forming the authentic relationships in their practices. The methods used are creative in nature and motivated by the needs of the client who may feel empowered by the multitude of intervention options offered in the counseling experience that stretches beyond strictly traditional and verbal counseling methods.”

The emerging definition has been developed intentionally to avoid strict guidelines for practice. The study findings were derived from a purposeful sample that involves a diverse network of disciplines and training. In concert with this realization, a renewed definition of the creative approach by LPCs was deemed necessary. Rooted in the

research findings, the following discussion will focus on the areas of importance that form the theory, orientation, client, and methods. Implications for counselor training and practice, limitations, and future research areas are also discussed.

Expressive Counseling Orientation

The practice of Expressive Counseling is dependent on the skills, training, and experience of the professional who engages in the specialized area of counseling. The specific skills that are used in the context of expressive counseling may be unique to the participants in this study and support the domain-specific definition of their counseling practice (Plucker et al., 2004, p.90). The counselors who focus on expressive methods are trained in traditional counseling and Expressive Counseling methods. As the findings of this study suggested, this can occur prior to counseling training, concurrent with counseling training, or in post-graduate training. The ultimate goal would be to develop coursework specific to the orientation and expose training students.

The Expressive Counseling approach for these participants has been established as an important portion of their professional and personal identities. They identified personally expressive methods as a lifestyle, a self-care asset, and integral to their practices. It is embodied in various ways that include, but are not limited to; practicing art, crafting, gardening, spending time in nature, gaming, reading, writing, being avid fans of anime, engaging in virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and exploration of augmented reality. Included in the expressive counselor's practice was meditation, mindfulness, and visualization that has been established in the literature as contributing to positive outcomes for various mental health and physical health treatments of individuals and groups (Brown et al., 2015). The activity they engage in not only positively enhances

their lives but has proven to cross over into their professional lives as they often share expressive techniques and offer artistic media-based support to clients in their process as Expressive Counselors.

This research study topic attracted a particular subset of LPCs who have been attentively focused on developing their Expressive Counseling practices with clients and their students. The professional identity of Expressive Counselor may be acquired in different ways, but one underlying value the participants is that the LPCs believe in the process, themselves, and the potential for client growth because of it. The findings of this study align with research that suggests that while using Expressive Counseling methods in practice, the experiential interventions may produce a cooperative, more energetic, multicultural engagement, serving as an aide to clients in their move toward self-integration (Gladding 2021).

Expressive Counseling Clients

Consenting clients of all ages, abilities, cultures would be suitable for the orientation of Expressive Counseling. A key element to the practice is to honor the intersectionality of individuals forming the authentic relationships in their practices. The client is the center of intervention development. Whatever the counselor has ready to offer for interventions, they wait because, first and foremost, the client's choices determine session content. It would be an ethical practice to thoroughly inform the client about the purpose of the potential interventions and gain their consent to proceed. It is also understood and respected if the client chooses not to engage in creative activity. The Expressive Counselor is only present to support the client as the center of their treatment relationship.

Some participants shared that, inevitably, there are mixed reactions to the introduction of using expressive methods. At times, clients may have texture aversions to materials, or it may be difficult for a client to transition from verbal counseling to expressive activities. Perhaps the client is self-conscious about their artistic skills. Expressive Counselors believe such clients are perfectly appropriate for the approach because the process addresses imperfections in a tangible way. Some may be dysregulated surrounding body image. Most art and expressive products of the creative process can be considered extensions of the self and reveal many aspects of the challenges a client faces. The mistakes become part of the process. The underlying goal for counselors, in general, is to create a collaborative space to form a relationship between the client and counselor that is person-centered and empowers individuals to grow, heal, and build success in their pursuit of personal wellness and mental health goals (Kaplan et al., 2014, p.92). This supports research that concludes that counselors see the strong relationship as growth fostering and the primary catalyst for expressive and creative methods to be part of the practice (Duffey et al., 2009; Rouse et al., 2015). When security is established, the quality of the relationship builds the trust and rapport needed to take healthy risks to successfully engage in the expressive methods that may bring self-awareness and discovery to clients.

The participants of this study were asked about their experiences during the Global Pandemic. Many of them agreed that the pandemic was difficult to adjust to in their practice. Despite initial challenges, they made it work. Some participants found it to be an inventive moment in time and experienced professional growth because of the pandemic. Many adapted and made their practice multimodal as never before. They

learned, adapted, and developed new skills over the online platforms. Counseling online developed out of necessity then, but now appears to be a helpful convenience that allows more mental health access for many across the states. It could be seen as a burgeoning area of growth for Expressive Counseling since the pandemic. The area of telehealth or online counseling is growing in the research for counselors in general and is still a developing area theoretically.

Expressive Counseling Methods

The counselor provides expressive interventions in sessions that offer the opportunity and experience to express the narrative of their lives through a multitude of media and processes. The processes used in Expressive Counseling sessions with clients are specific to the counseling relationship and not a general skill transferable to another domain of work or even another solitary relationship (Baer, 2012; Duffey et al., 2016).

During the expressive interventions, the counselor uses their intuition, training, and personally expressive creativity to support clients of all ages, cultures, and abilities. The skills and training of the Expressive Counselor introduce the creative processes and provide the means for the intervention. It is, first and foremost, a collaborative endeavor where the client and counselor may learn from each other. For example, counseling offices are equipped with various physical art materials, Play Therapy or sand tray accouterment, multimedia, and games, and some sessions may even take place outside of the office. There may be a nature walk outside the office, a basketball game on the grounds, etc. The client may also bring in objects from their lives, a song, a photograph, a recipe, and most importantly, their thoughts and ideas.

The Expressive Counselor may prompt visualizations or meditations and other mindfulness-based therapeutic exercises for anxiety or stress reduction (Brown et al., 2015). In Expressive Counseling, there is a multimodal capacity for engagement that can include the five senses and the whole body. Expressive Counseling can be viewed as a discipline where counseling tools are paired with innumerable creative methods to better support a client to move to a higher level of personal expression that allows them to reach their designated outcome goals of counseling.

Implications for Counselor Training and Practice

A focus of this study was to learn about the developmental pathway and training counselors have undertaken to form the identity to qualify them as an Expressive Counselor. Some LPCs came to counseling with experience and respective certification from Art Therapy or Play Therapy orientations. Some shared that they are practicing artists, crafters, musicians, writers, and use mindfulness-based practices that include meditation and visualization. When in counselor training with established expressive skills and training, their primary goal was to master the art and skill of counseling.

Many of the participants arriving at CACREP counseling programming, whether at the MA or PhD levels, shared that they felt that creativity was not always well received within the counseling programming. In those cases, they used their previous knowledge to enlighten others in their cohorts, including professors, in the program with information about the approach with clients. Those in training or post-graduate counselors who desired to accomplish the artistic, creative, mindfulness practices had to personally seek the education and training if their counselor education programming or their place of employ did not provide it.

The participants shared that the gaps in knowledge regarding expressive orientation appeared to have been plenty at some of the graduate programs for counseling. Many programs could close the learning gap with the incoming creative practitioners with experience in allied fields. The findings in this research point to a growing interest in the area, and it would behoove the institutions to capitalize on the wealth of knowledge entering the programs in upcoming cohorts. McCarthy (2018) stated, “Counselor educators are uniquely situated to not only aid in students’ creativity and creative problem-solving abilities but also enhance the overall training experience and possibly advance the counseling profession as a whole.” Focused seminars could be developed in collaboration with students who have the experience and training within creative therapy communities.

The National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations, Inc. (NCCATA) published a report on the various training and certification requirements for the specialized creative fields of Art Therapy, Music Therapy, Dance/Movement Therapy, Drama Therapy, and Poetry Therapy, which help to define and protect both practitioners and clients to ensure proper training and ethical standards are followed for professional practice. No such certification or organized body has claimed jurisdiction for the training of the unique subset of creative counselors in the field. The Association for Creativity in Counseling (ACC) has been established as a division of ACA for the research and knowledge base for creative approaches in counseling (Duffey and Kerl-McClain, 2007). While the association was recognized by current participants in the field as an entity for collegiality at a yearly conference, the organization has not published literature regarding competency guidelines for creativity in counseling to date.

The training for the specialized distinction of Expressive Counseling could begin early while taking coursework in counseling programs. The professional identity could ideally be forming simultaneously while learning the theoretical pedagogy of counseling in general. Research suggests that when creativity is part of the learning early in graduate-level counseling programs, students gain necessary knowledge about expressive tools, but also may help in understanding complicated counseling concepts more successfully (Lawrence et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2021).

Many graduate programs across the states today have Art Therapy and Play Therapy certification track programming embedded in counselor education programs in higher education. Some of the current study participants received such training. It was learned that while they received creative and expressive training in their respective Art Therapy and Play Therapy coursework, they did not get the same attention to expressive methods in their counseling coursework.

One participant reflected that while she was in the Art Therapy program and receiving instruction in counseling classes at the same time, she did not know it was an option to primarily focus on the counseling portion and take the Art Therapy courses as electives. It appeared that the information was a breakdown of communication. It seems that a missed opportunity for advocacy exists between the Counseling, Art Therapy, and Play Therapy programs that are increasingly partnering at the graduate level in universities. Increased communication between those departments would help rectify the dissonance.

Gladding has written widely on the importance of the creative arts in counseling and thought counseling's future would depend on the continued use of creativity

(Gladding, 2021). His texts on the creative arts in counseling have been used in counselor education coursework to expose counseling students to the idea that beyond foundational counseling skills, creativity can be attained (Smith, 2011). Participants shared that seldomly university programs have professors that included creative methods in their graduate coursework. It appeared that the existence of such a professor is not a guarantee. The types of coursework that mention expressive or creative approaches in a lecture or a block of lectures were mostly found in specialized courses focused on particular populations or issues. For instance, many of the participants who had minimal exposure to such methods had taken child and adolescent counseling, grief counseling, or trauma classes. Exposure was reported in offsite practicum and internship placements where supervisors had a creative orientation that they shared with training students. This is consistent with the findings of the content analysis looking at creative counseling in representative courses that focused on clinical skills practicum and internship coursework (Prasath et al., 2021).

Participants reported that some CACREP programs had no organized exposure to expressive or creative methods in core coursework beyond specializations. Most of the responses stated that there was no true fit as it was not a CACREP focus. The classes were structured to fulfill the requirements in pursuit of the strict accreditation process and it seemed to lack the motivation to fit such content into the curriculum. Students in the programs sought training post-graduation.

The counselor educators who were participants spoke about their students' interest in creative methods. Some stated that because of the personally acquired information, training, and practice, they have made it a part of their teaching values as counselor

educators. One idea that surfaced was to include it in lectures at least once in any class, and it may make a simple difference or at least an interesting conversation with students. One suggestion was to infuse it within the coursework, such as is done with the inclusion of aspects of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counselor Competency (MSJCC) (Ratts et al., 2016) in most of the core counseling classes.

Research in the area of Expressive Counseling could become a vehicle to creating a more inclusive framework for the use of creative methods in counseling. The different expressive media, modalities, and theoretical orientations reported in this study show that the specialized area is wide-reaching. Yet, there is the unifying professional licensure and drive to find ways for clients to explore their personal expression through creative mental and kinesthetic means. Developing such a framework could have the propensity to examine the specific competencies needed in facilitating therapeutic processes that meet the interests and needs of counselors and clients alike.

Participants spoke of the danger in conducting interventions without prior training and supervision. ACA ethics outlines that competent practice in any area of counseling is required. The literature also heeds the warning of the use of expressive and artistic methods without proper training (Rosen & Atkins, 2014). According to the data in this study, most of the participants either came to their CACREP programs with prior professional or personal experience, were involved in concurrent training, received minimal exposure, or there was no exposure in departmental coursework. This finding aligns with researchers who have advocated for using creativity in counselor education programs that train and prepare for the future in their professional counseling practice (Lawrence et al., 2015; Rouse et al., 2015). It is understood that when creativity is part of

the early instruction, students may learn complicated concepts more successfully (Lawrence et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2021).

The need for cross-discipline collaboration was one topic that entered the interview conversations on a couple of occasions. Consultation, professional sharing of skill sets, identification of widely used applications with populations, and specific interventions that LPCs are using were of interest to the creative counselors in this study.

The implication of a seemingly absent LPC voice in counseling-specific research for over fifteen years was a concerning trend and led to the development of this study which was outlined in Chapter Two (Johnson et al., 2020; Anderson et al., 2021; Boswell et al., 2021; Prasath et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). The unique perception and approach of practitioners working in the field, beyond university training, was essential to learn both for research and practice of the counseling profession moving forward.

All participants identified as LPCs. The data fills a void in the empirical research that focuses on the LPC narrative and perspective. The research revealed that professional counselors rarely contribute as research participants. It can be assumed that the professional counselors in this study working on the ground level in community agencies, schools, and other job sites did not have a vehicle to report or discuss their creative work in their practices until they were approached to participate in the current study. Completing this research was a step in filling a void of an LPC voice in research about their creative approach, yet on a greater level the overall domain of counseling, education, and supervision.

In fact, there were participants who stressed the need to connect with more like-minded LPCs who maintain an expressive approach despite representing various

disciplines and roles in the mental health fields. The current findings suggest that these participants maintain a constant orientation of expressive counseling as they approach all areas of their professional boundaries with others, which may still differ outside of this subset.

Limitations

The goal of the present study was to give a voice to LPCs and understand their perceptions about their creative approach, how they developed the approach, the reception and inclusion of interventions by clients, and how practices changed during the global pandemic. Although the results of this study could contribute to the development of new theories and information regarding Expressive Counseling, more information could be learned. The limitation of the participant size of 21 participants (N=21) makes it a small portion of perceptions within a large body of professional counselors across the country. Such inquiry could address the interest of students enrolled in counseling programs across the states.

Timing and planning the research to be able to attend annual counseling conferences, specifically the Association for Creativity in Counseling, may have allowed the opportunity to gain more participants to the study at hand. A missed opportunity was reaching out directly to the allied creative therapy fields such as Play, Dance/Movement, Drama, and Poetry professional communities, as it may have also garnered more participants and a better understanding of their program framework for licensure. It is also an area of growth as a specialization in Counselor Education programming, similar to Art Therapy across the states.

Future Research

Future research could include exploring the validity of an Expressive Counselor Identity Development Model. The participants in this research study had a wide range of education, training, licensure, and experience. It would be important to learn what the process would entail for strictly counseling professionals. Some of the participants were Art Therapists or Play Therapists, and Counselor Educators who were advanced in the field with Doctoral degrees. It would be advantageous to conduct research and learn about their specific development as Expressive Counselors.

It would be of interest to explore more areas where Expressive Counseling could be relevant in Counselor Education coursework. Research development could explore interest in coursework specifically tailored to teaching concepts of Expressive Counseling. The data resulting from research question 3, sub-question 2 focused on the multicultural and intersectional identity considerations of the counselor when developing relationships with clients. One theme focused on the client as expert of their personal culture and worldview. Developing an interest survey to learn if pairing expressive interventions with the concepts of cultural humility and intersectionality for a potential course may gauge viability amongst current counseling students.

This research also adds to a growing body of research focused on online or telehealth counseling. Present and future counseling students may benefit from training that focuses on online engagement training. Specifically, Expressive Counseling techniques and interventions can be adapted for online counseling, which would most likely be a niche area.

The results of this current research may interest counselor educators who engage LPCs who work in communities across the states, beyond the university setting, to better understand how practices, clients, and methods are changing to meet the changing needs of all. It is encouraged to partner with the professionals in the communities to continue to have their input in the development of standards of practice.

Summary

The overall goal of this study was to learn the perceptions of counselors in practice as it was seen in the research that their voices were fairly absent in the literature. The qualitative research topic of creativity in counseling literature was also a small part of the literature. This qualitative grounded theory research study attempted to fill a void covering both areas. In the review and analysis process of the findings, the term expressive became less limiting than the term creative. In the member-checking process, it was determined that Expressive Counseling was a better fit as the original definition used at the onset of this project didn't seem as inclusive for the data that was acquired for this research study. Expressive Counseling was defined by its specific orientation and methodology. Implications for counselor training and practice included the call for more communication amongst students with creative backgrounds, areas for training in expressive counseling methods, and training for online counseling or telehealth. Limitations were seen in the small sample size and missed opportunities in participant recruitment. Future research could expand on the topic of Expressive Counseling.

APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board

Date: August 16, 2023

Study #: IRB-FY2024-20

Study Title: Creativity in Counseling: The Creative Professional Counselors'

Perspective **Submission Type:** Initial - Revised Letter

IRB Decision: Exempt

Research Team:

Amy Kuzniar

Michael Chaney

Based on applicable federal regulations, the above referenced study has been determined to be Exempt, with the following categories:

Category 2(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

Notes for Researchers:

This submission includes the following approved documents:

- Recruitment/Advertisement
- Information Sheet
- Survey and Interview Questionnaires

Letter and Consent Document:

This letter along with the IRB approved (date-stamped) consent document can be found in Cayuse in the Submission Details page under Letters and Attachments, respectively. Please make sure to use the most recent IRB approved version of the consent form in consenting participants.

Permission from Research Sites:

Please note the following:

- This IRB exemption determination letter means that this research has met one or more of the federal criteria for exemption per 45 CFR 46.104- Exempt Research.
- Before the research is initiated, permission to conduct research at a given site must be obtained from all research locations listed in the IRB submission. You must keep copies of all such permission letters for your files.
- It is the responsibility of each researcher to follow all applicable policies and procedures of any outside institution where the research will be conducted.

Modifications:

Any changes to this exempt project must be reviewed by the IRB prior to initiation by submitting a MODIFICATION request. Do not collect data while the changes are being reviewed. Data collected during this time cannot be used in research.

Record Retention:

Exempt projects will be retained by the IRB office for three years after the last action on the project. You are approved to start the research. Please retain a copy of this notification for your records. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office.

Thank you.

The Oakland University IRB

APPENDIX B
CONSENT AND QUALIFYING QUESTIONNAIRE

Creativity in Counseling

Consent and Qualifying Questionnaire

Introduction: You are being asked to participate in a dissertation research study focusing on creativity in professional counseling practice. Amy Virginia Kuzniar, ATR-BC, SCL, LPC, Doctoral Candidate of the Oakland University Counseling Department is the Principal Investigator of this study. I am completing this study under the direction of Dr. Michael P. Chaney, Associate Professor, and my dissertation chair in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my doctoral degree.

Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary. You can choose to stop your participation at any time or skip any part of the study if you are not comfortable. Your decision will not affect your present or future relationship with Oakland University, the researcher, the counseling department, or any counseling organization you are affiliated with.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn directly from creative licensed professional counselors as to how they use creativity in their practice with clients on a regular basis. This study will provide answers about the development of their creative skills and the methods they utilize. Participants will be able to explain to what extent their creative methods integrate multicultural competence. They will also shed light on how they adapted creative practice during the global pandemic of Covid-19.

Who can participate in this study?

You are being asked to participate because you are a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) or the equivalent in their state. (Art Therapists (ATR-BC), Licensed School Counselors (SCL), or other allied fields can be included, but they must hold a current LPC or its equivalent in their state).

To participate in this study you must meet the criteria:

- You must identify as a professional counselor and align with the American Counseling Association (ACA) professional organization definition of counseling: A clinical relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. Professional counselors are similar to professionals working in allied mental health fields but are different because the clinical work to overcome obstacles and personal challenges that clients are facing are conducted with a mental health professional that works from within a lens of human growth and development (ACA, 2014; Gale, & Austin, 2003).
- You must also align with the definition of creative counseling for the purposes of this study: An approach in counseling where spontaneity and novelty beyond traditional talk therapy utilizes diverse media or activity that is useful, purposeful and adds a level of

meaningful processing of perspective, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by the client for greater self-awareness (Duffey et al., 2016; Gladding 2008, 2021; Gladding & Henderson, 2000).

- You include the use of a creative approach and incorporate interventions beyond traditional verbal therapy with individuals, families, couples, or groups, and creativity is part of your practice currently, and it is an approach you have developed over time.
- You must have attended and graduated from a CACREP-approved counseling program.
- You must be over 18.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to complete an online initial qualifying survey that will ask for demographic and professional information. The survey will be conducted online using Qualtrics and may take about 5 minutes to complete. If the inclusion criteria are met, you will be invited to discuss your practice methods online in an individual Zoom interview with me, Amy Virginia Kuzniar at a time and place of your choosing. The interview may take around an hour.

- The interview will be recorded through the Zoom platform to maintain accuracy of responses.
- The Zoom interview will also be audio recorded on a separate handheld recording device.
- The recordings will be cross-checked and transcribed.
- All participant information will be de-identified and will be given participant numbers. All data will be coded using the participant number.

Are there any risks to me?

Risks associated with participating in this research study are minimal. With many research studies, there is a risk that someone who is not part of this research may accidentally see your personal information. Safeguards will be in place to minimize this risk by keeping your research records as confidential as possible. When the results of this research are published or presented at conferences, no information will be included that personally identifies you. The Zoom recordings, audio recordings, and transcripts will be kept on a separate encrypted external drive in a locked cabinet in a private office. All recordings, transcriptions, and entire corresponding data reflective material will be destroyed after the analysis and responding written sections of my dissertation are finalized.

Are there any benefits to me?

There may not be a direct benefit to you. However, by participating in this research you will be part of establishing a professional counselor based theory of creativity in practice with clients that may inform future training of counselors who wish to use similar methods. Participation in this study will fill a void in the literature that engages creative LPC's to share your perceptions and experiences in a meaningful way.

Will I receive anything for participating?

There are no financial incentives for participation in this research study.

Who could see my information?

Your research records may be shared and reviewed by the following groups:

- Representatives of the Oakland University Institutional Review Board and/or other regulatory compliance staff, whose job is to protect people who are in research studies.
- Regulatory authorities who oversee research (Office for Human Research Protections, or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies) De-identified data may be used or distributed to another investigator for future research use without additional informed consent from you.

What if I want to stop participating in this study?

If you want to stop participating in the survey, close your browser before completing and submitting the survey. If you wish to stop participating in the interview, you can so indicate to the researcher. If you wish to stop participating in the study after you complete the survey and interview you should contact the researcher. The researcher may stop your participation in this study at any time without your consent. If the participation criteria are not met with fidelity, study participation could be stopped and participants will be notified by email that they can no longer participate in the study.

Who do I contact if I have questions about this study?

If you have any questions, you should contact the researcher, Amy Virginia Kuzniar, ATR-BC, SCL, LPC via phone (248)928-6496 or email avkuznia@oakland.edu. You may also contact Dr. Michael P. Chaney via phone (248) 370-3084 or email chaney@oakland.edu. For questions regarding your rights as a participant in human subject research, you may contact the Oakland University Institutional Review Board at (248) 370-4898.

Consent/Recording: By clicking the choices below, you agree to participate in this research. Please print a copy of this consent form for your information.

☐

I agree to be in this study (1)

☐

I agree to be recorded during the interview (2)

☐

I do not wish to be recorded during the interview (3)

Age What is your current age?

Gender How do you identify your gender?

Ethnicity Which race or ethnicity best describes you?

☐

Hispanic or Latino (1)

☐

American Indian or Alaska Native (2)

☐

Black or African American (3)

☐

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (4)

☐

White (5)

☐

Race/ethnicity unknown (6)

☐

Other (7) _____

Professional Info: What is your profession?

Q7 Do you work for a company/agency/institution, or are you self-employed? (Please explain)

Q8 Where did you study or train for your profession?

Q9 Name of degree(s) and completion year

Q10 Did you complete a degree in a CACREP accredited counseling program?

☐ No (1)

☐ Yes (2)

Q11 What was your counseling specialization?

Q12 What credentials/licenses do you hold?

Q13 Are your credentials/licenses current?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

☐ Other (3) _____

Q14 How long have you held your credentials/licenses?

Q15 Describe your professional identity

Q16 14. Does your professional counseling identity align with the following definition of counseling practice: A clinical relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. Professional counselors are similar to professionals working in allied mental health fields but are different because the clinical work to overcome obstacles and personal challenges that clients are facing are conducted with a mental health

professional that works from within a lens of human growth and development (ACA, 2014; Gale, & Austin, 2003).

☐

Yes (1)

☐

No (2)

☐

Other (explain) (3)

Q17 Does your creative approach in practice align with the following definition of the use of creativity in counseling?: An approach in counseling where spontaneity and novelty beyond traditional talk therapy utilizes diverse media or activity that is useful, purposeful and adds a level of meaningful processing of perspective, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by the client for greater self-awareness (Duffey et al., 2016; Gladding 2008, 2021; Gladding & Henderson, 2000).

☐

Yes (1)

☐

No (2)

☐

Other (explain) (3)

Q18 If you meet the criteria for this study, would you be willing to discuss further and provide your email to arrange a Zoom interview?

☐

Yes (1)

☐

No (2)

Q20 Please provide your name and best email so that I may contact you for the interview. Please indicate your best available day/time for scheduling if possible. Thank you in advance!

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

RESEARCH RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Greetings Creative Professional Counselors!

I am Amy Virginia Kuzniar, working under the direction of Dr. Michael P. Chaney, the faculty advisor for this research study in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree from Oakland University. I am conducting a research study to learn about creativity in professional counseling through the perceptions and lived experiences of licensed professional counselors who identify as creative counselors. I am requesting your participation if you fit the following criteria.

I am recruiting individuals who:

- Are a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) or the equivalent in their state. (ATR-BC, SCL, or other allied fields can be included, but they must hold a current LPC or its equivalent in their state).
- Professionally identifies as a professional counselor and aligns with the professional organizational definition of ACA.
- Identifies as a creative counselor and includes the use of a creative approach beyond traditional verbal therapy. Creativity is part of their practice currently and is a skilled approach they developed over time.
- Attended and graduated from a CACREP-approved counseling program.
- Must be over 18.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The research study will begin with participants taking a short online survey that will ask for demographic and professional information. Participants will be asked for contact information to schedule an interview on the topic that will take place online and in a Zoom session. The total involvement of participation could take approximately 1-hour maximum.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact me, Amy Virginia Kuzniar, ATR-BC, SCL, LPC via phone (248)928-6496 or email avkuznia@oakland.edu. You may also contact my dissertation faculty advisor, Dr. Michael P. Chaney, via phone (248) 370-3084 or email chaney@oakland.edu. If you wish to participate in this study, please click on the link below that leads to the qualifying survey and additional information about the study.

https://oakland.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/previewId/1b4b112e-8b9c-4ffd-947f-0c38dbe7b4d8/SV_37SeiffJDg2QKfi?Q_CHL=preview&Q_SurveyVersionID=current

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Questions	Interview Questions
R1) How do professional counselors define creativity?	R1A. Explain how you consider yourself a creative counselor?
R2) How do counselors describe their development as an identified creative counselor?	R2A. What kind of training in your CACREP program did you receive related to creativity in counseling?
R3) What types of creative techniques or interventions do professional counselors use that have been most engaging for clients?	R3A. How have your clients responded to the creative techniques you have used? R3B. How do your creative interventions take into consideration clients' multicultural and/or intersectional identities? R3C. How did you adapt or change your creative techniques, interventions, and practice in general during the global pandemic?

APPENDIX E
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Credentials	Years in Practice
P1	50	Female	White	LPC; Teaching Certificate; SCL	6
P2	60	Female	White	LPC; ATR-BC	8
P3	30	Female	White	LMHC	5
P4	43	Female	White	LPC; LPC-S; LPCC-S; ATR-BC; NCC; ATCS	18
P5	65	Female	Hispanic or Latino, White	LPC-S; RPT-S; CSC	22
P6	27	Female	White	LPC; RPT	5
P7	46	Female	White	ATR-BC; LPC; NCC; LCDC II	23
P8	42	Female	White	LPC; NCC	15
P9	33	Female	White	LMHC; LCPC	1
P10	43	Male	White	LPC; CHST	14
P11	42	Female	Black or African American, White	LPC	1
P12	55	Female	White	LCMHC; LCAS	5
P13	40	Female	American Indian or Alaska Native, White	LPC; NCC	3
P14	53	Female	White	LPC; ATR-BC	24
P15	33	Nonbinary	White	LPC; RPT; NCC	5
P16	37	Male	White	LPC; LBS; NCC	6
P17	43	Female	Black or African American	LPC; LPC-S; BC-TMH; RPT; NCC	15
P18	35	Female	White	LPC	7
P19	61	Female	White	LPC; NCC	6
P20	34	Female	Hispanic or Latino, White	LPCC; ATR-P; REAT	2
P21	48	Female	White	LCPC	14

REFERENCES

- Abbas, J., Wang, D., Su, Z., & Ziapour, A. (2021). The role of social media in the advent of COVID-19 pandemic: crisis management, mental health challenges and implications. *Risk management and healthcare policy*, 1917-1932.
- Ali, S., & Lee, C. C. (2019). Using creativity to explore intersectionality in counseling. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 14(4), 510-518.
- Al'Uqdah, S. N., Hamit, S., & Scott, S. (2019). African American Muslims: Intersectionality and cultural competence. *Counseling and Values*, 64(2), 130-147.
- American Art Therapy Association (AATA). (2024). <https://arttherapy.org/state-advocacy/>. Retrieved 6/11/24.
- American Counseling Association (ACA). (2014). Code of ethics and standards of practice. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- American Counseling Association (ACA). (2014). <https://www.counseling.org/aca-community/learn-about-counseling/what-is-counseling>. Retrieved 11/1/22.
- Amabile, T. M. (1996). Creativity in context: Update to the social psychology of creativity. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Amabile, T. M., & Pillemer, J. (2012). Perspectives on the social psychology of creativity. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 46(1), 3-15.
- Amundson, N. E. (1988). The use of metaphor and drawings in case conceptualization. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 66(8), 391-393.

- Anderson, B., Barstack, S., & Erford, B. T. (2021). A Meta study of Journal of Counseling & Development: An analysis of publication characteristics from 2000 to 2019. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 99(3), 263-272.
- Arnout, B. A., & Almoied, A. A. (2021). A structural model relating gratitude, resilience, psychological well-being and creativity among psychological counselors. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 21(2), 470-488.
- Association of Creativity in Counseling (ACC) (n.d). *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health: From the Editor*. <https://www.creativecounselor.org/journal>
- Atkins, S., Davis, K., & Atkins, L. (2011). Integrative theory in the expressive arts. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp.205-218). Springer Publishing Company.
- Baer, J. (1998). The case for domain specificity of creativity. *Creativity research journal*, 11(2), 173-177.
- Baer, J. (2012). Domain specificity and the limits of creativity theory. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 46(1), 16-29.
- Baer, J. (2016). *Domain specificity of creativity*. Academic Press.
- Barber, J. P., & Walczak, K. K. (2009, April). Conscience and critic: Peer debriefing strategies in grounded theory research. In *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA* (pp. 13-17).
- Beauregard, C. (2020). Being in between: Exploring cultural bereavement and identity expression through drawing. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 15(3), 292-310.

- Beghetto, R. A., & Kaufman, J. C. (2007). Toward a broader conception of creativity: A case for "mini-c" creativity. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 1(2), 73.
- Beghetto, R. A., & Kaufman, J. C. (2013). Fundamentals of creativity. *Educational Leadership*, 70(5), 10-15.
- Bell, C. A., Crabtree, S. A., Hall, E. L., & Sandage, S. J. (2021). Research in counseling and psychotherapy Post-COVID-19. *Counseling and psychotherapy research*, 21(1), 3-7.
- Bolton, C. A., Thompson, H., Spring, J. A., & Frick, M. H. (2021). Innovative play-based strategies for teletherapy. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 1-12.
- Borders, L. D., Welfare, L. E., Sackett, C. R., & Cashwell, C. (2017). New supervisors' struggles and successes with corrective feedback. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 56(3), 208-224.
- Boswell, J. F., Castonguay, L. G., & Pincus, A. L. (2009). Trainee theoretical orientation: Profiles and potential predictors. *Journal of Psychotherapy integration*, 19(3), 291.
- Boswell, J. N., Shoemaker, S., Barber, C. R., & Gibbons, A. (2021). A meta-study of Journal of Creativity in Mental Health (JCMH) from 2005 to 2017. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 1-15.
- Brown, D. B., Bravo, A. J., Roos, C. R., & Pearson, M. R. (2015). Five facets of mindfulness and psychological health: Evaluating a psychological model of the mechanisms of mindfulness. *Mindfulness*, 6, 1021-1032.

- Buzan, T. (2018). *Mind map mastery: The complete guide to learning and using the most powerful thinking tool in the universe*. Watkins Media Limited.
- Calley, N. G., & Hawley, L. D. (2008). The professional identity of counselor educators. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 27(1), 3-16.
- Carson, D. K., & Becker, K. W. (2004). When lightning strikes: Reexamining creativity in psychotherapy. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 82(1), 111-115.
- Cashwell, C. S. & McKibben, W. B. (2018). Personal and professional counselor identity development. In S. C. Nassar, & S. G. Niles (Eds.), *Orientation to professional counseling: Past, present, and future trends*; (pp. 341-359) Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Casado-Kehoe, M. & Ybanez, K. (2011). Clinical Supervision. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp.219- 253). Springer Publishing Company.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. (2nd Ed) London: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2017). The power of constructivist grounded theory for critical inquiry. *Qualitative inquiry*, 23(1), 34-45.
- Charmaz, K. (2020). “With constructivist grounded theory you can’t hide”: Social justice research and critical inquiry in the public sphere. *Qualitative inquiry*, 26(2), 165-176.

- Chan, C. D., Cor, D. N., & Band, M. P. (2018). Privilege and oppression in counselor education: An intersectionality framework. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 46(1), 58-73.
- Chun Tie, Y., Birks, M., & Francis, K. (2019). Grounded theory research: A design framework for novice researchers. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 7: 1-8.
- Conner, T. S., DeYoung, C. G., & Silvia, P. J. (2016). Everyday creative activity as a path to flourishing. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1-9.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (2024, 28 May). *2024 CACREP Guidance Document*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-CACREP-Standards-Guidance-Document-May-2024-update.pdf>
- Craft, M. A., Davis, G. C., & Paulson, R. M. (2013). Expressive writing in early breast cancer survivors. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 69(2), 305-315.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *u. Chi. Legal f.*, 139.
- Creswell, J. W (2013) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (3rd Ed) Sage Publications.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. Harper Perennial: New York.

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). Flow and creativity. *North American Montessori Teachers' Association (NAMTA) Journal*, 22(2), 60-97.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). 16 implications of a systems perspective for the study of creativity. In *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 313-335). Cambridge University Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2014). Society, culture, and person: A systems view of creativity. In *The Systems Model of Creativity* (pp. 47-61). Netherlands: Springer.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Sawyer, K. (2014). Shifting the focus from individual to organizational creativity. In *The Systems Model of Creativity* (pp. 67-71). Springer Netherlands.
- Danso, R. (2018). Cultural competence and cultural humility: A critical reflection on key cultural diversity concepts. *Journal of Social Work*, 18(4), 410-430.
- Davis, K. M. (2008). Teaching a course in creative approaches in counseling with children and adolescents. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 3(3), 220-232.
- Deaver, S. & Shiflett, C. (2011). Art-based supervision techniques. *The Clinical Supervisor*. 30:2, 257-276.
- Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. Springer Publishing Company.
- Duffey, T. (2007). Promoting relational competencies in counselor education through creativity and relational-cultural theory. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 2(1), 47-59.
- Duffey, T., Haberstroh, S. & Trepal, H. (2009). A grounded theory of relational competencies and creativity in counseling: Beginning the dialogue. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 4(2). 89-112.

- Duffey, T., Haberstroh, S., & Trepal, H. (2016). Creative Approaches In Counseling and Psychotherapy. *Counseling and psychotherapy: Theories and interventions*, 445.
- Duffey, T., & Kerl-McClain, S. (2008). History of the Association for Creativity in Counseling: The evolution of a conference, division, and journal. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 2(3), 61-70.
- Dumas D., & Dunbar, KN (2016). The Creative Stereotype Effect. *PLoS ONE*, 11(2): 1-13.
- Eberle, R. F. (1972). Developing imagination through scamper. *Journal of Creative Behavior*.
- Emerson, L. M., De Diaz, N. N., Sherwood, A., Waters, A., & Farrell, L. (2020). Mindfulness interventions in schools: Integrity and feasibility of implementation. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 44(1), 62-75.
- Esman, A. H. (2006). Psychoanalysis and the art of the mentally ill. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 54(2), 645-655.
- Feen-Calligan, H. R. (2012). Professional identity perceptions of dual-prepared Art Therapy graduates. *Art Therapy*, 29(4), 150-157.
- Feijt, M., De Kort, Y., Bongers, I., Bierbooms, J., Westerink, J., & Ijsselsteijn, W. (2020). Mental health care goes online: Practitioners' experiences of providing mental health care during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 23(12), 860-864.
- Flett, J. A. M., Lie, C., Riordan, B. C., Thompson, L. M., Conner, T. S., & Hayne, H. (2017). Sharpen your pencils: Preliminary evidence that adult coloring reduces depressive symptoms and anxiety. *Creativity Research Journal*, 29(4), 409-416.

- Foley, G., Timonen, V., Conlon, C., & O'Dare, C. E. (2021). Interviewing as a vehicle for theoretical sampling in grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, 1-10
- Freud, S. (1923). Remarks on the Theory and Practice of Dream Interpretation. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIX (1923-1925): The Ego and the Id and Other Works, 107-122.
- Gale, A. U., & Austin, B. D. (2003). Professionalism's challenges to professional counselors' collective identity. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 81(1), 3-10.
- Gillen, M. (2011). Solution focused therapy. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp. 29-44). Springer Publishing Company.
- Gladding, S. T. (1992). *Counseling as an Art: The Creative Arts in Counseling*. (3rd ed.). American Counseling Association. Alexandria, VA.
- Gladding, S. T. (2008). The impact of creativity in counseling. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 3, 97–104.
- Gladding, S. T. (2021). *The Creative Arts in Counseling*. (6th ed.). American Counseling Association. Alexandria, VA.
- Gladding, S. T., & Henderson, D. A. (2000). Creativity and family counseling: The SCAMPER model as a template for promoting creative processes. *The Family Journal*, 8(3), 245-249.
- Graham, M. & Pehrsson, D. (2011); Adlerian theory. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice:*

- Theory-based Interventions*. (pp.7-27). Springer Publishing Company.
- Graham, M. A., Scholl, M. B., Smith-Adcock, S., & Wittmann, E. (2014). Three creative approaches to counseling supervision. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 9(3), 415-426.
- Griffith, B. A., & Frieden, G. (2000). Facilitating reflective thinking in counselor education. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 40(2), 82-93.
- Gruber, H. E., & Wallace, D. B. (2001). Creative work: The case of Charles Darwin. *American Psychologist*, 56(4), 346.
- Guiffrida, D. A., Jordan, R., Saiz, S., & Barnes, K. L. (2007). The use of metaphor in clinical supervision. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 85(4), 393-400.
- Haugen, J. S., Neverve, C., & Waalkes, P. L. (2019). Advocacy in action: The use of photovoice in school counseling. *Professional School Counseling*, 23(1), 2156759X19885888.
- Hays, D.G. and McKibben, W.B. (2021), Promoting Rigorous Research: Generalizability and Qualitative Research. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 99: 178-188.
- Hennessey, B. A., & Amabile, T. M. (1988). The conditions of creativity. In Sternberg, R. J. (Ed.). *The nature of creativity: Contemporary psychological perspectives*. (pp. 11-38). Cambridge University Press.
- Heppner, M. J., O'Brien, K. M., Hinkelman, J. M., & Humphrey, C. F. (1994). Shifting the paradigm: The use of creativity in career counseling. *Journal of Career Development*, 21(2), 77-86.

- Hinkle, M. S., Radomski, J. G., & Decker, K. M. (2015). Creative experiential interventions to heighten emotion and process in emotionally focused couples therapy. *The Family Journal*, 23(3), 239-246.
- Hinkle, M. S., & Dean, L. M. (2017). Creativity in teaching case conceptualization skills: Role-play to show the interconnectedness of domains. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 12(3), 388-401.
- Ishiyama, F. I. (1988). A model of visual case processing using metaphors and drawings. *Counselor Education and Supervision* 28(2), 153-161.
- Jensen-Johansen, M. B., Christensen, S., Valdimarsdottir, H., Zakowski, S., Jensen, A. B., Bovbjerg, D. H., & Zachariae, R. (2013). Effects of an expressive writing intervention on cancer-related distress in Danish breast cancer survivors—Results from a nationwide randomized clinical trial. *Psycho-Oncology*, 22(7), 1492-1500.
- Johnson, A., West, C., Erford, B. T., & Karkhanis, S. (2022). A meta-study of Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation (CORE): An analysis of publication characteristics from 2010–2019. *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, 13(2), 134-144.
- Jordan, J. V. (2001). A relational-cultural model: Healing through mutual empathy. *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 65(1: Special issue), 92.
- Jung, C. G. (1957). *The undiscovered self: With symbols and the interpretation of dreams*. RFC Hull, (Translated). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kampylis, P. G., & Valtanen, J. (2010). Redefining creativity- analyzing definitions, collocations, and consequences. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 44(3), 191-214.

- Kaplan, D. M., & Gladding, S. T. (2011). A vision for the future of counseling: The 20/20 principles for unifying and strengthening the profession. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89*(3), 367-372.
- Kaplan, D. M., Tarvydas, V. M., & Gladding, S. T. (2014). 20/20: A vision for the future of counseling: The new consensus definition of counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 92*(3), 366-372.
- Kaufman, J. C., & Beghetto, R. A. (2009). Beyond big and little: The four c model of creativity. *Review of general psychology, 13*(1), 1.
- Kaufman, J. C., & Beghetto, R. A. (2013). In praise of Clark Kent: Creative metacognition and the importance of teaching kids when (not) to be creative. *Roeper Review, 35*(3), 155-165.
- Kaufman, J. C., & Beghetto, R. A. (2013). Do people recognize the four Cs? Examining layperson conceptions of creativity. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 7*(3), 229.
- Kaufman, J. C., Beghetto, R. A., & Watson, C. (2016). Creative metacognition and self-ratings of creative performance: A 4-C perspective. *Learning and Individual Differences, 51*, 394-399.
- Kaufman, J. C., & Sternberg, R. J. (2007). Resource review: creativity. *Change, 39*(4), 55-58.
- Kerr, B., & Gagliardi, C. (2019). Measuring creativity in research and practice. *Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures, Second Edition*, M. W. Gallagher and S. J. Lopez (Eds). (p. 125-138). American Psychological Association.

- Kriegel, L. S., Bernard, P., Fraser, E. R., Maclean, K., Noonan, C., Crespo, M., & Bellamy, C. D. (2022). Public spaces as transformative creative wellness spaces: an evaluation of Musical Intervention. *Social Work in Mental Health*, 20(1), 6-25.
- Kramer, E. (1986). The art therapist's third hand: Reflections on art, Art Therapy, and society at large. *American Journal of Art Therapy*.
- Krause-Parello, C. A., Gulick, E. E., & Basin, B. (2019). Loneliness, depression, and physical activity in older adults: The therapeutic role of human–animal interactions. *Anthrozoös*, 32(2), 239-254.
- Lampropoulos, G. K., & Dixon, D. N. (2007). Psychotherapy integration in internships and counseling psychology doctoral programs. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 17(2), 185.
- Lawrence, C., Foster, V., & Tieso, C. (2015). Creating creative clinicians: Incorporating creativity into counselor education. *Journal of creativity in mental health*, 10(2), 166- 180.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New directions for program evaluation*, 1986(30), 73-84.
- Lindsey, L., Robertson, P., & Lindsey, B. (2018). Expressive arts and mindfulness: Aiding adolescents in understanding and managing their stress. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 13(3), 288-297.
- Luke, M. (2011). Person-centered therapy. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp. 157-182). Springer Publishing Company.

- MacKinnon, D. W. (1962). The nature and nurture of creative talent. *American psychologist*, 17(7), 484.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (Ed.). (2012). *Handbook of Art Therapy*. Guilford Press.
- Mannion, M. (2011). Existential theory. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp. 87-106). Springer Publishing Company.
- May, R. (1975). Values, myths, and symbols. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*.
- Mayton, H. N., & Wester, K. (2019). Understanding the experiences of survivors of a loss by suicide: A photovoice study. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 14(1), 10-22.
- McCarthy, J. (2018). Do creative thinking and creative problem-solving have a place in counseling curricula? *Journal of creativity in mental health*, 13(3), 306-317.
- McCormick, R., Rosenblad, S. R., & Newmeyer, M. (2021). Untapped Therapeutic Potential: Using Sandtray in Substance Abuse Treatment Groups. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 16(4), 522-536.
- McKim, C. (2023). Meaningful member-checking: a structured approach to member-checking. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 7(2), 41-52.
- Mellin, E. A., Hunt, B., & Nichols, L. M. (2011). Counselor professional identity: Findings and implications for counseling and interprofessional collaboration. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 89(2), 140-147.
- Meyer, D. (2011). Cognitive-behavioral theory. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp.45-63). Springer Publishing Company.

- Miller, J. B. (1986). (2nd ed). *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. Beacon Press.
Boston, MA.
- Mistler, B. (2011); Gestalt theory. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.).
(2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp. 133-155). Springer Publishing Company.
- Moula, Z., Powell, J., & Karkou, V. (2020). An investigation of the effectiveness of arts therapies interventions on measures of quality of life and wellbeing: A pilot randomized controlled study in primary schools. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 3591.
- Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist review*, 89(1), 1-15.
- National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations, Inc. (NCCATA), (2023, 26 August). *Creative Arts Therapies Training and Certification Requirements Overview 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.nccata.org/nccatafaq>
- Newsome, D. W., Henderson, D. A., & Veatch, L. J. (2005). Using expressive arts in group supervision to enhance awareness and foster cohesion. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 44(2), 145-157.
- Neufeldt, S. A. (2007). *Supervision strategies for the first practicum*. American Counseling Association.
- Nichols, L. (2015). The use of mind-body practices in counseling: A grounded theory study. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 37(1), 28-46.
- Niu, W., & Sternberg, R. J. (2006). The philosophical roots of Western and Eastern conceptions of creativity. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 26(1-2), 18.

- Patrick, S. (2011). Narrative approaches. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp. 183-203). Springer Publishing Company.
- Patrick, S. (2020). Mistakes as pathways towards creativity in counseling: A case example. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 15(1), 128-138.
- Pillay, Y., Lu, H. T., & Funk, L. (2020). Introducing mind mapping as a creative counseling modality. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 15(4), 474-481.
- Plucker, J. A. (1998). Beware of simple conclusions: The case for content generality of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, 11(2), 179-182.
- Plucker, J. A., Beghetto, R. A., & Dow, G. T. (2004). Why isn't creativity more important to educational psychologists? Potentials, pitfalls, and future directions in creativity research. *Educational psychologist*, 39(2), 83-96.
- Plucker, J. A., & Makel, M. C. (2010). Assessment of creativity. In J. C. Kaufman & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of creativity* (pp. 48–73). Cambridge University Press.
- Portrie-Bethke, T. (2011). Choice Theory. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp. 65-86). Springer Publishing Company.
- Prasath, P. R., Chandrika Prasanna Kumaran, A., Spears, J. R., & Jackson, K. (2021). Creativity in the Classroom: A Content Analysis of the Journal of Creativity in Mental Health from 2005 to 2020. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 1-22.
- Prinzhorn, H. (1972). *Artistry of the mentally ill: a contribution to the psychology and psychopathology of configuration*. Springer Science & Business Media.

- Rafaely, M., & Goldberg, R. M. (2020). Grief snow globe: a creative approach to restorying grief and loss through narrative therapy. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 15*(4), 482-493.
- Ramsey-Wade, C. E., Williamson, H., & Meyrick, J. (2021). Therapeutic writing for disordered eating: A systematic review. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 16*(1), 59-76.
- Ratts, M. J., Singh, A. A., Nassar-McMillan, S., Butler, S. K., & McCullough, J. R. (2016). Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies: Guidelines for the counseling profession. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 44*(1), 28-48.
- Reilly, B. (2016). Mindfulness infusion through CACREP standards. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 11*(2), 213-224.
- Reyes, A. G., Lindo, N. A., Allen, N., & Rodríguez Delgado, M. (2022). Centralizing the voices of queer womxn of color in counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 100*(2), 171-182.
- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy* (p. 0). London: Constable.
- Rouse, A., Armstrong, J., & McLeod, J. (2015). Enabling connections: Counsellor creativity and therapeutic practice. *Counseling and Psychotherapy Research, 15*(3), 171-179.
- Runco, M. A., & Sakamoto, S. O. (1999). Experimental studies of creativity. *Handbook of creativity, 4*, 62-84.

- Runco, M. A. (2004). Everyone has creative potential. In Sternberg, R. J., Grigorenko, E. L., & Singer, J. L. (Eds.). *Creativity: From potential to realization*. (pp.21-30). American Psychological Association.
- Sackett, C. R., & Dogan, J. N. (2019). An Exploration of Black Teens' Experiences of Their Own Racial Identity Through Photovoice: Implications for Counselors. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 47(3), 172-189.
- Sackett, C. R., & Jenkins, A. M. (2015). Photovoice: Fulfilling the call for advocacy in the counseling field. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 10(3), 376-385.
- Sackett, C. R., Newhart, S., Jenkins, A. M., & Cory, L. (2018). Girls' perspectives of barriers to outdoor physical activity through photovoice: a call for counselor advocacy. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 13(1), 2-18.
- Sackett, C. R., Rapa, L. J., & De Alba, R. E. (2022). An exploration of teens' perspectives of poverty through photovoice: Implications for counselors. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*.
- Sancho, M., De Gracia, M., Rodriguez, R. C., Mallorquí-Bagué, N., Sánchez-González, J., Trujols, J., & Menchón, J. M. (2018). Mindfulness-based interventions for the treatment of substance and behavioral addictions: a systematic review. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 95.
- Sawyer, R. K. (2012). *Explaining creativity: The science of human innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schank, R. C., & Childers, P. G. (1988). *The creative attitude*. New York: Scribner.

- Scott, K. W. (2004). Relating categories in grounded theory analysis: Using a conditional relationship guide and reflective coding matrix. *The qualitative report*, 9(1), 113-126.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Shannon, J. (2020). Using moonlight to explore intersectionality in counselor education. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 15(4), 535-545.
- Shepard, B. C., & Guenette, F. L. (2010). Magazine picture collage in group supervision *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 44(3).
- Shiflett, C. L., & Remley JR, T. P. (2014). Incorporating case conceptualization drawing in counselor group supervision: A grounded theory study. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 9(1), 33-52.
- Shklarski, L., Abrams, A., & Bakst, E. (2021). Navigating changes in the physical and psychological spaces of psychotherapists during Covid-19: When home becomes the office. *Practice Innovations*, 6(1), 55.
- Simonton, D. K. (2000). Creativity: Cognitive, personal, developmental, and social aspects. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 151.
- Simonton, D. K. (2012). Taking the US Patent Office criteria seriously: A quantitative three-criterion creativity definition and its implications. *Creativity research journal*, 24(2-3), 97-106.
- Smith, A. L. (2011). Teaching a course on creativity in counseling: Ideas for counselor educators. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 6(2), 149-165.

- Spall, S. (1998). Peer debriefing in qualitative research: Emerging operational models. *Qualitative inquiry*, 4(2), 280-292.
- Stern, D. B. (2003). *Unformulated experience: From dissociation to imagination in psychoanalysis*. Routledge: New York.
- Sternberg, R. J. (Ed.). (1999). *Handbook of creativity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Lubart, T. I. (1996). Investing in creativity. *American psychologist*, 51(7), 677.
- Stickl Haugen, J., Waalkes, P. L., & Nerverve, C. (2021). Seeing the Other Side: Empowering the Voices of Latinx Middle School Students. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, 7(2), 100-117.
- Stone, D., & Amundson, N. (1989). Counselor supervision: An exploratory study of the metaphoric case drawing method of case presentation in a clinical setting. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 23(4).
- Thornberg, R. (2017). Grounded theory. *The BERA/SAGE handbook of educational research*, 1, 355-375.
- Trepal & Duffey, (2011). Feminist Theory. In Degges-White, S. & Davis, N. L., (Eds.). (2011). *Integrating the Expressive Arts Into Counseling Practice: Theory-based Interventions*. (pp. 107-132) Springer Publishing Company.
- Volavková, H. (Ed.). (1993). *I never saw another butterfly*. Schocken Books Incorporated.
- Walia, C. (2019). A dynamic definition of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, 31(3), 237-247.

- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387.
- Ward, C. C., & House, R. M. (1998). Counseling supervision: A reflective model. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 38(1), 23-33.
- Wells, P. C., & Dickens, K. N. (2020). Creativity in counselor education: More than case studies. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 42(2), 191-199.
- Williams, J. M., Byrd, J., Smith, C. D., & Dean, A. (2020). Photovoice as an innovative approach to group work with black youth in school settings. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 45(3), 213-225.
- Wood, L. L., McAndrew, L., & Frydman, J. S. (2021). Will to Meaning: A Pilot Study on Teaching Existential Theory through Creative Techniques. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 14(4), 6.
- Xiong, J., Lipsitz, O., Nasri, F., Lui, L. M., Gill, H., Phan, L., & McIntyre, R. S. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: A systematic review. *Journal of affective disorders*, 277, 55-64.
- Young, J. S., & Borders, L. D. (1999). The intentional use of metaphor in counseling supervision. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 18(1), 137-149.
- Zhang, X., Milowsky, A., Chang, C. Y., & Erford, B. T. (2023). A Meta-Study of the Journal of Creativity in Mental Health (JCMH): An Analysis of Publication Characteristics, 2005-2019. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 1-12.

- Ziff, K. K., & Beamish, P. M. (2004). Teaching a course on the arts and counseling: Experiential learning in counselor education. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 44*(2), 147-159.
- Zhu, P., Luke, M. M., Liu, Y., & Wang, Q. (2023). Cultural humility and cultural competence in counseling: An exploratory mixed methods investigation. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 101*(3), 264-276.