Dissertations   Graduate College

4-2009

Counselor Trainees' Perceptions of Their Personal Growth: A Qualitative Inquiry

Ericka L. Souders
Western Michigan University

Recommended Citation

COUNSELOR TRAINEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PERSONAL GROWTH:
A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

by

Ericka L. Souders

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology
Advisor: Suzanne Hedstrom, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 2009

UMI Number: 3354081

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI®

This poem is about finding oneself, of rebirth. It is my story. It is these participants' stories. It is anyone's story who has ventured into the unknown and who allowed themselves to be changed.

Diving into the Wreck

by Adrienne Rich

First having read the book of myths,
and loaded the camera,
and checked the edge of the knife-blade,
I put on
the body-armor of black rubber
the absurd flippers
the grave and awkward mask.
I am having to do this
not like Cousteau with his
assiduous team
aboard the sun-flooded schooner
but here alone.

There is a ladder.
The ladder is always there
hanging innocently
close to the side of the schooner.
We know what it is for,
we who have used it.
Otherwise
it is a piece of maritime floss
some sundry equipment.

I go down.
Rung after rung and still
the oxygen immerses me
the blue light
the clear atoms
of our human air.
I go down.
My flippers cripple me,
I crawl like an insect down the ladder
and there is no one
to tell me when the ocean
will begin.

First the air is blue and then
it is bluer and then green and then
black I am blacking out and yet
my mask is powerful
it pumps my blood with power
the sea is another story
the sea is not a question of power
I have to learn alone
to turn my body without force
in the deep element.

And now: it is easy to forget
what I came for
among so many who have always
lived here
swaying their crenellated fans
between the reefs
and besides
you breathe differently down here.

I came to explore the wreck.
The words are purposes.
The words are maps.
I came to see the damage that was done
and the treasures that prevail.
I stroke the beam of my lamp
slowly along the flank
of something more permanent
than fish or weed

the thing I came for:
the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth
the drowned face always staring
toward the sun
the evidence of damage
worn by salt and away into this threadbare beauty
the ribs of the disaster
curving their assertion
among the tentative haunters.

This is the place.
And I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair
streams black, the merman in his armored body
We circle silently
about the wreck
we dive into the hold.
I am she: I am he

whose drowned face sleeps with open eyes
whose breasts still bear the stress
whose silver, copper, vermeil cargo lies
obscurely inside barrels
half-wedged and left to rot
we are the half-destroyed instruments
that once held to a course
the water-eaten log
the fouled compass

We are, I am, you are
by cowardice or courage
the one who find our way
back to this scene
carrying a knife, a camera
a book of myths
in which
our names do not appear.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Borrowing from Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's concept of it "taking a village" to educate children, I have discovered that it also takes a community of people for anyone to earn a Ph.D. I have maintained this throughout the process and am eternally grateful for those who have inspired, encouraged, and (at times) pushed me along. Below are their well earned acknowledgments.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee members, Drs. Suzanne Hedstrom, Stephen Craig, and Lynn Brice. I extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Suzanne Hedstrom, my dissertation chair, for her competence and professionalism in leading me through my doctoral training. We began our work together my first semester as her graduate assistant that led to numerous research, writing, and teaching opportunities. Her gentle and steady guidance allowed me to balance my needs as an individual and student. She embodies the leadership that progresses our profession forward while also honoring our humanity.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Stephen Craig, whom I also worked with as a graduate assistant early in my training. His wisdom, insight, and encouragement assisted my transition into the rigor of doctoral training. He provided valuable contributions and expertise during my dissertation process. I'm also grateful to Dr. Lynn Brice for her willingness to provide qualitative research expertise from the inception of this research topic that originated in her course four years ago. I appreciate her commitment to me and

Acknowledgments—Continued

offer support, and employ accountability has sustained me this last year. I offer my deep

gratitude to each of you.

I also thank my dear, close friends, Dr. Lissa Perkins, Kylie Schultz, Natalie

Hosfeld, Charlene Brown, Jessi Manning, Tammy Heath, Zoe King, Heather Trefry,

Jacylyn Klann, and Ben Thompson, who offered their listening ears, senses of humor, and

unwavering belief in me. I'm still wondering how I've become so fortunate to have the

best of friends.

I'm grateful to Jason for his unconditional support and encouragement early in my

program. His patience, understanding, and sense of humor provided a foundation of

security and stability during the early years of my doctoral training. I am also grateful to

my extended family for their unwavering support and encouragement. I would also like to

thank my sister, Aimee, who has unconditionally supported my educational endeavors

over the years. I thank her for believing in me as a practitioner, educator, and scholar, but

most of all, I appreciate her unwavering pride in me, especially during moments of

weariness and discouragement.

I acknowledge my parents, Gary and Joan Souders, for their commitment to me,

spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and financially, on this journey. I'm grateful to my

mother who told me early on that she'd love me regardless of whether or not I earned a

Ph.D. She reminded me of this during periods of doubt and exhaustion. She continually

communicated in her words and actions that her love for me was not contingent on my

accomplishments. I'm also grateful to my father for continually reminding me of his pride

Acknowledgments—Continued

in me. His emotional availability during the final months of my dissertation was

especially meaningful. I share this accomplishment with them.

I have managed to acquire a considerable number of village people who have each

uniquely contributed to this project and to me as an individual and scholar. I am even

more fortunate that they all emanate greatness. My cup overflows.

Ericka L. Souders

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents—Continued

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Counselor development is a dominant theme in professional literature as counselor educators seek to provide the most effective training (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Neukrug, Lovell, & Parker, 1996; Spruill & Benshoff, 2000; Torres-Rivera, Phan, Maddux, Wilber, & Garret, 2001). Counselor educators have studied specific aspects of counselor development that have been found to be important characteristics of effective counselors. For example, Fong and Borders (1997), Granello (2000), and Brendel, Kolbert, and Foster (2002), among others, have studied the cognitive development of counseling students. Likewise, counselor development of multicultural competencies (Panici, 2002; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994) and in clinical supervision (Goodyear & Bernard, 1998; Sumerel & Borders, 1996) have been areas of focus in the literature. Another area in the counseling literature is the personal development of counselors (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Donati & Watts, 2000; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Wheeler, Goldie, & Hicks, 1998). In fact, training methods for facilitating personal development of counselors have received considerable attention in the literature.

Researchers have examined methods for facilitating the personal development of counselor trainees to help them cope with stressors of the profession and addressing their

own personal needs. This is especially important as research has indicated that depression, anxiety, and relationship problems of helping professionals are experienced at higher rates than the average population (Deutsch, 1985; Looney, Harding, Blotcky, & Barnhart, 1980; Maeder, 1989; Thoreson, Budd, & Krauskop, as cited in D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992). This suggests that counselor educators may need to focus more attention on the personal development of counselor trainees. In fact, the American Counseling Association (ACA) Codes of Ethics states: "counselors practice in a nondiscriminatory manner within the boundaries of professional and personal competence" (ACA, 2005, C), while the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) requires that counselors must perform competently (i.e., academically and personally) (CACREP, 2001). However, literature in the areas of counselor impairment and retention suggests that counselor educators are challenged by students with academic or personal limitations (Carroll, Gilroy, & Murra, 2003; Eichenfeld & Stoltenberg, 1996; Forrest, Elman, Gizara, & Vacha-Haase, 1999; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Jordan, 2002; Muratori, 2001; Woodyard, 1997). Counselor educators are challenged by students who exhibit behavioral misconduct regarding professional ethics (e.g., breeching of confidentiality, dismissing professional boundaries, engaging in plagiarism, misrepresentation of credentials) and/or interpersonal deficiencies (e.g., inability to form relationships, pronounced personality disorders). Counseling faculty are faced with impaired students at an annual rate ranging from 4.2% to 4.8% (Forrest et al., 1999). Although counselor educators have theoretical and training models to facilitate trainees in their personal development (Furr & Carroll, 2003; O'Leary, Crowley, & Keane, 1994), there is little information about this process from the perspective of counselor trainees.

Researchers have suggested that counselor educators would benefit from asking counselor trainees about their personal and professional development to facilitate effective training methods (Furr & Carroll, 2003).

Further research is needed to explore the influence of personal problems on counselor development and to examine methods to foster their personal development (Donati & Watts, 2000; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris, Linville, & Rosen, 2006). Current models that address counselor development (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth, 1998) do not include counselor trainees' perspectives about their personal development nor any training methods or personal practices that facilitated their personal growth. Counselor educators would benefit from knowing more about students' personal and professional development (Goodyear & Bernard, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

The literature exploring personal development of counselor trainees is limited in breadth and depth. Most of these studies are quantitative, linear, and conducted using techniques that focus on external, observable factors (e.g., student behavior and performance). Most of the qualitative literature that exists is limited to a specific construct (e.g., multicultural competency, cognition, self-awareness) and does not provide comprehensive information about counselor personal development. In addition, few of the aforementioned quantitative and qualitative studies explore personal development from the perspective of the counselor trainee, thus limiting the specific information that could provide insight to the developmental process, personal resources, and training

methods that could more effectively or differently facilitate counselor intra- and interpersonal maturity.

Counselor educators may benefit from understanding trainees experiences of growth and change by hearing more about the personal experiences, challenges, and/or successes that trainees found significant to their development. Counselor educators are lacking information from counselor trainees that may provide insight about training methods, including counselor impairment considerations that address personal development. In fact, Donati and Watts (2000) stated that in order to create the best opportunities for counselor trainees to enhance their personal development, counselor trainers must first "gain a more intimate and realistic understanding of the way different kinds of personal development work are actually experienced by individual trainees" (p. 16). Although the authors of one study (Furr & Carroll, 2003) attempted to gather such information qualitatively through studying critical incidents in counselor development, the methodology was questionable because data were collected through written format and were not actual interviews, thus lending limited results. The purpose of the present study was to gain understanding about counselor trainees' lived experiences of the following from the perspective of counselor trainees: (a) What are the experiences of personal development of counselor trainees?; (b) What are the differences and/or similarities between counselor trainees' personal and professional development?

Importance of the Problem

Gaining understanding of counselor trainees' personal development has potentially expansive implications for training. It is hoped that this study will provide

educators of helping professionals with a rich, meaningful understanding of counselor trainees' experiences in (and out of) training that contribute to their personal development. Counselor educators may gain a unique perspective regarding personal development in counselor training which they may use to influence their training methods and relationships with students. Also, this study will contribute to the existing literature about the personal development of counselor trainees and may reemphasize the importance of this aspect of counselor training. Furthermore, this study has the potential of contributing to literature on impaired trainees by providing contextual information and possible solutions for addressing student needs.

Research Questions

This study explored the lived experience of counselor trainees' that have promoted their personal development while in training. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How is personal growth and development of counselor trainees experienced while in training?

2. How is personal growth and development of counselor trainees facilitated while in training?

3. In what ways are counselor trainees' professional development related to and influenced by their personal growth and development?

4. Are counselor trainees mentored or guided in their personal growth and development while in professional training?

5. What activities do counselor trainees participate in outside of training that promote personal growth and development (e.g. church/religious activities, personal counseling, and community involvement), and how do these activities promote their personal development?

Definition of Terms

The field of counseling has struggled to distinguish between the meaning of *personal growth* and *personal development* (Irving & Williams, 1999). *Personal growth* refers to a general process of revealing one's "real self" (Rowan, 1997). Rather than acquiring a specific trait, personal growth occurs when the totality of the individual progresses toward his or her potential. Personal growth is interchangeable in the counseling literature with Rogers' concept of self-actualization, or "movement toward the realization of an individual's full potential" (Raskin & Rogers, 1980, p. 133). Growth infers a positive change, whereas personal development can be either negative or positive (Irving & Williams, 1999). *Personal development* is the process of acquiring a personal trait or quality (e.g., self-awareness, other-awareness, empathy); it can be developed through various methods (e.g., small group activity, journal writing). Personal development can be planned, goal-directed and structured to facilitate the acquisition of a particular trait. The researcher is interested in both the personal growth and development of counselor trainees and will include trainees' experiences of either in this study. However, the terms *development* and *growth* will be used separately or together for the ease of reading.

Professional development is the process of acquiring knowledge and skills (e.g., employing counseling techniques, understanding ethical and legal guidelines); it can be developed through various training methods (e.g., coursework, internship). The acquisition of counselor professional development is a process that is often parallel and interchangeable with their personal development as many of the skills associated with effective counseling (e.g., empathy, self-awareness, critical thinking) are also personal characteristics. This study will explore, in depth, the personal growth and development of counselors; however, in so doing, important information about professional development will also be revealed.

A *counselor trainee* is a student in a master's degree counseling program. An impaired counselor trainee is a student who may have a wide range of problems, including "substance abuse, pronounced personality disorders, prejudicial attitudes and values . . . and interpersonal insensitivity" (Bemak, Epp, & Keys, 1999, p. 21). Generally, impaired counselor trainees are those who are unable to insightfully understand and address their own personal issues, which may interfere with the therapeutic process.

Role of the Researcher

In pursuit of the qualitative tradition of phenomenology, the role of the researcher is an important aspect of the research. A qualitative researcher uses his or herself to observe, experience, and engage with research participants to gather information; this process inevitably influences the research. In fact, researchers have "subtexts," or concealed references, that "position" the material within a historical or specific time (Creswell, 1998, p. 172). In qualitative inquiry, the researcher exposes his or her biases,

values, and context that influence the final research narrative through epilogues, interpretive commentaries, or by including the role of the researcher (Creswell, 1998; Richards & Richards, 1994).

I am a 29-year-old Caucasian, divorced, able-bodied female from a middle-class background. My parents served 30 years as Protestant ministers, including work with lower income and minority groups. My experiences as a daughter of ministers explicitly and implicitly reinforced my belief in the importance of service to others. It was through my training in counselor education that I learned the importance of balancing service with self-care.

My undergraduate major in Applied Psychology on the Pre-Counseling Track had a strong emphasis that counseling students develop both professional skills and personal awareness. Counseling skills training was facilitated using a fishbowl method where students were observed practicing counseling through a one-way mirror. When counselor trainee personal issues arose in the process, the professor paused to facilitate understanding, for the student and the class, of how the personal and professional influence the counseling process. At the end of the class, students had the opportunity to provide feedback to the professor and the class in written and verbal form; the class as a whole discussed their reflections on their experiences. As a student and later a teacher's assistant, I found that students experienced increased self- and other-awareness, including me. Furthermore, I have continually participated in personal counseling as a means to manage my biases and issues that can potentially interfere with or enhance the counseling process.

On a more personal note, the topic of personal development, specifically the challenges that might hinder and/or enhance it, has been noteworthy in these final years of my doctoral studies. I have received much counsel and mentorship from family, friends, and my church these past two years as my marriage was ending. My former husband and I were married 10 months into my doctoral studies and divorced three years and three months later. There is much to say about the journey of our relationship and the ending of it; however, I will not delve into the details as that is between him and me. I will say that through the journey of self-exploration (e.g., considering the limits and boundaries of commitment, examining and asserting my wants and needs in relationships, and practicing my faith in a Higher Power to guide my life's path), I have evolved into a better woman and counselor. My process was, in part, guided by the participants of this study. As my former husband and I were proceeding toward separation, I was collecting my interview data and heard of participants' experiences of loss through death, relationships ending, and health related complications. They shared about their own processes and coping mechanisms. I couldn't help but be influenced by their stories and reminded of the universal, human experience of adversity. The parallel process of gathering counselor trainees' experiences of personal and professional growth, while experiencing my own adversity and personal growth, I believe, facilitated my being present and available to hear their stories. I was challenged to hold the tension between bracketing my own assumptions, beliefs, and experiences to accurately gather their stories, while also being sensitive to and aware of the universal understanding of adversity. The themes that emerged from their stories reflect the complexities of and the hope for healing and growth.

There has been a lack of research about counselor trainee personal growth and development over the past few decades. With an increase in literature about counselor impairment, there is a need to refocus on the process of counselor personal development. The present study was designed to gather information about counselor trainee development that might be used in counselor education training methods. Phenomenological and Life Story methods were used to gather descriptive, detailed experiences of counselor trainee personal growth and development.

The following is a brief overview of what to expect in the subsequent chapters. In Chapter II, a comprehensive review of literature related to counselor theory and practices as they associate with counselor trainee personal development is provided. Chapter III describes the research design and methodologies used to conduct this study. Results of the research are included in Chapter IV. Finally, a discussion of the results and the implications on existing literature about counselor personal development are included. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The personhood of counselors has been discussed for several decades as theorists,

researchers, and clinicians have explored the influence of personal experiences,

characteristics, and challenges among helping professionals. Therefore, the following

review of literature will provide (a) perspectives of human growth and development from

psychological theories, (b) personal characteristics of effective counselors, and (c) current

status of personal growth and development of counselors.

Theoretical Considerations of Human Growth and Development

Human development theorists have explored biological and environmental

influences on personality, motivation, and growth since the early 1900s (Ellis, 1959,

1962, 1979, 2000; Freud, 1910, 1936; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Kohlberg & Kramer,

1969; Rogers, 1959, 1980). Theorists often expound upon those theorists before them,

modifying principles based on their experiences and personalities in an effort to explain

human development. Therefore, although there are several theories addressing human

growth and development, many are influenced by primary theorists of the four major

traditions: (a) psychodynamic, (b) behaviorism, (c) cognitive, and (d) humanistic. The

primary theories and the unique contributions of the theorists will be described. Person-

centered theory, of the humanistic paradigm, will be discussed as the foundation of

effective counseling through the therapeutic relationship (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005; Raskin & Rogers, 1980).

Psychodynamic Theories

Freud, Adler, and Jung dominated the field of psychology in the early 1900s in the United States and Europe with theories describing human motivations and functioning of the psyche. Freud was a deterministic thinker and claimed that there is a causal relationship between psychological events and an individual's past. He described the id, the primary component of personality, as inherited biological impulses and demands that assist individuals in their survival (Ziegler, 2002). Furthermore, he believed that the id, ego, and superego, parts of the human psyche, often are in conflict, causing internal distress (Arlow, 2000). His concepts of psychic energy, instincts, and the pleasure principle are heavily influenced by the biological nature of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution with the fulfillment of sexual desires as individuals' primary motivations (Ziegler, 2002). In regards to psychotherapy, the patient is viewed as inferior and insufficient, needing the objectivity and expertise of the psychoanalyst to help make the unconscious conscious (Arlow, 2000). Freud's theory of psychoanalysis was developed in the early 1900s and continues to be employed by some mental health professionals today. Several theorists, including Adler and Jung, among Freud's elite colleagues, critiqued his theory and developed their own that included influences from his original theory (Corsini, 2000).

Adler expounded upon Freud's psychodynamic theory, believing that the reductionistic nature of the theory neglected that individuals are social beings and need

the interaction with others, particularly within the family constellation (Mosak, 2000). Adler posited that individuals are indivisible, where all parts of self (e.g., emotion, behavior, experiences) are unified to create a whole being that is facilitated through social interest and self-realization. In contrast to Freud, Adler believed individuals are not subject to their biological and environmental influences, but rather the opposite, that individuals can make choices that shape their internal and external experiences. Within Adlerian therapy, the goals of counseling are to (a) foster social interest, (b) eliminate discouragement, (c) modify lifestyle and goals, (d) change faulty motivations, (e) encourage equality among people, and (f) promote contribution to society as a means to self-actualize. The therapeutic relationship is somewhat collaborative; however, the therapist is considered expert in fostering social interest and encouragement through analysis of patient lifestyle, family constellation, and dreams.

Building from Freud's and Adler's work, Jung developed his theory of analytical psychotherapy that contributed to multiple assumptions of human experience and maturation (Douglas, 2000). Similarly to Freud, Jung believed the internal experience of the psyche was primary to one's personal and collective realities. According to Jung, the psyche, which consists of spirit, soul, and ideas, balances internal and external experiences. He claimed that the collective unconscious is a "hidden psychic resource shared by all human beings" and is represented through archetypes that organize and structure reality through images, principles, and energy (Douglas, 2000, p. 100). His hypothesis of the collective unconscious was heavily influenced by human behavior, self-analysis, myth, and fantasy, and has been used in contemporary spiritual, religious, and sociological theory. Jung used several constructs to explain human development,

including (a) opposites, or the dualistic theory that the world is paired in opposites (e.g., good/evil, positive/negative); and (b) preoedipal development, or the importance of early child-mother relationship (Douglas, 2000). Because there is conflict between the conscious and unconscious, the purpose of Jungian therapy is for patients to reveal and come to awareness of their unconscious through disclosure and interpretation within the therapeutic alliance. Although Jungian therapists believe that one's psyche is self-regulating and recognize the significance of the therapeutic relationship on patient mental health, there is an underlying assumption that patients struggle with deficiencies which impede their ability to function effectively.

The psychodynamic movement is the initial paradigm in which personality and development was understood. Psychoanalytic theorists believed, to varying degrees, that individuals' personalities and development were influenced by internal and external factors. There was a heavy emphasis on the role of the therapist to facilitate individuals' progression toward mental health. Furthermore, the psychodynamic movement was influenced by the medical model, which focused on the deficiencies or ailments that impeded human functioning.

Behavioral Theories

The behavioral movement evolved since the early 1900s and overlapped and integrated with various other therapeutic orientations. However, a few principles remain constant, such as operant and classical conditioning. Skinner's original approach evolved into what is known today as applied behavioral analysis, which focuses on operant conditioning as a means to shape behavior through consequences using methods such as

reinforcement, extinction, and punishment (Wilson, 2000). Through the influences of Pavlov, Guthrie, and others, the Stimulus-Response Model was influenced by learning theories and emphasized the use of classical conditioning, using methods such as systematic desensitization and flooding.

Although operant and classical conditioning deemed effective for treating various anxiety and phobic disorders, the absence of cognition as influential in behavior change caused other theorists to expound upon original behavior principles. For example, Bandura's Social-Cognitive Theory (1961, 1967, 1969, 1977) proposed that behavior change occurs through one's ability to use cognition to perceive and interpret his or her behavior and environment. Through the emphasis of behavior using cognitive processes, the behavioral movement has expanded to the Cognitive-Behavioral Model, which includes principles from traditional cognitive models (Wilson, 2000).

Cognitive Theories

While studying depression during the early 1960s, Aaron Beck proposed systematic procedures for processing information; these procedures included understanding schemas, or individuals' thoughts, perceptions, assumptions, and expectations. Cognitive therapy suggests that individuals' views of self and others are primary in their behaviors. Essentially, cognitive theory suggests that errors in cognition result in maladaptive responses such as depression and anxiety and can be effectively treated through a variety of strategies aimed at individuals discovering faulty perceptions and biased interpretations.

Ellis expanded on this theory by suggesting that errors are actually irrational thoughts stemming from irrational core beliefs (Zeigler, 2002). Ellis' own cognitively based theory states that people dogmatically adhere to irrational ideas and personal philosophies that cause people great distress and misery. He stated that these ideas can be boiled down to a few basic categories that therapists can identify in their clients' reasoning rather easily. Consequently, the purpose of therapy is for therapists to successfully teach clients how to identify and give up their misery-causing irrational beliefs (Ellis & Geiger, as cited in Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004, p. 260). Therefore, similarly to previous theorists who were influenced by the medical model, individuals are inflicted with internal problems for which they need the expertise of the therapist to help them resolve.

Person-Centered Theory

A paradigm shift occurred in the field of psychology during the 1940s when the field of psychology was introduced to a very different perspective about human development through Carl Rogers' Non-directive approach. He renamed his theory to Client-Centered Therapy, which he later changed again to Person-Centered Theory (PCT) (Raskin & Rogers, 1980). Before this time, primary psychotherapeutic traditions were heavily influenced by the medical model and focused on deficits within human functioning that contributed to personality and behavioral problems (e.g., neurosis in psychoanalysis, abnormal behavior in behaviorism, irrationality in cognitive). Individuals were assumed to be sick, damaged, and incapable of healthy functioning without the expertise of the therapist (Arlow, 2000; Douglas, 2000; Mosak, 2000; Wilson, 2000). In

contrast to this philosophy, Rogers' (1980) theory was founded upon the principle of

actualizing tendency, or human beings "movement toward the realization of an

individual's full potential" (p. 133). He believed that actualizing was associated with the

"formative tendency" that the universe, (i.e., stars, microorganisms, crystals) continually

moves toward greater order in a complex and interrelated manner (p. 133). Rogers

believed that human beings also self-actualize in self-directed movement toward full

potential. Built upon trust, the person-centered approach to human development and

therapy asserts that individuals and groups possess the personal qualities necessary to set,

monitor, and progress toward their goals in movement toward optimum functioning.

Essentially, individuals are not sick as previously theorized, but rather possess all the

attributes and capabilities to fulfill their potential. Rogers stated:

> This theory is basically phenomenological in character, and relies heavily upon
> the concept of the self as an explanatory construct. It pictures the end-point of
> personality development as being a basic congruence between the phenomenal
> field of experience and the conceptual structure of the self—a situation which, if
> achieved, would represent freedom from internal strain and anxiety, and freedom
> from potential strain; which would represent the maximum in realistically oriented
> adaptation; which would mean the establishment of an individualized value
> system having considerable identity with the value system of any other equally
> well-adjusted member of the human race. (as cited in Raskin & Rogers, 1980,
> p. 143)

This perspective of human development was quite different from what earlier theorists

had speculated because PCT assumes a strengths-based approach rather than a deficit

orientation. In fact, some have suggested that Rogers virtually founded the counseling

movement by branching away from the traditional medical model of previous theorists

(Capuzzi & Gross, 2001; Gladding, 2000).

Another important component of PCT was the introduction of the core conditions within the therapeutic relationship. Empathy, genuineness, and positive regard are the core conditions a therapist conveys to build a successful therapeutic relationship necessary for client self-actualization. A person-centered therapist practices empathy by offering consistent appreciation for the client's experience. The therapist makes an effort "get within and to *live* the attitudes" of the client to sensitively immerse himself or herself in the client's world of experience, rather than merely observing or diagnosing them (Raskin & Rogers, 1980, p. 147). This ongoing process involves mirroring and reflection, with a willingness to be corrected, to assure the therapist's understanding is accurate and in entirety. Genuineness is the congruence between therapist words and actions and his or her "willingness to relate on a person-to-person basis rather than through a professionally distant role" (Raskin & Rogers, 1980, p. 163). Finally, positive regard, or caring, is the therapist's intense respect for the clients' individuality through his or her expression of "unconditional, nonpossessive regard" (p. 163). When these core conditions are present, the counselor is able to facilitate the counseling relationship that has been found as primary in client growth. Rogers argued that these conditions were effective regardless of the therapeutic technique being used, stating, "the techniques of the various therapies are relatively unimportant except for the extent that they serve as channels for fulfilling one of the conditions" (Rogers, 1957, p. 102). Training in the core conditions continues to be a mainstay in counseling (Farber & Lane, 2002; Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005; Orlinsky, Grawe, & Parks, 1994; Sexton & Whiston, 1994).

Person-centered theory has significantly influenced the professions of counseling and psychology, including over 3 decades of research (Bozarth, Zimring, & Tausch,

2001). Although Rogers has been ranked the most influential counselor/psychotherapist to date according to surveys in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (Heesacker, Heppner, & Rogers, 1982) and the *American Psychologist* (Smith, 1982), person-centered theory has some critics (Kensit, 2000; Kirschenbaum, 2004). Rogers' lasting impression has not pleased everyone. Kirschenbaum (2004) reviews criticisms that person-centered theory is naive, superficial, "unmindful of gender and multicultural issues," and as unrealistically positive regarding human nature (p. 122). Others have suggested that the core conditions may be neither necessary nor sufficient (Wampold, 2001). Despite these criticisms, Rogers' work is well documented. Kirschenbaum, a modern-day person-centered theorist, analyzed the presence of PCT literature in the 17 years following Rogers' death in 1987. He found that PCT theory, research, and applications were documented in 141 books, 174 book chapters, and 462 journal articles, suggesting that the counseling profession continues be heavily guided by this revolutionary theory (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005).

Therapeutic Relationship

Additional support is provided about the significance of the therapeutic relationship through theory and research. In 1957, Rogers introduced the theory that when a therapist demonstrates the core conditions (i.e., unconditional positive regard, empathic understanding, and congruence) then clients experience therapeutic change (Bozarth et al., 2001). He believed that when the core conditions are present, then an effective client-therapist relationship can be developed; the relationship is crucial for client progress (Rogers, 1942, 1951, 1957). Furthermore, he believed that the core conditions operated

independently of the therapeutic techniques. This hypothesis has "evoked more than 3 decades of research" (p. 153). Researchers have studied the influence of the core conditions on the therapeutic process, including the development of the Relationship Inventory for clients to rate their therapists on the core conditions (Barrett-Lennard, 1962). Halkides (1958) developed scales for independent judges to rate therapists on these conditions. In 1971, Traux and Mitchell reported on 14 studies that included 66 statistically significant findings between the core conditions and therapeutic outcomes.

More recent and ample research within varying disciplines in the helping professions have documented that the therapeutic relationship is vital to client progress (Bohart, Elliot, Greensberg, & Watson, 2002; Duan & Hill, 1996; McColloch, as cited in Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005; Orlinsky et al., 1994; Sexton & Whiston, 1994). For example, one person-centered therapist explored the effectiveness of the core conditions in establishing therapeutic relationships with male prison inmates with histories of anti-social behavior (McColloch, as cited in Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005). She entered the prison to provide counseling, and found that many inmates called her names, spat on her, and exposed themselves. However, over time, the inmates discontinued their negative behavior and began meeting with her for counseling. When asked how she managed to convince the inmates to participate, she said:

> I treated them like human beings. I showed concern and interest while accepting their anger without judging it. I expressed my own limitations by telling them that I was distracted by their behavior, that I would give them my full attention, and that I found it difficult to do so when I was distracted. I told them that I valued speaking with them and hoped we would talk when they were not doing these other things. (McCulloch, as cited in Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005, p. 48)

Inmates demonstrated therapeutic change in their willingness to build a relationship with the therapist, who consistently employed the core conditions.

Similar findings were found in a study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health to determine the effectiveness of three treatments for depression, including psychotropic medication, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and interpersonal therapy (Blatt, Zuroff, Quinlan, & Pilkonis, 1996). This large, experimental study has been considered significant because of the strong methodology and seasoned professionals involved. Patients received treatment for depression in three medical centers in order to provide appropriate sampling procedures. The seasoned professionals providing therapy received additional training to assure standardization and accuracy. Results indicated there were no significant differences among the three treatments; however, participants in all groups indicated that the core conditions (i.e., empathy, congruence, and positive regard) employed by their therapists were significantly correlated with therapeutic outcomes. The therapeutic relationships experienced by the patients were significantly related to improvements in their depression (Blatt et al., 1996). Research continues to demonstrate that the therapist's ability to establish a relationships as primary in assuring therapeutic outcomes. Thus, the underpinnings of person-centered theory continue to be significant in the counseling profession (Kirschenbaum, 2004). In fact, the person-centered theory has stimulated ample literature about the personal qualities of expert counselors.

Counselor Variables

Personal Attributes

Evidence of the multiple variables influencing the therapeutic relationship have been documented in the literature, including core conditions (e.g., empathy, warmth, congruence), common factors (e.g., placebo effect, expectancy, variables outside of therapy), and therapist variables (Jennings, Goh, Skovholt, Hanson, & Banerjee-Stevens, 2003; Jennings & Skovholt, 1999; Lambert & Barley, 2001). Personal characteristics that are associated with therapists' ability to facilitate the therapeutic relationship have been discussed in the literature over the past 4 decades (Jackson & Thompson, 1971; Jennings, Goh, Skovholt, Hanson, & Banerjee-Stevens, 2003; Jennings & Skovholt, 1999; Luborsky, McLellan, Woody, O'Brien, & Auerbach, 1985; Ricks, 1974; Wicas & Mahan, 1966; Wiggins & Weslander, 1979). During the 1960s and 1970s, it was discovered that effective therapists demonstrated a level of self-control and sympathy toward their clients and had positive attitudes about themselves, their clients, and the therapeutic process (Jackson & Thompson, 1971; Ricks, 1974; Wicas & Mahan, 1966). Furthermore, effective therapists were found to have greater job satisfaction than those less effective (Wiggins & Weslander, 1979). In their important study, Luborsky et al. (1985) discovered a significant relationship between therapist personality and client outcomes, which stimulated much of the later literature in this area. However, the specific therapist personality characteristics and multiple therapist factors were not identified until more recent years (Jennings et al., 2003; Jennings & Skovholt, 1999).

Jennings et al. (2003) studied the multiple factors (cognitive, emotional, and relational) of master therapists using qualitative methods. The 10 participants who were identified as master therapists through purposeful sampling methods were interviewed regarding therapist effectiveness and personal characteristics. Results indicated that master therapists (a) are voracious learners; (b) use accumulated experiences as a primary resource; (c) use cognitive complexity and experience ambiguity of the human condition; (d) have emotional receptivity, including self-awareness, nondefensiveness, and openness to feedback; (e) are mentally healthy and mature, attending to their own emotional well-being; (f) are aware of their emotional well-being and how this affects their work; (g) possess strong relational skills and use them in therapy; and (h) have the belief that the foundation of therapeutic change is in a strong client-therapist relationship. These findings suggest that being an expert therapist entails more than time and experience, but personal characteristics such as emotional receptivity and strong relational skills to be effective. These findings were the catalyst for three additional studies, where the same participants were interviewed in an effort to create a portrait of the qualities and characteristics of master therapists (Jennings et al., 2003).

Skovholt, Jennings, and Mullenbach (2004) created a synopsis of the cognitive, emotional, and relational domains of master therapists, described as the Highly-Functioning Self. Characteristics of the Highly-Functioning Self were grouped in four categories: (a) paradoxical characteristics, (b) word characteristics, (c) identifying characteristics, and (d) central characteristics. Examples of the paradoxical characteristics include (a) an ability to be fully present and preferring solitude, and (b) a drive to be masterful and never a sense of having fully arrived. Word characteristic examples are:

intense, congruent, open, reflective, generous, analytical, inspiring, and curious. Examples of identifying characteristics include (a) emotional health as evidenced by self-acceptance, (b) curiosity about human life, and (c) skill from ample practice. Finally, the examples of central characteristics include (a) embraces complex ambiguity, (b) employs accumulated wisdom, (c) maintains insatiable curiosity, (d) desires to grow, (e) conveys genuine humility, (f) lives with vibrancy, and (g) receives life feedback, to name a few. Skovholt, Jennings, and Mullenback also discussed therapists who fit within the Highly-Functioning Self description as therapists who are ordinary people invested in their greatest human potential.

Multicultural Competencies

In addition to the aforementioned cognitive, emotional, and relational domains of counselor personal characteristics, counselors' abilities to be multiculturally responsive are important (Constantine, Gloria, & Ladany, 2002; Sue, 1998). Effective counselors need to be multiculturally competent, aware of their biases, stereotypes, and beliefs about those culturally different from them (Constantine, Gloria, & Ladany, 2002; Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997; Sue, 1998; Sue & Sue, 1999). Unfortunately, many contemporary, Western counseling approaches do not explicitly account for the cultural variables of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, or ability/disability (Bentancourt & Lopez, 1993). Therefore, research in the area of multiculturalism has received considerable attention in recent years as the counseling profession is working to train mulitculturally competent counselors (Ancis, 2004; Jennings et al., 2003; Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997; Sue, 1998; Sue & Sue, 1999). Multicultural competence is founded upon

the belief "that people should not only appreciate and recognize other cultural groups but also be able to work effectively with them" (Sue, 1998, p. 440). Cultural competence is also described as an approach that accounts for clients' life history, culture and customs (Witztum & Goodman, 1999), and as one that acknowledges the social, political, and cultural expectations that may be further oppressive to marginalized groups (Ancis, 2004). Several theorists and researchers have examined the personal variables impacting counselors' abilities to be multiculturally competent (Helms, 1990, 1995; Torres-Rivera et al., 2001; Vinson, 2000; Watt, Robinson, & Lupton-Smith, 2002).

The multiculturally competent counselor has been described as someone who is (a) self-aware of his or her own socialization, (b) curious and open, (c) self-disclosing, (d) able to receive feedback nondefensively, (e) capable of cognitive complexity, (f) committed to becoming more multiculturally competent, and (g) committed to social justice (Ponterotto, 1998). Moreover, it was initially theorized (Helms, 1990, 1995) and later demonstrated that employing culturally appropriate interventions is contingent upon counselors' level of awareness of their own racial identity development (Vinson, 2000). Because counselor trainees' racial identity development varies depending on their ego development which corresponds with their training level (e.g., coursework versus practicum and internship), it is important that counselor educators and training institutions provide developmentally appropriate activities to facilitate counselors' self- and other-awareness significant in multiculturally competent treatment (Torres-Rivera et al., 2001; Watt et al., 2002). Furthermore, it is equally important that counselors supplement their effective training by engaging in self-awareness activities, to uncover their biases and stereotypes regarding those culturally different. Unfortunately, when

counselors are multiculturally incompetent, the consequences are great, including the risk of harming clients (Sue, 1998). This may be the cause of underutilization of mental health treatment of racial and ethnic minority clients (Sue, 1998; Wierzbicki & Pekarik, 1993). Therefore, counselors' ability to understand and incorporate culturally sensitive interventions, whether they are culture-specific infused in traditional models, modifications of the traditional, or entirely novel approaches (Witztum & Goodyear, 1999), they are necessary for establishing an effective therapeutic relationships (Wampold, 2001).

Counselor Personal Growth and Development

Training of effective counselors includes consideration of both professional and personal development (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Academic performance is no longer the primary focus when evaluating counselor competency (Lumadue & Duffey, 1999). Since counselors are potentially "damaging" clients as a result of developmental and personal limitations, counselor educators are paying more attention to counselor development (Eichenfield & Stoltenberg, 1996; Forrest et al., 1999; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Jordan, 2002; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999, p. 101). In an attempt to understand the development of counselors, Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) conducted a longitudinal, cross-sectional, qualitative study. They interviewed 100 counselors and therapists of varying experience levels (i.e., counseling students, advanced graduate students, and postgraduate practitioners) and found 14 themes describing counselor development. The authors identified a six-phased model of counselor development, including (1) lay helper, (2) beginning student phase, (3) advanced student phase, (4)

novice professional, (5) experienced professional, and (6) senior professional. Throughout these phases, themes of personal development were evident in the experiences and characteristics of counselors/therapists.

During Phase 1, the lay helper phase, counselors/therapists are untrained, operating from instinct and natural ability. The individuals may help others through their existing roles (e.g., mother, father, sister, friend), and involve themselves in helping others make decisions and better their relationships. Lay helpers often become engrossed in their family and friends' concerns, and thus have difficulty managing boundaries. Lay helpers often become emotionally involved with others' problems and project their own solutions to others' problems. Lay helpers can identify problems efficiently, offer emotional support and advice; however, they lack the emotional maturity to maintain distance between others' problems and their own. Furthermore, demonstrating empathy versus sympathy is a challenge for lay helpers, which is the primary differentiation between an untrained and professional counselor/therapist (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Phase 2, the beginning student phase, can be overwhelming for students. Beginning students know their previous lay helper behaviors and attitudes are no longer sufficient and are inundated with professional resources (e.g., academic preparation, research, mentorship from seasoned professionals, life experiences) that affect their early training. Self-doubt is a theme among these students as they question if they have the personal characteristics to be a counselor/therapist, and thus they may feel especially vulnerable (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

In Phase 3, the advanced student is working in internship or field placement and receives regular supervision. These students often feel pressure to perform perfectly and

may seek comfort and assurance from supervisors or practitioners. Similarly, the novice professional in Phase 4 experiences demands to meet the expectations of other professionals, clients. One participant in this study said, "I used to think that my doubts about me and my despair would go away with the degree . . . now people look at me, call me doctor and want and expect more" (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003, p. 18). Over time the novice professional becomes comfortable in his or her abilities and the demands of the environment; however, he or she may still feel "guilty" when not responding to these demands (p. 19).

The experienced professional in Phase 5 has worked for years in professional work settings and applies his or her competence authentically. Experienced professionals struggle to balance demands of professional and personal lives, and they utilize experiences in their personal lives to help them professionally. For example, one respondent spoke of her recent divorce and the effects it had on her identity. The experience forced her to identify herself as an individual and not existing in association with others. Her "dark" journey of looking at herself honestly helped her reconnect with the universal human pain that ultimately helped her "be a better therapist" (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003, p. 24). Last, in Phase 6, the senior professional is regarded by colleagues, peers, and students as being a knowledgeable expert in the field. Training, teaching, research, and planning for retirement are activities of this group. Many feel a sense of loss, without the guidance from senior professionals from their earlier days.

Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) identified 14 themes of counselor development that emerged from across these phases. Some of the themes included (a) the focus of functioning shifts dramatically over time (Theme 2), (b) the commitment to learn propels

development (Theme 4), (c) the developmental process of becoming a professional is life-long (Theme 7), and (d) the influence of clients on professional learning is significant (Theme 9). Some of these themes directly relate to development of counselor personhood. For instance, counselor professional development involves higher order integration of the professional self and the personal self (Theme 1), which suggests that counselors who are able to integrate their personal selves (e.g., qualities, characteristics, limitations, challenges) with their professional selves (e.g., clinical knowledge and skills) are more advanced. Also, the authors found that counselors who have extensive experience with suffering have heightened recognition, acceptance, and appreciation of human variability (Theme 13). Last, counselors' personal lives impact their professional functioning (Theme 10), because family history and significant partner relationships can influence counselors' work. The aforementioned personal development themes suggest that there are parallels between counselor personal and professional maturity.

Field Experiences

Researchers have identified aspects of counselor training and events out of training that have been found to influence counselor personal development, one of which is their field experiences (Furr & Carroll, 2003). Researchers and theorists have found that practicum and internship are significant aspects of counselor training that promote both the professional and, particularly, the personal development of counselors (Denicola, 2001; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006; Scott, 2004; Spruill & Benshoff, 2000; Walfish & Allan, 2001). During practicum and internship, counselor trainees relinquish their roles as students in order to practice their new roles of counselors, diagnosticians,

teachers, and consultants, making this a significant step in their professional and personal development (Denicola, 2003). In fact, field experiences have been found to be a critical incident in student counselor development.

Furr and Carroll (2003) studied critical incidents in student counselor development; one theme that emerged was that participants were greatly influenced by their field experiences. Students described the process of applying their knowledge and skills as challenging their perceptions of competency, personal and professional development, and clinical abilities. Similarly, Spruill and Benshoff (2000) describe the developmental process of counselors adopting and practicing their personal theory of counseling during their theories course and later in practicum and internship. Practicing a particular counseling theory requires examination of one's values, attitudes, and beliefs about human nature, which inevitably promotes self-awareness and introspection. This process of developing a theoretical orientation during counselor training, particularly practicum and internship, continually evolves as the counselor progresses in his or her professional and personal development and through various work-related changes (e.g., environment, populations, clinical issues, pre-doctoral training) (Paris et al., 2006; Scott, 2004).

Marriage and family counseling interns identified practicum and internship as important aspects of training that led to their personal growth (Paris et al., 2006). Using qualitative methods via Internet data collection methods, participants identified growth experiences related to (a) self-awareness, (b) confidence, (c) perspective taking, (d) self-focus, (e) letting go, and (f) open-mindedness. For example, one participant developed greater self-awareness about her belief system by identifying her views on social and

political issues, while another participant increased his ability to let go by stating, "The biggest life lesson came when I realized that I cannot change everyone . . . " (p. 52). Additional significant lessons contributing to counselor personal growth during internship included (a) awareness of other cultural backgrounds, (b) need for self-care, and (c) empathy and sensitivity in personal relationships.

Supervision

Clinical supervision of counselor trainees in practicum, internship, and early professional practice is another significant component of their personal development (Bischoff, Barton, Thober, & Hawley, 2002; Paris et al., 2006; Stoltenberg et al., 1998). Stoltenberg, McNeill, and Delworth created a concise framework for conceptualizing counselor professional and personal development during supervision, the Integrative Developmental Model (IDM). The premise of the model is that counselors develop through levels as they become more self-assured in their clinical skills and personal capabilities. The level of a counselor trainee is partly determined by three overarching structures: (a) Self/Other Awareness, (b) Motivation, and (c) Autonomy (Stoltenberg et al., 1998). Self/Other Awareness is the structure made of cognitive and affective components that indicate the "self-preoccupation, awareness of the client's world, and enlightened self-awareness" of the counselor (p. 16). The cognitive component (thoughts) and the affective component (feelings) are experienced by the counselor across levels. Motivation is the structure that describes the counselor's interest and investment in training and often fluctuates throughout development. Autonomy is the degree of independence the counselor expends as he or she develops, demonstrating more

dependence early, moving to dependency-autonomy, and then eventually to autonomy. Counselors will demonstrate varying degrees of Self/Other Awareness, Motivation, and Autonomy based on their level of development and the specific domain.

The multiple tasks counselors perform are described as the specific domains and include: (a) intervention techniques, (b) assessment skills, (c) interpersonal assessment, (d) client conceptualization, (e) individual difference, (f) theoretical orientation, (g) treatment plans and goals, and (h) professional ethics. Counselors may be at different levels of development across domains.

Counselor development can be described by Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and Level 3i (Level 3 integrated). Level 1 counselors are those who are in the initial stages of development, have little knowledge about a specific domain, and have few training experiences. When considering the aforementioned overarching structures, Level 1 counselors are usually preoccupied with their performance and development (Self Awareness), have high interest and investment (Motivation), and are dependent on their supervisors (Autonomy). Once Level 1 counselors have resolved their anxieties and fears associated with a particular domain, they become a Level 2 counselor (Stoltenberg et al., 1998).

Level 2 counselors are developing into more integrated professionals. They typically vacillate between preoccupation with self and awareness of their client (Self/Other Awareness). Likewise, the overarching structure of Motivation fluctuates as their self-efficacy and professional knowledge increases. Level 2 counselors begin to test their new knowledge and show more independence (Autonomy). Typically, Level 2

counselors have uncertainty associated with the responsibilities of counseling; once they become more stable they become a Level 3 (Stoltenberg et al., 1998).

Level 3 counselors are those who are confident in their role and are able to personalize their work with clients, using genuine responses and their unique characteristics. Level 3 counselors are both self and other aware, noticing their own feelings, thoughts, and experiences while with a client. Level 3 counselors are consistently interested and invested in their work (Motivation) and are highly independent (Autonomy). Level 3i (Integrated) are those counselors who are Level 3 in several domains are becoming more integrated (Stoltenberg et al., 1998).

The IDM has received considerable attention in the literature (Aten & Hernandez, 2004; Cummings, 2005; McCracken, 2005). Counselor personal development has been facilitated in supervision by increasing counselor self-confidence (Bischoff et al., 2002). Examining levels of self-confidence among marriage and family counselor trainees, Bischoff et al. interviewed students regarding their experiences in practicum and supervision. One theme that emerged was the role of supervisors in facilitating counselor self-confidence. One counselor said about her supervision experiences:

> Supervision was real helpful. [My site supervisor] consistently gave me positive feedback about what I was doing with my cases . . . she would turn to me for suggestions about other people's cases . . . I received a transfer case with a schizophrenic mother and I . . . didn't feel like I knew what to do. But, in March I taped a session [with this family] and showed it to my supervisor. She saved the tape so the next therapist could see it because it was good therapy. . . . [She] just always made me feel like she thought I knew what I was doing. (p. 376)

Positive feedback regarding specific clinical behaviors was deemed helpful by these students because they did not have the breadth of experience compared to seasoned

counsefors. Another student discussed the significance of the structure of supervision on her self-confidence:

> The structure of . . . supervision, and how it was conducted was probably the most influential [set of experiences to the development of my confidence]. . . . I felt like I received continual encouragement from my supervisors at my site. I had complete freedom to share my anxiety about being a therapist. . . . Supervision was conducted in a way that communicated that everyone is anxious, but that anxiety is not necessarily a reflection of how competent someone is to conduct therapy. (p. 377)

In addition to the supportive supervision environment, results showed that beginning counselors' self-confidence fluctuates with new clients and clinical issues, and personal distractions can impede therapeutic effectiveness. Results of this study further support Stoltenberg et al.'s (1998) and Paris et al.'s (2006) notion that beginning counselors need immense support from supervisors as they negotiate the anxieties and fears associated with becoming a counselor and internalize the appropriate use of clinical skills. Counselor trainees also receive this support from their supervisors and colleagues during group supervision (Agnew, 2000).

Multicultural supervision. Personal development of counselors also occurs through multicultural training and supervision (Torres-Rivera et al., 2001). Over the past few decades there has been a movement toward training multiculturally competent counselors, which has recently expanded to include multicultural training during clinical supervision (Fong & Lease, 1997; Fukuyama, 1994; Helms & Cook, 1999; Ladany, Britten-Powell, & Pannu, 1997; Robinson, Bradley, & Hendricks, 2000). Multicultural supervision is different from traditional models of supervision because it accounts for cultural variables of the supervisor, supervisee (counselor trainee), and client (Bernard &

Goodyear, 1998). Researchers have suggested approaching multicultural supervision with the intention of supervisors assisting counselors in their personal development, including using group supervision to examine biases and stereotypes that affect counseling (Torres-Rivera et al., 2001). They found a strong relationship between counselor self-awareness and multicultural counseling competencies. Furthermore, as counselors' self-awareness improves during group supervision, their empathy and sensitivity also improved. Therefore, multicultural supervision is potentially a significant training method for not only training multiculturally competent counselors, but also promoting their overall personal development.

Hird, Cavalieri, Dulko, Felice, and Ho (2001) agree that multicultural supervision should focus on increasing counselor self-awareness and cultural sensitivity. The competency of the supervisor may be a barrier to effective multicultural supervision, since many have not had training in multicultural counseling, and if they have, it has been inadequate (Garret, Borders, Crutchfield, Torres-Rivera, Brotherton, & Curtis, 2001; Mintz, Bartels, & Rideout, 1995; Ochs, 1994). According to Garret et al., 70% of supervisors have not had formal training in multicultural counseling, suggesting that they are either not addressing multicultural considerations in supervision or are doing so inadequately. Therefore, it is safe to assume that counselor trainees may not be receiving multicultural supervision, including their personal processes of developing self-awareness and sensitivity. Fortunately, models have been proposed to assist supervisors in providing multicultural supervision (Garret et al., 2001; Tummala-Narra, 2004). It is the supervisor's responsibility to guide trainees through appropriate multicultural counseling, particularly regarding the influence of race and ethnicity (Cook, 1994; Estrada, Frame, &

Williams, 2004; Leong & Wagner, 1994). Overall, multicultural supervision should allow for vulnerability among both supervisor and supervisee regarding cultural differences in order to facilitate understanding, awareness, and sensitivity (Hird et al., 2001), which will likely increase their overall self-awareness and personal growth.

Personal Counseling

In addition to multiculturally competent supervision, personal counseling has been found effective in promoting a variety of qualities associated with effective counseling (Donati & Watts, 2000; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006). Counselors experience significant stress as a result of helping others with their emotional and mental concerns (Biermann, 2003; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Hazler & Kottler, 1994; Misch, 2003; Murr, Miller, & Papadakis, 2002; Slotnick, 2001). This stress may be related to preexisting psychological trouble, the demands of being a helping professional, or a combination of both. Consequently, counseling professionals have discussed the usefulness of counselor trainees receiving personal counseling while in training (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Donati & Watts, 2000; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006).

D'Andrea and Daniels (1992) studied counselor trainee mental health needs by asking department chairs' perspectives of requiring personal counseling as an entrance requirement to counseling programs. The authors were "distressed" (p. 4) with the level of personal difficulties in counseling administrators, educators, and students that they observed directly and in the counseling literature. They designed a national study to address the ongoing professional debate of whether or not counseling programs should

require personal counseling for incoming students. Fifty-four percent of department chairs agreed that students should be encouraged to seek personal counseling, and 17% of chairpersons in this study supported implementing a requirement. Department chairs supported the notion that student personal concerns and professional stressors need to be addressed; however, they were divided regarding whether or not personal counseling should be required.

Donati and Watts (2000) discussed the need for counselor training to address trainee personal development, especially through personal counseling. They questioned the effectiveness of personal counseling compared to other personal development methods (e.g., personal growth groups) and suggest that both are viable options. Counselor trainers should be intentional in promoting personal development methods, such as personal counseling and/or personal growth groups, and they should communicate the purpose and objectives of such activities to their counseling trainees. Counseling professionals have an obligation to train counseling students to address issues appropriately, especially through personal counseling.

Studies have been conducted regarding counselor trainees' perspectives of personal counseling and found that counselor trainees benefit from personal counseling while in training (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006). Furr and Carroll (2003) found that one of the critical incidents in student counselor development was personal counseling, because their counseling students experienced (a) enhanced self-management skills and increased self-awareness, and (b) greater understanding of being a client. Similarly, Paris et al. (2006) found that personal counseling was helpful to the growth experiences of the therapist interns they studied. One student said:

> It's all very logical. A man who has had a heart attack makes a more effective and understanding cardiologist because he's "been there." There is a difference between textbook learning and life learning. I feel as though my experience as a client helped me be a better therapist because I experienced "the other side" of therapy first. (p. 50)

Counselor trainees who engage in personal counseling have the opportunity to address their mental, emotional, and/or behavioral issues that could hinder their work; in addition, they receive professional benefits by increasing their understanding of being a client. This may provide counselor trainees with additional insight and sensitivity when counseling their future clients.

Experiential Activities

Along with personal counseling, experiential activities have been shown to increase counselor self- and other-awareness (O'Leary, Crowley, & Keane, 1994; Sevig & Etzkorn, 2001; Wheeler et al., 1998). Counselor trainees have opportunities for personal growth through experiential activities (O'Leary et al., 1994; Sevig & Etzkorn, 2001; Wheeler et al., 1998). In their pilot study, Wheeler et al. (1998) found that counseling students nearing the end of their programs benefited from a weekend-format residential outdoor personal development retreat. The retreat was designed to enhance personal development, including self- and other-awareness through a variety of experiential activities. Participants were surveyed following the weekend and some reported increases in self-esteem and self-awareness; however, students' perspectives regarding the weekend were mixed. The authors deemed that the results were inconclusive due to incongruence of student responses and some methodological problems in data collection. Regardless, the authors stand by the notion experiential

activities are helpful in promoting personal development, although they question the weekend format.

O'Leary, Crowley, and Keane (1994) found that experiential activities are beneficial to counselor development based on their study of personal growth groups with counselor trainees. They conducted a pre- and posttest with 10 female participants involved in a personal growth group. Results indicated significant findings related to participants' (a) increased self-awareness, (b) improved congruence, (c) enhanced feelings of change, and (d) greater spiritual reference. This study provides additional support for the use of experiential activities for counseling students' personal development.

Experiential activities, such as year-long seminars, have also been found useful to increase multicultural counseling competencies of interns in the helping professions (Sevig & Etzkorn, 2001). Sevig and Etzkorn (2001) found that social work and psychology interns seemed to gain knowledge and skills that contribute to them being more multiculturally competent after their participation in experiential activities designed to increased multicultural awareness. The format of a year-long seminar was process-based and included activities designed to encourage self-reflection, group dialogue, risk taking, and emotional openness. The nature of the year-long seminar was highly emotive as students discussed concepts related to oppression and White privilege and how these experiences might influence society and counseling alike. Because of the emotive nature of the experience, the researchers did not conduct a formal study, and therefore do not have long-term, definitive results as to the effectiveness of the training. However, through self-report and multiple years of providing the seminar, the authors report that the

seminar provides opportunities that increase participants' self-awareness, identification of group memberships, and awareness of blind spots.

Relationships

Counselor trainees' personal development is also influenced through their relationships with friends and family (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006). Paris et al. (2006) studied the personal growth experiences of marriage and family counseling interns and found that their relationships with family and friends positively influenced their personal and professional development. One of the counseling intern participants stated that she grew personally as a result of her relationship with her former husband. Due to their marital problems and later divorce, she stated that she was better able to empathize with couples in counseling. Similarly, a participant who survived an alcoholic household as a child believed that her experiences with her family gave her empathy and regard for clients in similar circumstances. Similarly, Furr and Carroll (2003) studied the critical incidents of counselor trainee development and found that one of the themes was relationships with friends and family. Relationships with family, friends, and significant others were identified by counselor trainees as critical incidents in their personal development. As participants gained awareness, some identified their relationships as unhealthy and needing necessary improvement, while others decided to leave relationships (Furr & Carroll, 2003).

These studies highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships on counselor trainee development. As counselor trainees study and reflect upon human behavior and relationship dynamics, they may begin to evaluate their past or current relationships, and

use that information to facilitate their empathy and understanding their clients'

relationship challenges. Counselor trainees may enhance both their personal and

professional development through reflection about their friends and family relationships.

Summary

Over the past decade, empirically validated treatments have received substantial

attention in counseling and psychology literature due to the managed care system funding

only proven treatments. Therefore, federal funding has supported studies on

psychotherapy that identify effective, empirical treatments for disorders such as anxiety,

depression, and drug abuse. This movement has "essentially ignored 30 or more years of

research" that demonstrated that alternative treatments to the therapeutic relationship

make slight or no difference in therapy outcomes (Zeigler, 2002, p. 10). A task force was

established to summarize research over the past several decades and discovered that the

therapeutic relationship makes substantial and consistent contributions to client outcomes

regardless of treatments employed (Norcross, 2001). The task force also discovered that

promoting evidence-based practice without a therapeutic relationship is incomplete and is

"potentially misleading on both clinical and empirical grounds" (p. 2). These findings

suggest that counselor training needs to reemphasize the importance of relationships

oriented therapy and train counselors accordingly in order to promote the therapeutic

relationships with their clients. Unfortunately, when the therapeutic relationship is not

established, clients are at a disadvantage and may not experience their desired outcomes.

It is important that counselor education program emphasize the value of counselors'

development of the qualities and characteristics (e.g., self- and other-awareness)

necessary for developing a therapeutic relationship. When these personal characteristics of counselors are not developed, they may not be able to provide the relationship needed for positive client outcomes. In some cases they may unknowingly create harm to the client, which is further demonstrated in the counselor impairment literature (Eichenfeld & Stoltenberg, 1996; Forrest et al., 1999; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Muratori, 2001; Woodyard, 1997).

Counselor educators have a responsibility to promote the personal growth and development of counseling students to assure that they are able to effectively solve their personal and professional problems that could potentially, if not addressed, impact the effectiveness of their work with clients (Donati & Watts, 2000; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006). In fact, research efforts are "urgently needed" to address the personal development needs of student counselors and to determine best training practices for promoting their development (Donati & Watts, 2000, p. 20). Unfortunately, although counselor trainees, counselor educators, and scholars have identified this important, yet underrepresented aspect of training, there continues to be insufficient attention given to counselor personal development (Donati & Watts, 2000; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006), which is likely supported by the managed care movement toward empirically-validated treatment (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005).

The following study was designed to address the significant need for the counseling profession to address counselor trainee personal growth and development. The purpose of this research was to gather information from counselor trainees regarding (a) their experiences of personal development while in training, and (b) their perceptions of the differences and/or similarities between their personal and professional

development. It is possible that this research will provide counselor educators, administrators, and supervisors with additional information regarding activities that facilitate counselor trainees' personal growth. This could potentially help them adapt training methods that attend to personhood of counselors, efforts that will likely benefit counselors, clients, and the profession.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate counselor trainees' experiences of

personal growth and development while in training and to explore the intersections of

personal and professional maturation. Exploration of counselor trainees' experiences of

the phenomenon of personal growth and development was accomplished through

phenomenological methods as well as drawing upon constructs from Life Story

methodology. This chapter will include a description of the theoretical framework that

incorporates the constructs of personal growth, personal development, and professional

development that are guiding this study. Phenomenology and narrative inquiry, which

were employed to collect and analyze the data, will also be described.

Theoretical Framework

Theorists have explored the multifaceted, complex nature of counselor personal

and professional maturation from a variety of theoretical perspectives about human

growth and development. There are numerous philosophical, theoretical, and/or spiritual

understandings and meanings of personal growth and development. Following a review

of the literature on personal growth and development, I have selected the theoretical

constructs and their definitions which will be used to provide a theoretical foundation for

this study.

44

Counselor development is multidimensional and complex and includes the theoretical constructs of *personal growth*, *personal development*, and *professional development*. *Personal growth*, in short, is the ongoing process of self-actualization. In contrast, *personal development* refers to the acquisition of a specific trait or quality, such as the capacity to show empathy or be self-aware. *Professional development* refers to the process in which the knowledge and skills associated with becoming a counselor are acquired. There has been confusion over the commonalities and differences of these constructs in the professional literature, which is likely because both the personal and professional identities of counselors contribute to the counseling relationship. Counselors' primary instrument in building therapeutic relationships is themselves: their personalities, characteristics, and traits. These same personal characteristics (e.g., capacity for empathy and understanding) are also important skills for a professional counselor. Understandably, there are some intersections between personal and professional development. Before describing the potential intersections between counselor personal and professional development, the constructs of *personal growth*, *personal development*, and *professional development* are briefly defined.

Personal Growth and Personal Development

Personal growth refers to a general process of revealing one's "real self" (Rowan, 1997). Rather than acquiring a specific trait, personal growth occurs when the totality of the individual progresses toward his or her potential. Personal growth is interchangeable in the counseling literature with Rogers' concept of self-actualization, or "movement toward the realization of an individual's full potential" (Raskin & Rogers, 1980, p. 133).

Growth infers a positive change, whereas personal development can be either negative or positive (Irving & Williams, 1999). *Personal development* is the process of acquiring a personal trait or quality (e.g., self-awareness, other-awareness, empathy); it can be developed through various methods (e.g., small group activity, journal writing). Personal development can be planned, goal-directed, and structured to facilitate the acquisition of a particular trait. I am interested in both the personal growth and development of counselor trainees and will include trainees' experiences of either in this study. For the purposes of this study, the terms *development* and *growth* will be used synonymously in order to eliminate redundancy in writing.

Professional Development

Professional development is the process of acquiring knowledge and skills (e.g., employing counseling techniques, understanding ethical and legal guidelines); it can be developed through various training methods (e.g., coursework, internship). Counselor professional development is a process that is often parallel and interchangeable with their personal development, as many of the skills associated with effective counseling (e.g., empathy, self-awareness, critical thinking) are also personal characteristics. As counselors explore personal development, they may also encounter professional growth.

Intersections Between Personal and Professional Development

Counselor *personal growth*, *personal development*, and *professional development* likely occur simultaneously in an ongoing, forward progression toward maturity, as both an individual and practitioner. Also, experienced counselors continually receive, process,

and apply new information that would contribute to their personal and professional development. As counselors acquire new knowledge and experience related to their personal growth (e.g., family crisis, travel abroad, health problems, etc.), these experiences will influence them professionally. For example, a counselor who has experienced health problems will likely demonstrate increased empathy for a client having a similar crisis. Similarly, counselors who develop professionally will also experience personal growth and development. For example, as counselors develop knowledge about specific counseling skills (e.g., active listening, paraphrasing) they will likely practice their abilities within their personal relationships. The concept of the personal and professional selves overlapping is consistent with Rogers' (1958) notion of congruence.

In essence, the process of becoming professional counselors is dynamic and multifaceted as counselors trainees' are called not only to acquire the necessary professional knowledge and skills, but also to demonstrate intrapersonal maturity. When counselors exhibit deficits in either their personal or professional development (e.g., inappropriate breeching confidentiality, failing to build rapport, engaging in plagiarism), they would be considered *impaired* (Eichenfield & Stoltenberg, 1996) and would need remediation or dismissal from their graduate program or the profession.

The constructs of personal growth, personal development, and professional development guide this study because there is a need in the professional literature to know more about the process of counselor development (Furr & Carroll, 2003): how counselors experience their development and the interactions between the personal and professional. The process of becoming a counselor is multifaceted and dynamic and can

be challenging to articulate. Through the methodologies of phenomenology and narrative inquiry, this study will investigate the dynamic process of counselor trainee development in order to reveal the complexities of the interactions between their personal and professional growth.

Analytical Framework

This study was conducted using phenomenological methods, while also drawing upon constructs from narrative inquiry. Psychological phenomenological methods (Husserl, 1931) were used to identify themes of counselor trainee personal growth and development through two interviews with each participant. In addition, narrative inquiry, specifically the construct of coherence from the life story methodology (Linde, 1993), was used to draw upon and examine how participants' life stories hold together. Phenomenology and narrative inquiry were also used to identify and describe the recurring themes within and across participants' descriptions of their experiences of personal and professional growth. Further descriptions of the procedures for data collection and analysis are described below, including participant recruitment and selection.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology was founded upon the philosophy of Edmund Husserl during the 1930s. He believed in the philosophical tenets of *epoche*, or the suspension of judgments, and intentionality of consciousness, the belief that consciousness is directed toward an object. Those who agreed and carried these tenets forward were primarily in the social

sciences, including sociology and psychology. These social sciences were built on philosophical foundations that influenced various perspectives of phenomenology, such as psychological, dialogical, hermeneutic, existential, and transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 1998). Despite their differences, all phenomenological studies describe "the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon" (p. 51). Usually the data are collected through interviews and then reviewed repeatedly to discover themes among the individuals. These themes emerge to provide descriptions of the lived experience, which give meaningful insight to the reader about the phenomenon. The process of data analysis requires the researcher to employ "bracketing" or suspending of his/her judgments in order to capture the true experience of the participant.

Psychological Phenomenology

Psychological phenomenology focuses on individuals' meaning of their experiences rather than group experiences. The philosophical tenets of psychological phenomenology are "determining what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it" (Husserl, 1931). The methods of psychological phenomenology are derived from this philosophy and typically consist of interviews with participants.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research method that is used to gather information about social problems or personal experience through the telling of stories.

Specifically, the life story methodology (Linde, 1993) is used to gather information about individuals' identity development through the telling of their life events and experiences.

Life Story

Technical and nontechnical definitions have been used to describe life stories. Simply stated, life stories are the events and experiences that establish understanding of one's identity, or how we know who we are. Linde's (1993) life story theory provides helpful analytic tools for this study, especially the discourse units of explanation, chronicles, and literal stories as well as the construct of coherence.

When considering life stories, *coherence* refers to the relationships between the levels of text (e.g., word, sentence, and phrase) and the whole text, or conversely, the whole text to the smaller discourse units. Essentially, drawing from linguistics, coherence refers to how a story holds together. Coherence also appreciates the relationship between speaker and audience as he or she seeks to communicate stories in a logical and coherent manner, while the audience seeks to understand and communicate this back to the speaker. In this study, participants explored their personal and professional development through the telling of stories. How participants' stories and the ways in which they were told led the researcher to identify the intersections between their personal and professional development (Linde, 1993).

Participant Selection

Participants for this study were six counseling professionals from geographically diverse parts of the United States who had recently received their master's degrees. New

counseling professionals were individuals who had graduated from a graduate counseling program within the 18 months prior to the commencement of the study. Graduates represented programs that were accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). They had graduated from school counseling, mental health, community, rehabilitation, marriage and family, or substance abuse counseling programs.

Potential participants were recruited via e-mail announcement. I began by contacting approximately 20 counseling program faculty across the United States whom I or my committee members knew and asked them to forward an e-mail announcing the research opportunity to recent graduates. The e-mail included my contact information. Once I was contacted by potential participants, I obtained their postal addresses and mailed them the following: (a) a description of the research, (b) an invitation to participate, (c) the description of the incentive for participating, (d) a demographic and program questionnaire (Appendix A), (e) a screening questionnaire (Appendix B), and (f) a self-addressed, stamped envelope (to return the demographic and screening questionnaires).

The demographic and program questionnaire provided descriptive information about the prospective participants and their respective programs and was used to determine if they met eligibility criteria (e.g., master's degree in counseling, within 18 months of graduation). The demographic questionnaire was also used to select participants who represented a range of multicultural diversity (e.g., age, gender, race, ethnicity, geographical location, and university affiliation), and program types (e.g., marriage and family, rehabilitation, community, mental health, school and substance

abuse), in order to gain varied perspectives of personal and professional development. The screening questionnaire was used to gather information about the participants' suitability for the study (e.g., experience of and willingness to describe their personal growth).

A second identical e-mail was sent to different program faculty, using the methods above, to announce the research opportunity. These methods were repeated until the desired number of 20 prospective participants was obtained. I selected the 6 from the 20 participants who met the criteria and who seemed suitable (e.g., experience of and willingness to describe their personal and professional development) to participate in the study. The six who were chosen to participate also represented diversity in geographical location and program specialization. Consent documents (Appendix C) were sent to the 6 participants. Once the consent documents were signed and returned, I arranged interviews with each participant. The 6 participants who were selected to participate were included in a drawing for a $50 check to use in the ACA bookstore. The raffle drawing occurred following the second interviews.

Data Collection

Participants were asked to reflect on their personal and professional development through two audiotaped interviews. Due to the geographical distance between me and the participants, all the interviews were conducted over the phone except for one. The participant with whom I conducted the face-to-face interviews lives within the pre-determined 150 mile radius for in-person interviews. The two interviews were each approximately 60 minutes in length and allowed time to gather detailed information about

the participants' personal and professional development. The interviews were semistructured and consisted of open-ended questions related to participants' personal and professional development. They were prompted in these questions to tell stories in order to gather context about how the participants create meaning about themselves and their lives. For example, during the first interview, participants were asked to tell about an event(s) earlier in their lives that influenced them (see Appendix D).

Once the initial transcription and analysis of the data were completed, participants were provided with a brief summary of their interview to reflect on their personal growth and development and some prompts to prepare them for the second interview (e.g., "Consider significant events that occurred during your master's training"). Next, a second round of interviews, approximately 60 minutes in length, was conducted to allow participants to further discuss their experiences of personal growth and development, particularly while in their counselor training. The interview questions may have included those not asked from the interview protocol (Appendix D) during the first interview due to time constraints. Participants were asked questions such as "Describe what has shaped your understanding of who you are as a professional," and "What experiences in your master's training helped to shape you as a person?" (Appendix D).

Data Analysis

Following the data collection, two methodological techniques, psychological phenomenology (Husserl, 1931) and life story (Linde, 1993) were used for analysis. Data were analyzed in multiple levels in order to identify across and within participants the

recurring experiences that held together in ways that allowed me to describe consistent

patterns of counselor personal and professional development.

The first level of analysis was conducted by drawing from Linde's (1993) Life

Story method. I listened to each participant's audiotaped interviews (within case) in order

to understand their perceptions of their identities and overall development. Explanations,

chronicles, literal stories, and other discourse units were identified within the transcripts

based on redundancy, recurrence, saliency, and valence of the interviewee. I used these

discourse units to write narratives of each participant's life to gain understanding and

awareness of how they construct their perceptions of themselves and their development.

The second level of analysis was conducted using psychological phenomenology

(Husserl, 1931). Following interviews with the participants, I analyzed the data to identify

themes across all of their experiences based on redundancy, saliency, recurrence, literal

stories, and explanations. I hired a professional transcriber, who transcribed the

participant interviews. I read the transcriptions to gain an overall sense of the

participants' experiences. Transcribed data were then entered into NUD*IST (Non-

numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing; Richards & Richards,

1994), a data analysis software program. This program was chosen because of the various

features to assist in (a) storage and organization of files, (b) file searching, (c) crossing

themes, (d) diagramming, (e) template creation, and (f) analysis and reporting.

After reviewing the interview transcriptions, I manually entered them into the

NUD*IST program to be analyzed. I identified themes among participant experiences and

created categories, or "nodes." For example, assume all participants talk about their

spirituality as factors in their personal development. I would create a node called

"spirituality" and select the text from all the transcripts where participants talk about

spirituality. I can either print this information or cross this node with others. As multiple

nodes are created based on participant transcripts, I can cross themes to review

information of multiple nodes. For example, if there are nodes related to spirituality, such

as "spiritual practice" and "no spiritual practice," I can direct the NUD*IST program to

cross "spirituality" with "spiritual practice" and "no spiritual practice" to see differences

in perspective regarding personal development and spirituality. The program then creates

matrices to depict this information. Furthermore, as information is categorized, NUD*IST

creates visual diagrams which facilitate discussion of data analysis. These diagrams

represent, in the case of phenomenological analysis, the grouping of text into larger

meanings. The larger meanings are then grouped into themes, which are then used to

create the thorough description (the essence) (Creswell, 1998). Identifying themes across

participants provided consistent patterns that were used to describe counselor personal

and professional development. Additionally, I employed manual analysis of the data in

visualize the emerging themes through diagrams and charts. In order to further

comprehend the data, I hung large sheets on paper on the wall and drew diagrams, charts,

and lists that facilitated my understanding of what was materializing from the

participants' experiences.

The third and final level of analysis was drawn from Linde's (1993) life story

method in order to highlight an individual's experiences of personal growth and

development. One participant's interview was selected to explore in greater depth how

she constructs and tells the stories of her life while highlighting the themes that emerged

from the second layer of analysis. The third layer allows for a deeper and more meaningful description of counselor trainee personal and professional development.

The participant was chosen for the third layer of analysis because her story was compelling and best represented the intersections of personal and professional development. According to Linde (1993), individuals do not articulate their stories completely; they tell and retell portions of them, which may eliminate or modify information. Through the use of the life story method, I explored the coherence of the participant's stories—how she created meaning about her life and how her overall story held together.

Summary

Psychological phenomenology (Husserl, 1931) and life story (Linde, 1993) methods were used to gain understanding about the intersections between counselor trainees' personal and professional development. Participants were recruited through e-mail by graduate counseling program faculty who were acquainted with me and/or my committee members. Participants were offered an incentive for participating. Participants were asked to describe through narratives their experiences of personal growth and development in two 60-minute, semistructured, audiotaped interviews. Three layers of analysis were conducted to identify themes, based on redundancy, recurrence, saliency, and valence that illustrate the intersection between counselor personal and professional development. The layers included: (a) within cases, (b) across cases, and (c) one in-depth case. The multiple layers of analysis provided the rigor necessary to accurately identify and describe the phenomena. The next chapter provides a rich, contextual, and thorough

description of counselors' experiences of personal and professional development,

especially the intersection between these phenomena.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The aforementioned study was conducted to explore the experiences of counselor trainee personal growth and development while in training. Counselor education faculty members from selected Council for Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs (CACREP) nationwide were notified of the research opportunity and were asked to forward an attached research announcement to recent counseling graduates. Thirteen prospective participants showed interest in the research study by e-mailing the researcher who then provided them with demographic and screening questionnaires. Six participants who best fulfilled the research criteria were chosen to participate in the study. Participants were asked questions regarding their personal growth and development while in training during two 60-minute semistructured interviews. Through the data analysis, themes emerged regarding participants' personal growth and development.

Counselor trainees' experiences of personal growth and development were analyzed using two qualitative methodologies: Life story (Linde, 1993) and phenomenology (Husserl, 1931). Three levels of analysis were conducted using the aforementioned methodologies to gather a rich description of counselor personal growth and development. The first layer of analysis was conducted using the life story method used to gather information about the participants and their understanding of their personal growth and development through the telling of stories. The second layer of analysis was conducted using phenomenology in order to explore the common themes across counselor

trainees' experiences. The third and final level of analysis was conducted using life story methodology by highlighting an individual's experiences of personal growth and development while in training in light of the themes that emerged across participants. With each layer of analysis, the understanding of counselor trainee personal growth and development grows deeper and richer to provide a thorough description of the phenomenon.

The following chapter includes the results of the first layer of analysis, life story method, where demographic and biographical information is provided for each participant. This first layer also includes the participants' understandings of who they are and what life experiences have shaped them. Next, the results of the second layer of analysis, where phenomenology was employed, are reported. Finally, the results of the third layer of analysis are explored. The life story method was employed once again to provide an in depth description of counselor personal growth and development by telling one participants' life story. This chapter concludes with a summary of the research findings.

<div align="center">Life Story Method: First Layer of Analysis</div>

In order to gather rich, descriptive information about the personal and professional development of counselor trainees, I interviewed six participants about their experiences during graduate training. Participants were asked a series of semistructured questions related to their personal and professional experiences during their master's program. Following two 60-minute interviews with each participant, the data were transcribed and analyzed. I used prompting questions that included, "What is easy about being you?" and

"What is difficult about being you?" to orient them to the nature of the interview questions and to gather more descriptive information regarding their understanding of themselves.

The Life Story Method was used for the first layer of analysis in order to gather experiences related to the intersections between participants' personal and professional development. I reread and listened to each participant's interview transcripts. I listened for redundancy, recurrence, saliency, and valence of each of participants' stories. The following are stories related to participants' experiences of personal and professional development and they influence one another.

Carrie

Carrie is a married Caucasian in her mid-20s with no children. She lives in the Midwest and completed her master's degree in community counseling in 2005. Her employment history prior to her graduate education included positions in customer service, in-home care, and medical records. Her master's degree in community counseling was a 48-credit-hour program and followed a formal cohort format. She reported that her program did not require any extracurricular activities related to personal growth and development, such as personal counseling. At the time of the study, she was employed full-time as a vocational rehabilitation counselor and part-time as a domestic violence counselor.

When asked, "What is easy about being you?" Carrie stated her ease in connecting with people as well as her ability to not cast judgment. She stated, "being able to be really social and talk to anybody." She gave an example related to her comfort in talking with

strangers, "I talk to people in the grocery store, help people find things, whether they're up for it or not. . . . I think that's pretty easy to for me, almost comforting actually." She also described how not casting judgment on others come rather easily to her through the following statement:

> Some people might hear something about somebody, or might see something, and then just forever see that person that way, but for me I can just kind of put it aside and try to look at the person for the good that they have in them.

Carrie was also asked, "What is difficult about being you?" and described her challenges with perfectionism. She stated, "The difficult part about being me, I would say, is being a perfectionist. I like everything to be perfect." She further described how being a perfectionist has proven to be challenging for her:

> Life isn't perfect. It's not going to always be perfect. But it's like I always strive for perfection in myself. And I'm not that hard on other people, but for me it's like, you know, if I'm not doing the best I can do, I can be really, really hard on myself.

She further described that her perfectionism influences her work and relationships:

> So it's like I can be really hard on myself, and even my coworkers tease me because when I leave work at the end of the day, regardless of what time it is or if I'm running late, I file. I'm like obsessive/compulsive. All the stuff in my boxes, I have all my paperwork in my file, all my files are in the drawer. It's like, that's the kind of stuff where, you know, my husband, I'm always on him, like put your stuff away. . . . So when my own expectations of myself fall short, sometimes I struggle with that.

Carrie described several experiences that have shaped her throughout her life. She has been highly influenced and affected by several relationships throughout her life, including her stay-at-home mother, elementary school teachers, significant others, graduate school faculty, colleagues, and supervisors. She was very close with her stay-at-home mother and found it challenging to be away from her when it was time to begin

kindergarten. Consequently, she developed a close relationship with her kindergarten teacher, who is someone she maintains a mentoring relationship with. Carrie also stated that she was also shaped by the break-up of a long-time boyfriend. Through the challenges, she stated that she learned how to accept others and this has helped her to have a happy married life with someone else. Carrie discussed her collegial relationships during her graduate training, stating that she received support and universality that was helpful in her process.

When asked about how her personal growth and development has influenced her professionally, Carrie stated that she is a dedicated and committed professional. She's organized, motivated, and systematic, in order to assure she's providing effective counseling. She referenced several times the importance of continually pushing herself through researching, supervision, and consultation to offer the best possible care to her clients, providing a supportive counseling relationship and connecting them with necessary resources. As a domestic violence counselor, she advocates for her clients to assure they receive the services they need because she believes this is a basic human right.

Her life experiences have also shaped her work as a counselor by acknowledging her need to accept her limitations. She described her tendency to be "harder on [herself] than on her clients," that she occasionally doesn't meet her expectations for herself. She offers her clients acceptance and compassion more easily than she does for herself. She is a self-proclaimed perfectionist and continually struggles to accept her limitations. This influences her work by contributing to her level of dedication and professional standards, while also creating challenges in accepting imperfection.

She described how her 6-year long relationship prior to her marriage has shaped her work as a counselor. Through the tumultuous relationship and break-up with her former partner, she knows that her domestic violence clients must "come to their own realizations" about the quality of their relationships. She knows that she cannot force them to leave an abusive relationship, but rather, she can offer them emotional support and community resources knowing that when they are ready, and if they choose that they will end the relationship. Although she struggles to not tell her clients to leave abusive relationships, she doesn't because she knows it can be counterproductive. She referenced those closest to her who encouraged her to leave her unhealthy relationship and how it caused her to cling even more to her boyfriend. Based on that experience, she described how she accepts her clients where they are and does her best to offer them options and to brainstorm ways to protect themselves and their children (e.g., safety plans). She believes that her greatest goal is that her clients know that "the door is always open for them," especially when they might make a decision to return to an abusive relationship. Carrie stated that she understands that it is a process to end a relationship, even when the individual knows it isn't healthy.

Cece

Cece is a married Caucasian in her late-20s with two children. She and her husband have an 11-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son. She lives in the Western United States and completed her master's degree in counseling, with an emphasis in college counseling and student services in 2006. She worked in student affairs before pursuing her graduate education to enhance her knowledge and skills. Cece's graduate

program was 60 credit hours and followed a formal cohort format. She reported that her

program required attendance at four personal growth workshops in the first year of

graduate school and 10 personal counseling sessions during the program. At the time of

the study, she was employed as a career advisor.

When asked "What is easy about being you?" Cece stated that she easily meets

and connects with a variety of people. Conversely, the most difficult thing about her is

managing her epilepsy. She stated:

> That's the difficult part of being me [managing epilepsy], especially because the
> side effects are never going away. I'm taking medication and will need to for my
> whole life, so the side effect of being tired, that's one of the hardest things about
> me.

Cece also stated that she can be highly sensitive to others' feedback. She said:

> I think I'm very sensitive to the need to be on their side to avoid criticism. When
> people do criticize me, or hurt my feelings, or somehow say something bad, I take
> it personally and it's very emotional, it's hard to deal with.

Cece, a career advisor at a college, described several experiences that shaped her

throughout her life. She recalled the dysfunction and instability in her childhood home

was being significant to her life experiences. She described how education was not

encouraged and how many of her siblings did not graduate from high school. Cece

recalled the mentorship she received from people at a community agency that facilitated

her in having basic needs met, while also encouraging her in her education. She recalled a

specific mentor who encouraged her to "take a different path" than her siblings by

focusing on her education. She stated that these experiences with her mentors helped her

to rise above the challenges in order to move forward in her life.

Early in her graduate counseling training, Cece was diagnosed with a seizure disorder and was beginning a treatment regimen. She described the challenges of adjusting to the powerful medications, raising a family with her husband, while attending graduate school. She discussed at length her experiences with her fellow cohort members in training. She stated that she received much support from her cohort members during her health challenges, while also learning about those different than herself.

When asked how her personal growth and development has influenced her professionally, Cece stated without hesitation, her ability to empathize with her clients. Her experiences have helped her to have sensitivity and understanding for people from multiple backgrounds, specifically with their feelings of loss, fear, and confusion. She further stated that her experiences of coming from a dysfunctional home and dealing with health challenges have caused her to have "high expectations and high empathy" in a directive manner as a counselor. She feels comfortable having empathy, while also pushing her students, because she "knows it can be done," based on her experiences. She sees herself as a cheerleader who encourages her students while not allowing them to make excuses for their behavior. Experiencing challenges in her childhood, and working with some students who, she claims are "used to having things done for them," have caused her to not readily accept her students' excuses. She referenced several experiences with students whose parents filled out their applications, and made necessary phone calls and appointments for them to attend college. Her approach with students is that of taking no excuses and teaching them to take care of themselves. She stated that her counseling and style and skills have evolved directly from her experiences of "self-parenting" during her childhood. Cece believes that some counselors espouse a parent-child type of

counseling relationship, which she believes hinders clients from taking responsibility for their decisions and behavior. She values "going alongside the student" rather than "in front of them."

Miles

Miles is a married Caucasian in his mid-30s with no children. He lives in the Midwest and completed his master's degree in counseling in higher education in 2006. Prior to his graduate education, he worked as a musician and music teacher. Miles' graduate program was 48 credit hours and followed a formal cohort format. He reported that his program did not require extracurricular activities related to personal growth and development; however, students were strongly encouraged to participate in professional counseling organizations. At the time of the study, he was employed as an academic counselor at a community college.

When asked "What is easy about you?" Miles stated that it is easy for him to connect with others and experiences in his upbringing. He described his natural ability to engage in conversation with people by stating the following, "I guess I don't have trouble, I don't have an issue starting a conversation with somebody I don't know. I'm pretty outgoing, I guess." Miles said it is easy to "be in my skin sometimes," and further explained by referring to his upbringing in this statement:

> I think, well, I had very loving parents, despite the fact that I wasn't really close with one of my parents, that didn't affect what I thought of love. I think it's easy to be in my skin sometimes because of that.

Conversely, Miles described that he can be self critical and that it creates challenges for him. He described how "being hard on" himself effects his work as a counselor. He stated:

> I think I am a little too hard on myself as far as being myself and a counselor. Sometimes I just, I need to accept where I am. You know, I need to accept where I am and who I am in terms of my counseling abilities right now. Especially with counseling because I'm so into seeing progress. I want so much so fast. That's difficult for me to do that every day, I guess, and think that I want to be so much better. But I'm not quite there yet. That's something I think I'm a little tough on myself.

Miles, a community college counselor, described several components of his life story that have influenced his personal growth and development and subsequently, his approach to counseling. He mentioned that his social network, his relationship with his mother, and his experiences as a musician have significantly influenced him. He recalled experiences during high school at a Center of Arts and Sciences with a community of classmates who also studied music. He described experiences playing music alongside a community of African American musicians that elicited a level of sensitivity and appreciation for the cultural differences. He also recalled his experiences in California, living in a predominantly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community while playing music for a theater. He dealt with challenges with conservative friends as he was a single heterosexual male in a predominantly LGBT community and was questioned about his sexuality. Again, he developed a sensitivity and appreciation for the prejudices experienced by the sexual minority by way of working alongside them. He stated that these experiences influence his approach to clients because he's able to have empathy and appreciation for their experiences.

Miles was highly influenced by several relationships during his life. His close relationship with his mother, who was also a musician, highly influenced his understanding of himself as a musician and individual. He was also supported by some of his colleagues during training, his practicum supervisor, and several musician friends throughout his life.

When asked how his personal growth and development have shaped him as a counselor, Miles answered by describing the parallels between music and counseling. He recalled an experience when he was to play a solo at a musical workshop soon after his break-up with his fiancé. Just prior to the show beginning, he opted not to take the solo because he "didn't have anything to share," that day and "didn't want to play those notes," which happened to be a love ballad. He recalled his mentor asking him about his decision to not play the solo and he remembered saying that he didn't have anything to give. Miles connected this experience to counseling because he believes that many clients feel similarly in that they have gone through a tragedy and have nothing share. They may be afraid of "breaking down or saying too much." He views music and counseling in similar ways. He explained that there is language involved for both and that both can be used as a method for expressing emotions. Miles believes that performing music has helped him to accept and empathize with others, while also not making assumptions about them because emotions are very personal. He believes that receiving feedback from clients about how counseling is progressing is important. He's also aware that, similarly to his opting out of his solo, those clients may not be ready, able, or willing to share sometimes in counseling, and he accepts this.

Norm

Norm is a married Caucasian in his mid-30s with no children. He lives in the

Midwest and completed his master's degree in community counseling with an emphasis

in substance abuse counseling in 2006. Before entering his graduate program, he stated

that he was a golf course superintendent. Norm's graduate program was 52 credit hours

and did not follow a formal cohort format. He reported that his program required that

students participate in a minimum of five personal counseling sessions and observe five

group sessions as a component of personal growth activities. At the time of the study, he

was employed full-time in private practice and was pursing his doctoral studies in

counseling psychology.

When asked "What is easy about being you?" Norm described his ability to

connect with people. He stated:

> So I think when it comes to that, I think it's very easy for me, easy for people to
> talk to me. It is very easy for people to understand my empathy toward their
> situation, and I think they also see the sincerity of how I view their problems very
> seriously, not trivially.

Norm further stated, "I'd say, just to sum it up . . . it's very easy for me to be me, to be

very laid back." He also stated that it's easy for him to be nonjudgmental. "I would say

for me, I'm very easy going, I'm not judgmental," and he more specifically described how

this manifests in his work as a substance abuse counselor. He stated, "whatever issue the

client brings in, I'm there—I mean, we're talking about it," and referring to a client who

has relapsed, he said, "you can tell me, you know, ten times that you still, you know, you

had alcohol if you're trying to quit or whatever, and that's fine, but I'm still not going to

judge you." Norm also described that challenge he faces in being himself. He described

his challenges in the area of trust with others. He said, "I'm too quick to trust. I've had other people tell me this. . . . I'll trust and then I'll learn there is some hidden information or something. I struggle with this."

Norm stated that there are several things that have contributed to his personal growth and development throughout his life. He described his family structure and birth order significantly influenced how he was raised. Norm's parents had them in older age and there is a span of 20 years between him and his oldest sister and 8 years between him and his next oldest sibling. He described that he was primarily raised by his older siblings. This was, in part, due to his father's undiagnosed and untreated schizophrenia that took his mother's attention away from the family. In his late 20s, Norm's father committed suicide at the age of 72, an event that deeply shaped him as an individual and counselor. He was also shaped by his divorce with his first wife. He has since remarried and, as an afterthought, mentioned that his mother-in-law needed a kidney transplant for which he donated. He stated that this helped him to appreciate the value of life.

Norm also described his experiences during his training that helped shape him personally. He was mentored and supervised by faculty who took a vested interest in his development. He also had support from his colleagues in the program. He recalled experiences in his practicum and internship that provided the opportunity for him to practice his counseling skills. He also described experiences working with people from diverse backgrounds in his counseling experiences and in his cohort. He shared about a colleague who had recently emigrated from the Middle East and how they developed a meaningful friendship during their program. He described feeling humbled that she would trust him and share about her life with him given their differences.

When asked how his personal experiences have shaped him as a counselor, Norm mentioned his family structure: Having older parents, and a diversity of ages between him and his siblings. He's aware that having such a unique upbringing has caused some challenges for him. He also described how the suicide of his father has influenced his approach with clients because he feels the need to be aware of his limitations as a counselor and his responsibility to advocate for them. He described how he has a responsibility to deal with his life challenges so they do not interfere with his work with clients. He emphasized the importance of ethical practice and knowing one's limitations.

Renee

Renee is a single Caucasian in her mid-20s with no children. She lives in the Midwest and completed her master's degree in school counseling in 2007. Before pursuing her graduate education, she was employed in business advertising. She left corporate America to pursue graduate training in school counseling in order to facilitate students' development. Renee's graduate program was 48 credit hours and did not follow a formal cohort format. She reported that her program did not require extracurricular activities in personal growth and development. At the time of the study, she was employed as a part-time school counselor and part-time therapeutic wilderness guide.

When asked, "What is easy about being you?" Renee described her ability to connect with others, the privileges associated with her race, and her optimistic disposition. She stated about her ability to connect with others, "I think that helps to put other people at ease and really allow me to develop good relationships with a variety of

people, which I enjoy a lot." When referring to connecting with people in her personal

life, Renee said:

> I'm really fortunate that I've got great friends that I feel like I can trust, that I feel care about me, and I know that if I need help that I'm taken care of, and I guess that's really helped me.

Renee also implied that it is easy being herself as indicated by the following

statement, "I have privileges that a lot of people don't." She further described the ease of

being herself by describing her positive attitude. She stated:

> I think I'm also pretty comfortable with rolling with the punches, so I want, actually this would be informative. . . . I won an award for an optimism essay when I was eleven, and I really think that having a positive attitude has helped me a lot. Because it just makes life easier. I mean, things aren't going to go your way. We all know that. But, just having that strong belief that it will get better, it always gets better.

When asked "What is difficult about being you?" Renee described her challenges

in asking for help and for making positive changes regarding social justice issues.

Regarding asking for help she stated:

> It is difficult to ask for help. I was brought up to really value independence and autonomy. My dad's an entrepreneur and my mom's going back to work after their divorce. After my parents' divorce [my mom] was very independent and very self-sufficient, at least from outside appearances. And so I think I learned to place a strong value on taking care of yourself, even to the point that you could take care of others. . . . So I think it's challenging when I do need help for me to admit it, and . . . ask the people who are around me. Especially since I was young and even as a counselor, it's difficult for me to be emotional because I think I have sometimes seen where that's not helpful, and so it's challenging.

Renee also described the challenge in wanting to bring positive change to marginalized

populations while also understanding her privilege as a Caucasian American. She

described her challenge in using the skills that she has to be effective in others' lives

given the multicultural dynamics. She said:

I have this privilege, of being white, I have this privilege of having an education, I have this privilege of seeing the change I want to see in the world, but I'm struggling with how to enact it. And so, what's difficult is knowing how to create meaning that's enduring—for myself, but more so for others, to really help in the best way I can.

Renee described several factors that have contributed to her personal growth and development, including early childhood experiences her spirituality and her experiences with diverse populations. Renee described the story of her father's business going bankrupt and how that affected her sense of security and safety at an early age. She shared how losing their house and car caused her to question the meaning of money and material items. She described that by losing everything, she learned to trust in her higher power that she'll be provided for. She also discussed her experiences of being Caucasian and moving away to college and being introduced to other cultures, backgrounds, and belief system and how this caused her to reflect on the privileges she has as a White female in American society.

When asked how her personal growth and development have influenced her as a counselor, Renee stated that she has acceptance for herself and others. She described how her experiences have caused her to want to connect with other people on an authentic and meaningful level. Having experienced what is like to "lose everything," she feels a responsibility to dedicate herself to those people in need, helping them to access resources and serve as a liaison between them and the system. She has specifically chosen to work in areas with People of Color who are disadvantaged financially. Her experiences in attending a large state university and her training experiences in her counseling program have helped her to feel comfortable with a variety of different people. She also

brings hope and optimism to her work as a counselor having experienced possibilities despite her life challenges.

Thelma

Thelma is a married Caucasian in her late-30s with three children. She has one daughter, age 14, from a previous relationship and two stepdaughters, ages 12 and 10. She lives in the southern United States and completed her master's degree in marriage and family counseling in 2006. Before pursuing her graduate education she was an administrative assistant in an accounting department of grocery store chain. Thelma reported that her graduate counseling program was 61 credit hours and that it did not follow a formal cohort format. She did not recall any required personal growth activities.

When asked "What is easy about being you?" Thelma described her ability to accept adversities and to withhold judgment of others. She stated about accepting life challenges, "If it's not a life and death situation, it's not worth getting upset over. I enjoy being me." Thelma made a similar point by saying, "I'm not going to sit here and think less of somebody because they're working at McDonald's or something," which implies a withholding of judgment. She also mentioned what might be described as the opposite of judgment in the following statement, "So I don't know what I'm doing other than what I think I've done, which is modeling the respect and the generosity and the caring that I hope other people would do to other people."

When asked "What is difficult about being you?" Thelma stated that she struggles with disrespectful people and the grief process. She said, "I think, rude people are my nemesis. I have a low tolerance for disrespect." She also stated, "I don't do well

with grief," and described how at the beginning of her graduate training her brother

committed suicide followed by her "favorite, favorite" grandmother's death a year or so

later in December. She continued her story of multiple family deaths and how she coped

by stating:

> . . . and then, that August, my uncle died. So I'm like, what is with this? So, I
> mean, I think I grieve okay. But that's one area that I just don't like going there.
> And I wouldn't say I necessarily bottle it up, because I deal with it in my way. I
> know it's not healthy to hold stuff back. But that is an area if there is a difficulty
> . . . for myself. I am okay with other people grieving. And I'm not berating myself
> for grieving. I just know that that's an area that's difficult for me.

As she was describing the process of grief, she came upon a moment of self-awareness

and stated:

> You know what it is? I think I've figured it out. I understand the grief process so
> well I really don't know what to do with it. It's one of those, Well, you're in this
> stage right now . . . this is normal, you can do this. . . . I'm like ahhh, can I not just
> grieve?

When I asked Thelma what has contributed to her personal growth and

development she shared experiences related to her upbringing in a cult, her divorce, and

being a mother. Thelma's early childhood experiences in a cult, whose leader was her

father, significantly influenced her understanding of herself and others. She recalled being

physically, mentally, and emotionally abused for several years before leaving the occult at

age 13 to live with another family. It wasn't until she married and had her own daughter

in her 20s when she really began to work through the trauma of her early years. She began

what became a long journey of therapy and healing; however, her learning increased

when she and her husband divorced.

Thelma shared her experience of her and her husband divorcing as a significant

event that shaped her. She recalled knowing that they had problems; however, she didn't

realize until then how unsuitable they were for each other. She and her daughter moved in with her mother, she quit her job of 12 1/2 years, and they began a new life. There were benefits of going through so many changes at one time. She stated that these changes gave her "a lot of internal strength to know I really could do all the things I'd been afraid I didn't have the strength to do." During this time she sought guidance from a cognitive behavioral therapy who taught her to challenge the beliefs that were so deeply ingrained at an early age. She saw this therapist for only four sessions and experienced more healing than years of therapy with others. She also stated that being a mother was a significant experience for her because she felt a need to protect her daughter in the ways she was not.

When I asked Thelma how her experiences of personal growth and development have shaped her as a counselor she mentioned healing from her early childhood wounds and her approach to counseling. Thelma described the challenges she had in relationships with her biological family and her first husband that caused her to examine herself and her beliefs in order to heal. As a domestic violence counselor, Thelma believes her role is to facilitate others' experiences of healing through cognitive behavioral therapy. She's also witnessed her clients use physical measures to discipline their children, a practice she once used; however, she teaches them that "there are other options." Her experiences as a mother greatly influence her treatment approaches because she wants to offer clients helpful parenting strategies.

The six participants of this study described their understandings of their identities and the factors that have shaped them. Along with their demographic information, the participants offered their perceptions of the ease and difficulty of being themselves. Each

participant also shared experiences that contributed to their personal growth and development. They also described how their personal growth and development shaped them as counselors.

Phenomenology: The Second Layer of Analysis

Phenomenological methods were used in the second layer of analysis for the purpose of identifying common experiences of personal growth and development across all participants. First, I listened to each of the audio-taped participant interviews to identity the emerging themes, or commonalities, among their experiences. Next, I entered the transcriptions into the NUD*IST qualitative research software program for further analysis. After reading each interview transcript, I identified "nodes" or categories that represented participants' experiences of personal growth and development. Within each category, I continued this same process until the underlying meaning of their experiences emerged.

Two universal themes emerged related to counselor personal and professional development: Experiences In Training (EIT) and Experiences Out of Training (EOT) emerged from the data. Several subthemes emerged from the universal themes. The following subthemes of Experiences In Training (EIT) emerged from the data: Support from Colleagues, Faculty Mentorship, Practicum/Internship Experiences, and Other Training Experiences. The following subthemes of Experiences Out of Training (EOT) emerged from the data: Challenges in Personal Life, Supportive Personal Experiences, Personal Counseling, and Opportunities with Diverse Groups. The universal themes and subthemes will be explored below.

Experiences In Training

Participants described their Experiences in Training (EIT) that contributed to their personal and professional development. The most frequently described experiences were associated with support received from relationships with others: Support from Colleagues and Faculty Mentorship. The next most frequent subtheme was Internship and Practicum Experiences, followed by Other Training Experiences.

Support from Colleagues. One prominent theme that emerged from participants' EIT was the support they received from their fellow students. In fact, four of the six participants were in a cohort training format which they stated was especially helpful to them both personally and professionally. For example, Carrie stated the following about her experiences in a cohort format:

> It seemed like the bonding that we had and the connection that all of us had in the class wasn't found by others on the main campus because there were so many people. You know, you come to your class and go, and if you have different people in every class you're not getting very close to those people . . . [the cohort format] helped to create more meaningful relationships in my life. We created a level of trust.

She stated that "starting and ending the program" together helped to establish a the trust needed to challenge themselves. Similarly, Cece stated that she benefited from a cohort format of training because it offered her the opportunity to gain self-awareness in a safe environment. She stated:

> Well, I would say it's definitely true that the cohort experience helped me. Going through the program with the people that I grew with. The relationships were safe enough they could say things to me and I could learn things about myself and how I react to challenges.

She further explained:

> Being part of a cohort was probably one of the best things that had ever happened to me. We had a cohort of 12 people. Of those 12, probably 4 of them are still very close. But it made a huge difference in that, the first day of class, I looked around and thought, oh, this person, this person, this person will probably be, you know, my closest friend.

She further described how she benefited from building relationships with colleagues who were different then her:

> . . . [the colleagues] that I ended up gravitating to and becoming close to were very, very different from me and so I learned a lot about myself in that, explaining myself to them and sharing with them in the ways that they saw me. I mean, we could ask each other questions about one another's experiences because it's such a safe environment, and that also required a lot of support. It was a safe environment. It didn't really seem okay to do that in any other classrooms . . . that would not feel safe. This is a constant challenge. We were experiencing things, intellectual growth and emotional growth, but also had different things to say, and you have to cope in different ways.

For Cece, being a cohort helped her to process her preconceived notions about people who were different than her in a safe environment. Thelma also discussed her experiences in a cohort format:

> My classmates too [were supportive], you are doing this together. Most of you are taking classes together, helping each other. If you feel like you're by yourself, I wouldn't feel like that's the program doing it as much as student doing it. It's not like they set it up ahead of time for you to all go through it together. You just kind of do it on your own. If you're not going to be assertive then you're probably not going to be effective.

Two participants also described the professional benefits of being part of a cohort format. Carrie described how her cohort worked collaboratively. She stated, "Everybody worked together and even afterward as we're starting to look for internships and stuff, everyone was very helpful in letting all their classmates know of opportunities that they were finding."

Norm was not in a formal cohort format; however, he stated that he and some of his classmates arranged to take their classes together. He stated, "I had 2 or 3 of my classmates in every class," and as a result, they "really bonded a lot stronger." He further reflected on the level of intensity in his graduate training in relationship to undergraduate education, "It's a great learning experience to work with classmates and work with other people that are in the same track as you. . . a lot more focused than at the undergraduate level." He also stated:

> I think at this level that your peers and everybody is kind of going through the same stuff and taking the exact same courses, it's a lot more dialed in, it's a lot more personal, it's a lot more intimate, and you have a lot more camaraderie going on.

Similarly, Renee's program was not a cohort format; however, she mentioned that she still benefited from relationships with classmates that she developed during her training. She stated, "Throughout the course of pursuing my masters' degree I learned the value of relationships as a motivational component of life."

Miles had a negative experience during training related to a faculty member during a class (which I will describe later in detail). He stated that his classmates said, "I can't believe that just happened," which he described as being validated and supported by them. In this example, Miles was validated by his colleagues during a time of feeling powerless, which helped him to see that he could have been treated unfairly by someone in a position of power.

Carrie described how working with colleagues during practicum role plays helped to offer her support. When asked if the role playing was scripted or more personal, she stated:

You're working on real life issues. It's knowing that you really do have to have all of your own issues handled before you can start counseling other people. That was another thing, again, the cohort that I think was nice because by the time you get to that process, you're already a year into a program and some of you knew each other so well it wasn't awkward going in there and really opening up and you start to deal with life issues. So it was a real level of comfort already that I didn't feel awkward.

Carrie gained a deep level of support from her colleagues while she was working through her own issues. Having experienced a break up during her training, Carrie was able to process her feelings of loss with a specific colleague during a series of role playing activities. She remarked further about how this experience facilitated her personal and relational development:

It was so interesting, because just getting that whole new level of awareness and insight. And it just so happened that, although we had briefly talked about it during the first interview, about how my relationship was ending . . . that it really had fallen apart. Just like a week or two before starting the process during the semester, I learned that it was my issue, it was like, perfect timing. That was my issue that I had used as a treatment issue and just working through and gaining the awareness and coming to realize why the relationship did not work and then what things I can look for and do differently in future relationships. So that you both can have a healthy and meaningful relationship.

She stated that she "wouldn't have gotten to real life issues" if she was role-playing with a new classmate. The timing of the practicum and the cohort format helped to build rapport with her colleagues, which facilitated her willingness to become vulnerable.

A prominent subtheme of participants' EIT included support from colleagues. They benefited from the emotional and psychological support of encouraging one another, while also having an experience of universality. They were not going the journey alone.

Faculty Mentorship. In addition to collegial support, a prominent subtheme of EIT that emerged in the data was faculty mentorship. Participants benefited from individualized attention from faculty regarding their personal challenges during their training. Most of the participants had one or two faculty members with whom they developed a relationship with that promoted their personal and professional growth. For example, Carrie stated that "you could go to certain faculty if you were having problems, even outside of school, or if you were getting frustrated or overwhelmed." She further stated that her relationships with faculty helped her to "feel safe" to explore her own issues and her professional goals.

Similarly, when asked about experiences that helped her to grow personally, Cece stated:

> The relationship that I had with my program coordinator. My particular program coordinator has become very close with me, and we had become really close anyway, but she was really a good illustration for me. . . . I think that just made me more successful . . . having her as an example.

More specifically, Cece shared her experience of being diagnosed with epilepsy during her counselor training. She did not only benefit from gaining emotional support from faculty, but also by their optimism about her abilities to continue despite her personal obstacle for which she took a brief break from training. She stated:

> I had to have patience when diagnosed and I had my seizures. I had that relationship with [faculty] . . . they gave that empathy, not sympathy, like, "Oh, she can't do this so that's okay." Instead, they were like, "Oh wow, that's really something, but when are you going onto the next thing (in training)." It's not a, "Oh, you can give up now because you have this thing." And so, really, continuing the challenge throughout the break, that kind of thing. Role modeling.

Thelma also benefited from role modeling of faculty when they used their mistakes as examples of what to avoid in counseling, especially in respect to self-disclosure and boundaries. Carrie also benefited from mentorship and role modeling from faculty, especially in the areas of research. She stated that she developed as a researcher because of the "impact of some of the professors and faculty at [university name], and becoming interested in the types of research and work that they were doing, and that they had such a level of dedication to the counseling program."

Norm discussed how he benefited from faculty mentorship regarding clinical issues. He was introduced to various philosophical approaches to counseling and described a professor's attitude when dealing with sensitive client disclosures:

> I had a professor once tell me that, you know, it's like you can bring the worst stuff into the office, and at the end of the day I mean, I'm still going to be there, and I'll be there next week. It could be the fact that they killed somebody yesterday. Okay, we're going to deal with the legal issues behind that. I mean, I'm still not going to give up on you. You know?

Norm was guided to be emotionally present and vulnerable to client needs, while also managing the legal and ethical responsibilities of a competent counselor. This professor seemed to help Norm balance the ethical and personal dimensions of the counseling relationship through giving a personal example.

Miles described an experience in class with one of his professors that influenced him negatively. Although his retelling of this experience does not support the subtheme of faculty mentorship, it seems fitting to include this information in this section as it pertains to student/faculty relationships. He stated, "I feel like I could have used a little more individual attention, possibly." However, despite a "negative experience" with a

professor, he learned how he might handle the situation differently if ever in a similar position. He stated:

> There was a class that I had and I happened to be the only individual who had already started working for the college. I was called out in a condescending way in front of the class. It was a very negative experience for me. I came out of that class discouraged, but the one thing that I really did get out of that class was 4.0 GPA. The experience with the professor was the only negative experience I had and I still think about it now. I would like that [professor] to see where I am now and I would want her to understand that I don't think that was appropriately handled in class.

Although Miles did not disclose specific details of what the professor said, it was evident that this experience was troubling for him. He mentioned that he would "do things differently," in a similar situation.

Several participants indicated that they were mentored in meaningful ways through their experiences with counseling faculty. A common thread woven among their experiences was the relationship with a faculty member(s) that allowed for support, as in the case of Carrie, Cece, Norm, and Thelma. Their professional development was facilitated in research and clinical endeavors, while also challenging them to persist in the face of obstacles. It seems the majority of these participants were trained effectively by the investment faculty made toward their development.

Practicum/Internship Experiences. Another theme that emerged from the data regarding participants' EIT was their practicum and/or internship experiences. All six of the participants mentioned their counseling experience as important to their development was counselors for various reasons. For example, Carrie benefited from "being in the client chair" during her practicum role play experience. She described the format of the role play exercise:

> [We] would spend an hour where I would play the counselor role and counsel my partner and then the roles would reverse and my partner would become the counselor and I would be the client. And that went on for a whole semester just in that practice, and videotaped and then reviewed by the instructor.

Carrie also stated the benefits she experienced from this training technique. "You're working with your classmates, you're getting your practice counseling and you're working on real life issues."

Norm also benefited from the role play activities during practicum because he was able to apply what he had learned throughout his coursework. When asked about his development as a counselor and individual he stated, "I still think starting [with coursework] and going all the way up to the end of practicum was really a life changing experience." He further described his experience:

> You make it through [coursework] and suddenly it's like "wow . . . it's kind of cool, I kind of did it, I kind of feel like a counselor" and then you sit down in practicum and at that point is when you're going "oh my gosh, this is really going to happen now."

Its seems that practicum experience was a significant transitional component from student to counselor. He was challenged to apply what he had learned from coursework, while also having an internal experience of questioning his abilities.

Renee also benefited from her practicum experience because of the specific skills she was able to practice. She said, "I think going through practicum class was helpful. Practicing things like active listening while thinking about counseling from a theoretical perspective was really great to feel how that feels." She also experienced challenges to define her theoretical approach, a requirement during her practicum experience, and described how this helped her develop professionally:

Also as a counselor, being forced to pick a theoretical perspective, as much as I hated trying to do that because there are pieces of many that I agree with, I think it really helped me to figure out what kind of counselor I want to be.

During her practicum course, Renee described the process during which she examined her beliefs about human growth and development in an effort to define her theoretical approach. She described her challenge to "choose just one" approach and how her practicum experience helped her to reconcile her questions about theory. She stated:

I think it's good that I may draw from the other areas. . . . It totally threw me [in theories class] because I remember reading theories and thinking [that] picking just one was the dumbest thing ever. I just thought the single theories were so flighty, and a joke really. Then when I really, really got down to it, "ok this piece of it, this piece of it," just really dissected it, analyzed every portion, it was the only one that hit all of that marks. . . . I spent a weekend with books, not only my theories stuff, but with books I got from friends, other articles, really trying to figure out what is my orientation. Can't I just have my own? In practicum I asked myself if the theories were something that will work in a way I want to work with other people. I had the opportunity to really say, "Ok this is something I can espouse, this is something that I can support."

Her practicum helped her to identify what theories were consistent with her beliefs that would also be effective with clients.

Cece described the format of her pre-practicum, practicum and internship experiences and how these courses helped her to practice her skills throughout her training. She stated:

We had our practicum class, went for a full year and lasted one night a week from 7-9:45 an almost a 3 hour class . . . for an hour and half we would practice skills and the second hour and a half would be a group session basically with the 12 of us and the practicum instructor. It was intense and really helpful.

Her experiences during practicum seemed to facilitate the cohesiveness within the cohort group while allowing them to practice their counseling skills. She further stated,

"[Practicum] really built my counseling style and skills and [gave me] the opportunity to

be really mentored, and engaged and watched closely."

Renee described how her school counseling internship experience helped orient

her to the profession of counseling and the importance of collaborating with other

professionals. She stated:

> As a counselor having an opportunity to interact with other counselors, [other] people that are in different settings, [and] people in different fields, I think is really helpful . . . all the people I met were really supportive, really great people. I think it's the value of having so many different settings surround you is that you can ask, "so with this diagnosis what would you do?" Or if you had this type of client that you don't typically encounter, you can ask [others] and get some great ideas. I think watching other people from other professions and also in different settings is having that ability to collaborate and share resources and share knowledge. So collaborating is really, really helpful . . . to have that kind of community.

It was through her internship experience that Renee learned the importance of

collaborating and drawing on the expertise of other professionals. She later described how

she learned more about the school atmosphere and culture through close supervision and

collaboration with colleagues within the school setting.

Thelma described how her practicum and internship experiences allowed her to be

mentored by her supervisors. She gave the following example:

> In practicum I had a supervisor that said "you're going to get the clients that you're supposed to have." In other words, you're going to end up with someone who, for some reason, either you need to do some work, or you need be a better counselor. . . . My very first client was somebody who had been sexually abused as a child. I thought that was very interesting considering I was sexually abused as a child. Not that that's highly unusual, but it's interesting that that's the particular client I got.

Thelma was mentored by her practicum instructor toward the propensity to be matched

with clients for a specific purpose. She later described how she was able to guide this

client toward healing as she had been through her own process of healing. She relayed the story of working with this client:

> She came in; when I first saw her, she was dressed in very drab, gray, black, almost like sweats all the time. Her hair wasn't done, no makeup, not a whole lot of pride taken in her self. In talking to her . . . I pinpointed different areas for her to look at. I made a statement about her sister that basically she talked her teen daughter into going to live with her. Her sister had lots of money and a support system that in a way basically the daughter said "I want to go live with my aunt." So that's where she went . . . [my client] was very bitter about that as well as being abused as a child by an alcoholic father. Her husband would drink sometimes, which would remind her of her father. She was bringing all of these things up, and I would say things like, "you're angry at your sister for taking your life away, when we were talking about her daughter." She would make statements that seemed to help her to realize that "oh yeah, that is what I'm upset about and it's not just that I've been manipulated it is that my daughter was my whole life and she basically ripped my life away." As [counseling] progressed she started wearing makeup and she started dressing nicer and I wouldn't say anything, she would bring it up.

> Because I would want her to initiate saying something because I felt that it all needed to come from within her and I did not need to hand it to her. Throughout that process I had had relationship issues as well, by then I was divorced, but it was the same type of feelings toward that person and trying to relate the feelings to them and then not totally listening and taking it serious. In speaking with her about that as well whether it be parenting issues, whether it be relationship issues, I was just able to help her in every area she needed help in. That helped me realize, you know, I can do this.

Thelma's clinical example from her practicum portrays the parallel process that occurs for both client and counselor. She was able to facilitate her client's healing having experienced something similar in her own life, while also addressing some of her current relationship challenges. She also increased her self-efficacy as a counselor. This clinical example embodies the transformative possibilities for both client and counselor.

Carrie also described the benefits of effective supervision, which has influenced her clinical abilities. She described the need for supervision to assure that counselors are competent and effective, especially after training:

> We have such a strong will towards supervision in our program and that has carried out into my work life, just in the sense that I have a very strong level of supervision through [agency name] we have which is also required by the [state of residence name] to get your full counseling license. Just to get meaningful experiences out of it and to go to my supervisor and tell him about difficult or challenging cases and how to strategize and to come up with a plan and just making sure too that there is a ultimate plan and long term goals so that counseling is on track.

Through her practicum experience, Carrie learned how to use supervision as a resource to benefit her clients and her own development as a professional counselor. Similarly, Miles described how his supervisor helped him during practicum and how he wished he'd had even more time with her:

> We'd get a lot of time with our supervisor and that was great. She did a wonderful job, no question about that, but I wished I had more of that. I wish I had quite a few more clients and an entire semester, another semester, even another year.

Miles valued his supervision experience in practicum and desired additional training experiences that may be reflective of the insecurities of novice counselors.

Participants described the significance of practicum and internship experiences in their personal and professional development. Renee described the intrapersonal process of questioning beliefs and assumptions about human growth and development when exploring her theoretical orientation. Thelma and Carrie described the parallel healing process for both counselor and client as they began to practice their skills and work through their own past issues. Participants also indicated the benefit of supervision in their counseling development. Through practicing counseling skills and receiving feedback and support from their supervisors, the participants began to evolve from students to practitioners. They began to see themselves and others through a different framework that further facilitated their personal and professional development.

Other Training Experiences. Another theme that emerged from the data was additional training components, such as graduate coursework, experiences with a variety of individuals, and the training as a whole. Regarding specific courses that facilitated counselor development, Miles stated:

> I guess one other important aspect of my graduate work was the multicultural course . . . it really helped me to focus on a specific ethnic group and if I have to be working with a certain ethnic group, for example, I know more about where they may be coming from. I learned that there is a lot more that I need to learn about other cultures.

He also mentioned a few other courses that were helpful:

> My counseling techniques class really helped me, in conjunction with my psychotherapy class, to figure out specific client case studies . . . diagnosis, treatment and so forth. My research class helped me get the lingo down and so I believe that helped me as a professional to be more informed.

Miles seemed to benefit most from the multicultural, research, techniques, and psychotherapy courses as they facilitated his development as a professional counselor. Norm also described specific courses that he found significant to his development: "the group class, the career class, the theory class, the statistics courses, the psychopathology, and the human development courses that are talked about in the intro class are really explored on a deeper level."

Thelma spoke specifically about how class assignments facilitated not only her professional knowledge, but also her personally. She stated, "I know writing papers where we really had to look at ourselves and personal growth kinds of things, those helped me to reflect on myself as a person and counselor." Through one of these assignments she realized that she needed to "learn more" about the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. She stated, "What I did is I signed up for the [LGBT] allies class at school

and learned a lot about history, what is appropriate and not appropriate when working

with them. I also learned about my possible hang up zones." Through her class

assignments, Thelma gained awareness about her personal growth areas and chose to

pursue additional sources of information.

During her graduate training, Cece was also challenged personally by balancing

her training responsibilities and newly diagnosed epilepsy. She stated:

> having my first seizure during the program was a huge thing that changed me . . .
> it challenged my strength to persevere in my training. I thought I was kind of
> unflawed until I had these things completely out of my control.

She also described her cognitive dissonance in defining her professional role. Prior to her

counseling training she was in various student affairs positions and found herself "giving

advice." She struggled to understand the subtleties between her role in student affairs and

being a professional counselor. She said:

> . . . my role [as a counselor] is somewhat similar. I think my perception of what it
> is to be a professional [counselor] comes from being myself. In my previous roles
> I think, I was an advice giver. I have training now . . . I have the skills that I didn't
> have before. Having the contrast between the two [student affairs and counseling]
> has helped me to be a better counselor.

The process of struggling to define her role as a counselor, given her prior work history,

helped Cece to define her professional identity. She stated that she was facilitated in

various courses to "better understand" the similarities and differences between these

roles.

When asked what shaped him during his training, Norm summed up well what

other participants alluded to by stating, "the whole program . . . courses, internship,

assignments . . . all of it . . . the program as a whole shaped me." Miles, Thelma, Cece,

and Norm were influenced by several components related to training that facilitated their understanding of themselves as individuals and professionals.

The universal theme, Experiences In Training (EIT) that emerged from the participants' experiences offers much information about training practices that facilitate counselor development. The subthemes of Experiences with Colleagues, Faculty Mentorship, Practicum/Internship Experiences, and Other Training Experiences indicate that counselor development is facilitated effectively through relationships and specific training activities.

Experiences Out of Training

A second universal theme that emerged from the data is the Experiences Out of Training (EOT). Participants indicated that they were influenced from past or current experiences (not affiliated with the graduate program) while pursing their training in counseling. The following subthemes emerged from the universal theme of EOT: Challenges in Personal Life, Childhood Experiences, Experiences with Diverse Groups, and Commitment to Personal Work.

Challenges in Personal Life. A consistent subtheme that emerged among participants was regarding the challenges they experienced in their personal lives during training that helped them to evolve both personally and professionally. Participants were faced with managing their training responsibilities while also dealing with personal challenges. Managing their professional with their personal responsibilities helped them to gain self-awareness and perseverance.

Carrie was involved in a long-term relationship that came to an end during her graduate counseling training. She said that this contributed to her growth because she had the support of her fellow cohort members. As previously mentioned, she used her practicum role-play experience as a means to work through her break-up. This experiences guided her toward healing and acceptance. She stated:

> I could never look at that experience as a time of regret. Because, you know, some people might look at it as, oh you wasted 5-1/2 years, but I didn't waste, not even a minute, because everything when I was in that relationship it was learning something about myself, or something about relationships, or something about what I wanted out of life. I learned about coming to accept that things are not always perfect and that if something, regardless of how nice or how great two people are and how much you get along, if your goals and outlook on life are completely opposite, it's really not going to work. So it took me a long time to realize that if something isn't working, no matter how hard I try, it's just not going to work and it gets to the point where you and that person need to move on . . . and you know, once I finally figured that out for myself, I never looked back. I couldn't. As much as I wanted to, I'd be like, you know, is he okay? I just couldn't. I knew that I had to just keep my eyes straight ahead and not look back, because if I would stop, I would just fall back into that same routine, "okay, let's try again, let's make it work."

Through the support of her colleagues, whom she developed close relationships with, she was able to sever her relationship. She learned to let go and to relinquish control.

Cece also gained self-awareness about her ability to persevere and overcome when she was diagnosed with epilepsy during training. She believes this ability came from "surviving in my family . . . my being unsupported, not getting much attention [at home]. It made me need to prove myself then." She also reflected on balancing her training and managing her health and family:

> During grad school with being so busy, and the training being intense, and then having the diagnosis of epilepsy, and then there was my husband and kids. I'm on the other side of that now . . . I don't feel like I need to . . . I've let go of the need to prove myself to any other people.

Through the challenges of managing her personal life and health condition, Cece was able to dispel her belief from childhood that she needed to prove herself to others. She believes this awareness has made her a "better counselor" because she knows on a basic level that she's most effective when "being with the client" rather than employing techniques. She further replied that since she's not "trying so hard" to prove herself that she's more confident.

Norm also experienced a health related personal challenge at the very end of his graduate (while transitioning into his counseling doctoral program) when he donated one of his kidneys to his mother-in-law. He stated, "I donated a kidney in September of 2005, and it basically saved her life." He described further that offering his kidney "probably has to be the most significant thing that I've ever done in my life." He learned the value in being sacrificial for the benefit of someone else.

Norm described his personal challenges related to his family history that were elicited from coursework and other training activities. He shared that when his father was 72, he committed suicide after several decades of battling schizophrenia. Although his father's suicide had occurred several years before his graduate training, Norm shared his reflections and awarenesses that were triggered by his intensive counselor training:

> My father was 72 years old when he committed suicide, and the statistics, white, male, age, all factor in. I would say that it definitely showed that there is a vulnerability I think to everybody, no matter who they are. I think our parents, depending on your experience when you're growing up, and no matter how old you are, you still look at them as your parents and basically they're infallible. I mean, some of clients I've seen, and they still look, you know, their parents might have done the scariest things to them, but for whatever reason they still hold that understanding that we are all imperfect. We're all fallible. I mean, we look at our parents like nothing could ever happen to them. Things do happen, you know, and it does change who we are, I think.

He further described how learning of his fallible nature, and of others learning the same

of their parents might influence them:

> It makes us realize that we aren't indestructible anymore. I mean I think it puts
> reality into the situation and it creates a sense of self and a deeper understanding
> of who you are. It's more tangible . . . it's more real. We also are fallible, not only
> our parents. Things can happen to ourselves or the people we love.

He also described how these awarenesses have changed him:

> It changed me by waking me up. I came from an Italian family and, you know, you
> don't talk about your issues. We had secrets within the family, and within our own
> household. We didn't know what was going on. So I mean, when something like
> that comes in it's a real reality. I think because of that I look at things more
> seriously, maybe to take my school work more seriously.

Examining his experiences during the time of his father's suicide also affected

him professionally. Norm described how he began to ask himself questions regarding the

professional care his father received leading up to his suicide and how this might serve

him as a college counselor. He stated that he asked himself:

> Was she [his father's counselor] doing everything she could do? Were all the
> precautions in place? Maybe that has affected me as a counselor to say, "Am I
> doing everything I can to help my client?" . . . Then there are the parents who
> come into see if I'm doing everything I can for their Johnny or Sue, and I'd be
> like, "well yeah." Maybe that's where it's coming in, and that's where I take it
> very seriously . . . that's where ethics come in.

Norm then reflected upon how his personal process was affecting his work as a counselor.

He stated:

> this [counseling work] bridges back to that [personal challenge], to say, it's kind
> of a spider web of all these things that make up kind of the person of who I am. . .
> and the counselor I am. It's kind of rolled all into one.

Norm further reflected on the questions that arose about effective interventions for

suicidal clients during his training as a result of his father's suicide. He shared his beliefs

about effective suicidal assessments by wondering if counselors are doing enough. "Are

you probing deep enough? Are you getting it out of the client? I tell clients that they are

in control, but that I will use my skills to go deeper into their own self-help, so to speak."

He shared a story about a female client whose son had committed suicide and how he was

able to attend to her in a unique way given his experiences:

> I tell my clients that I will never give up on them. One of my clients that I had for a year and a half was dealing with the suicide of her son, and was basically suicidal herself. And the one thing she told me, the last session that we had, I'll never forget it, she said, "thanks for never giving up on me." It was one of those things, it was like "oh my gosh, I would never do that. I would never give up on you." But it just shows how much our clients really weigh in. It was a significant experience to see that [our clients] really do look up to us. So that's where it really solidifies where . . . we really got to do what we do seriously.

Although Norm had dealt with the initial shock and loss of his father, his personal work

continued during his training. He reflected on the details surrounding his father's mental

health care prior to his suicide, which caused him to ponder ethical practices of

counselors. He used this experience as a barometer of his own ethical practices as a

counselor.

Thelma also described personal challenges in her life during her graduate training

that helped her to show empathy toward her clients. She described how she reflected on

the life changes that led to her pursuance of graduate training in counseling. She stated

that she had been married for 10 1/2 years before getting a divorce and moving with her

daughter into her mother's house. She further stated how dealing with the residual trauma

and adjustments to graduate school helped her:

> I quit my job of twelve and a half years, finalized the divorce, and then moved my daughter and I where I could go to graduate school. So I basically did, like three or four of the major life stressors at the same time . . . I was not freaking out, but internally I felt like screaming for about two weeks, but then I calmed down . . . I expected it, I knew that was going to happen, and that was not a problem. But that in itself gave me a lot of internal strength to know I really could do all the things

> I'd been afraid I didn't have the strength to do, which was get a divorce, quit my job and get another one, go back to school, and end up a counselor, which is what I wanted to but I was afraid I couldn't do. And basically, it got to the point where I said, okay, you can either put up with this forever, or you can make a change. And I chose to make the change.

She further described how making these changes affected her positively. She stated:

> I never try to force anything. If something is not working, then it's not meant to be. So basically, if I have to do a lot of hard work that's different than if all these doors are being shut and I'm continuing to try to do it, then that's a problem.

Thelma also shared the challenges she faced dealing with her personal traumas and adjustments to graduate school. She learned that she "does not do well with grief," and said:

> I know I've just accepted the fact that I have difficulty with it and know at some point I won't. That's going to be my slow process. Other things I can do better with and deal with them quicker. This is just one of the ones that will take me a little longer.

Along with coming to acceptance that grieving takes time, she also continued challenging beliefs passed down from her parents. She recalled messages from her parents that she hadn't entirely challenged until her graduate training. As previously mentioned, Thelma was raised in a cult with rigid beliefs and customs that she spent years in therapy trying to correct. She said:

> I know that our beliefs change as we grow . . . I realized that I had more work to do. I know I grew up being told, of all things, that black people were horrible, that kind of thing. And the more I observed in school, the more I would think, what was he [her stepfather] talking about? I was putting two and two together and figuring out, okay, that is not the issue at all.

Along with challenging past beliefs, Thelma continued her work toward healing from her past through class assignments and discussions that promoted her internal work. She

stated that she came to some further acceptance and understanding of herself and her process:

> I have learned from the mistakes I have made. Because it would be one of those things where I would do something really dumb and then get totally humbled and never do it again. Just like, what was I thinking? Ways I treated people. I went through a phase when I was really trying to learn where I either wrote letters, phone calls, whatever, everybody I thought I had lost. And tried to make amends that way. Because I don't like carrying around any kind of values where I feel like I owe somebody something, or that I've wronged them in any way. So I tried to repair all of those things as well.

Her experiences of dealing with recent trauma and the adjustments to graduate school served as a catalyst for Thelma to do additional personal work.

Participants indicated that they had personal challenges for which to cope when pursuing graduate counselor training whether it be medical problems, balancing school and work, or addressing feelings and beliefs triggered from the past. Several participants shared a universal experience of coping with personal challenges during their training.

Supportive Personal Experiences. Another subtheme of EOT that emerged from the data were participants' childhood experiences that influenced them in various ways, such as their motivations for pursuing counseling as a profession, beliefs about balancing career and family, and desiring to help others.

Carrie described the close relationship she had with her mother that has influenced her beliefs about career and family. She believes that she benefited from her mother staying at home with her as a child because it is such a significant time in one's life. She indicated that she struggles, at times, between whether or not to focus her efforts on raising a family and staying at home with children or pursuing her career. She shared her reflections and family story about this conflict:

When I was about in 10th or 11th grade, my mom did re-enter the workforce and continues to work, but she had been a homemaker for 25 years so it wasn't an easy transition. I do have an aunt and uncle that live in Maryland that have always been really influential in my life because I always knew that spending all of this time going to school that one day I do want to have a family and children, but at the same time I see myself as somebody who would like to remain in the workforce . . . Looking at my aunt and uncle, who both have really important like high-powered type careers, they have three children, and no matter how wrapped up they were in their careers their children always came first. They always just had this great balance between work and family. So, even when my uncle was traveling for work, when he was in Mexico five days a week, he still worked his schedule to be home to coach my cousins' soccer teams and to be there for their soccer games. They always have that balance to . . . manage their family and work life. You don't have to give up your career. You just have to, you know, make it work. So that was always pretty influential for me as well. Because I feel like, I don't really feel like there's a right or a wrong answer because I know some friends of mine that are stay at home moms and people in our society today, they tend to look down on them. That's unfortunate.

Carrie was significantly influenced by her relationship with her stay-at-home mother, which is causing her to question how she will manage her future children and career. She further stated that her dad worked to support their family, while her mother stayed home; however that they were both "very involved in [my] life," which influenced her a great deal. In fact, she was so close to her mother that she had some significant challenges when it came time to enter the first grade. She said, "I had a really hard time being away from my mom all day . . . I had a lot of separation issues as a child," and subsequently grew close to her first grade teacher with whom she says she's still in contact. Apparently, the teacher "picked certain students in the class to come over to her house and just do little projects and somehow we were assisting her with some type of research," she said. However, Carrie stated that the separation from her mother took a toll on her emotionally, despite the support from her teacher, which caused her mother to request that she be held back for another year. She further explained with the following story and reflections:

I would feel sick in the morning and wouldn't want to go to school . . . I would get to school and tell the school that I was sick and that I needed to go home. It really was just a huge, like, separation-anxiety thing. So, as the school year went on, academically I was up there, but emotionally I wasn't. And so my mother wanted to hold me back and keep me in first grade another year because emotionally she felt I wasn't ready, but the school wanted me to move forward. My mom really had to fight with them to just make them realize that she thought I would be better off staying in the first grade another year. And I always look back and tell my mom that I think that was probably the best thing she ever did for me. Being able to, you know, just have that extra year to adjust. And after that I really didn't have much of a problem going to school and I began to love school and really did excel academically. I did very well and I always thought that had the school just pushed me forward . . . I would've continued struggling . . . I had seen other students that would struggle either academically or emotionally and then just keep getting pushed along, for the sake of moving them forward as scheduled. It seems like some of those students never really caught back up to speed. So that was another part of my life that I think was a very good thing that happened, that turned out to be a very positive thing as well. And then, too, when you're that young no kids really notice. You know, you're in first grade, nobody really notices if you've been there the year before, so socially, I didn't get made fun of or anything like that.

Carrie benefited from the opportunity to stay in the first grade long enough for another year in order to gain additional emotional skills important in one's development. She also feels grateful to her mother for being attuned to her needs and advocating for her to the school.

Similarly, Miles stated that he had a positive upbringing. He said, "my childhood was pretty normal. No major traumas . . . my parents were loving and supportive." He said that this gave him a sense of "security and confidence" growing up and through adulthood.

Conversely, Cece described the challenges she faced throughout her childhood within her family and the subsequent external support that has influenced her positively. She stated the following:

> I come from an extremely dysfunctional family. I have five sisters who all have different dads and the same mom, and two brothers have the same dad but different moms. The support in my home was not there, so I have a lot of experiences with external support from friends' parents. Also I have a long history with a group [agency name] that had advisors and counselors that were helpful to me. They showed me a different way than running away like my sisters. They showed me that my life could be different. And so they gave me a much different perception of where I wanted to go, if I would do something different. They were apart of my life all the way from first grade through when I graduated from graduated from high school . . . they were counselors. They were involved with people that needed different things . . . I'm the only one to graduate high school, college, let alone graduate school from my siblings. [My early counselors' influence] is what has shaped my life the most.

She also stated how her lack of support at home helped her to appreciate the support of her childhood counselors through the non-profit agency:

> I would say, too, that the experiences I was having at home, the experiences that I was having with five siblings and family chaos . . . that without that I wouldn't necessarily realize that . . . I wouldn't necessarily have appreciated the external support if I came from a healthier home life.

Cece was shaped by the lack of support in her childhood home, and the subsequent, ongoing support of counselors throughout her formative years. As indicated by her story, she was able to overcome neglect and poverty by choosing a different path through the support of these influential figures in her life.

Thelma also had a tumultuous upbringing as she was raised in a cult where her stepfather was the leader of the compound. She reports having experienced years of abuse and torment before leaving the compound and her family. She describes in her own words:

> The main experiences growing up, I grew up with a sociopath father. So you know, you're talking mental abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, that kind of thing, but done in a very manipulative way. I don't know how to describe it, but it was similar to David Koresh in Waco, if you are familiar. That's who he kind of modeled after. That's the closest I could tell people as to what it was like. He was building a commune when we left. And it was end of the world stuff, we learned

how to shoot guns, we had a ranch way out in the mountains, that kind of thing. And there was always an underlying threat that somebody was going to get us, they were going to do that, only it was never clear who "they" was when you asked. So, growing I was extremely anxious, extremely jumpy. I mean, I don't know, there was no inner calm, there was no anything. So, the rest of my life I was working really hard to get rid of all that, to try to come to some calm place, that kind of thing.

She further described the progression of her stepfather's control and the evolution of the compound:

It didn't start out as bad as it ended up. But, looking back, I can see the manipulation all along. It just got worse and worse and worse. You know, we'd move every year, every couple years, that kind of thing. Until we finally went to the—basically it was moving further and further out until we ended up on this big ranch thing.

She stated that she left the ranch the week before she turned 13. She stated, "That's a significant amount of time in that type of environment, so obviously, that is something that shaped who I am today."

Thelma offered an example of how, aside from her ongoing anxiety, fearfulness, and depression, she was affected by her upbringing. She stated:

I don't remember having a whole lot of good life times until I had my daughter. She's now fourteen. So, fourteen years ago when she was born, I remember thinking, "Oh my God, what'd I do? I can't protect her now. What am I going to do? I had this horrible life, how am I going to make sure that she doesn't have a horrible life?" So that's when, I think she was about five months old, and I sought out a cognitive/behavioral therapist, and really dealt with a lot of this stuff. And I know four sessions doesn't sound like very long, but I had already been half talking about it for a while, so this time we actually got to the meat of the issue, got it all done. After that it was like a load was off, and then I could move forward. I went to college, I really started looking at ways to improve my skills. I was an administrative assistant at that time, so I went to each and every seminar that they would send me to, basically just went on a learning spree. Anything I could learn, I went after. Major, major personal growth. And I just went on from there.

Thelma was significantly impacted by her unpredictable upbringing and chose to seek help in order to raise her daughter in a healthy stable environment—something she did not have herself. She sought therapy and remedied the aftermath of the years of manipulation and abuse. As previously stated, Thelma used her experiences of healing from her childhood abuse to offer empathy and hope to her client recovering from similar treatment.

Norm grew from his experiences of having a unique family structure along with the mental health condition of his father. He was the youngest of four children where there was an age span of 15 years between him and his oldest sibling. He stated that he was "basically raised by my older siblings," especially because of his father's inability to provide much care given his health concerns. Norm described his observations and understanding of his father's mental health concerns and how this affected their family:

> My father, I think, had and he was never diagnosed with schizophrenia. My three uncles, my dad's brothers were diagnosed with schizophrenia or some other mental health problems. My dad started getting worse right around when I was born, because I was talking to my oldest sister who knew my dad when he was well. She said that as my dad aged his apparent schizophrenia got . . . worse and I think it was untreated and undiagnosed. And as a result . . . he did see a psychiatrist I think in the early 1960s, but didn't get much out of it. I think he tried to do self-diagnoses and that kind of a thing, but it never helped anything. So as a result, when I was born, my dad was really never around, so I didn't get much of his influence in my life. My next sister up I think really had a hard time with this. She really got the brunt of my dad's illness, where he was kind of in and out of her life a lot more than he was with mine, he was basically absent, so I just didn't know, and figure that's the way dad was kind of a thing. Yeah. I think like my sister, who watched my oldest sister basically watched my dad deteriorate. And it was probably the hardest on her. And I think as you move down it was less difficult, but I mean, obviously, we all took it pretty hard. There was a lot there going on. I think she knew he was not well.

Norm described his recollections of when his dad's health began to significantly deteriorate and how he was internally reconciling his loss:

. . . toward the end [of his life] what happened basically was he had a really bad gall bladder surgery. At that point, he basically had really bad white coat syndrome, and he swore off basically medical doctors. He was on Prozac I think at the time, and he was taking it—well, he got to the point where he didn't like the kind of numbness that you feel, just the normalcy of just kind of like, okay you're just kind of moving through life . . . Unfortunately, my dad took himself off the Prozac cold turkey and he took a turn for the worse. I think got to the point where my dad crashed through the basement, and just got into this deep depression and he couldn't get himself out . . . This is my personal observation, I think it was his death was an escape for him. I mean, like we read in literature, just, this is the way it is, this is the only way that he could get out of it. That's the way I look at it. And that's why I kind of go back to, when I first started, is it really wasn't his fault, and in a way it wasn't. I mean, yes he did take his own life, yes, what happened, happened. But I mean I think had he not been on the medication, had he not had other things. I mean, it could have been a different outcome, maybe.

Norm was significantly influenced by the relationship, or lack thereof, of his parents, specifically, his father. Being raised by his older sisters due to the age and health of his parents, he grew up in an atypical family structure. He has asked himself and his family members' questions to try to make sense of his father's mental health deterioration.

Renee also described challenging home life experiences as a child. She recalled the time in her childhood when her father's business went bankrupt and the subsequent challenges within her family and how it affected her:

My dad's company went bankrupt when I was seven, so we lost our house and car and our furniture. But we ended up moving to an entirely different neighborhood full of entirely different kids and I was amazed just how welcoming everybody was. And so I maintained my friends from my school and my mom insisted that I continue at the same school, so 4th and 5th grades I was driven to my old school, so I didn't change, because she was real concerned about that.

She further described that her parents "used to argue a lot" during this time in their lives, for which she saw a school counselor. She received attention and support that she wasn't receiving as much at home during a challenging time. She stated, "I went to our school counselor and really had a good relationship there. I did some academic work with the

school counselors through our gifted and talented program, which was kind of an escape from the norm." Renee also described important experiences she had during her middle school years:

> And then in middle school, I was actually selected by my peers to be a peer assistant listener, which I thought was really odd, because I didn't know a lot of kids in the middle school . . . I didn't think. But, it was great that my friends would consider me as someone they would confide in, so I had a chance to work in listening skills and work with new students to help them feel more comfortable and acclimate to our school, which was "clicky," so it was nice to sort of be the segue between that. And I feel like actually that's been a role, throughout growing up.

A common thread within Renee's stories is her tendency to bring people together. She gave an example of trying to bring her different friends together and how this benefited her. She recalled:

> I had a lot of amazing friends that come from really different places because of moving around. I guess that was definitely encouraging in the way that I think it really developed, not only an appreciation for difference, and the beauty of that.

She also reflected upon what she learned from her experiences of moving around due to her father's company going bankrupt:

> I've learned more about our culture . . . I think [our culture] really celebrates commercialism . . . that money is a means to happiness. Personally, I have recognized through that experience that money had nothing to do with happiness . . . I was so happy being as broke as possible for those few years, and just running around with great people who were completely open and honest, and just smiling every day. I guess it kind of gave me a spiritual sense of, where does happiness come from? It comes more from relationships and more in community than necessarily anything you could buy at the store. I learned that life will have those events that are traumatic, and through them, I was able to grow and change. My experiences have really helped me because the more of them I can have, the more I can really accept people, where they are at, and appreciate them a lot.

Participants indicated that a variety of childhood experiences influenced them in numerous ways. Most of the participants experienced some form of trauma or hardship in

their childhood, which caused them to deeply question their beliefs, assumptions, and understanding about themselves and others.

Opportunities with Diverse Groups. Another subtheme of participants' EOT was their experiences with diverse groups. Participants indicated that they were challenged by encountering people different than themselves.

Miles described his experiences within the African American community as a musician. He played bass guitar with group through the Center of Arts and Sciences and was introduced to the African American culture. He stated:

> When I was growing up and I went to high school half days and I went the Center for the Arts and Sciences the other half. I would explore people who were into music, art and math . . . I think that they had chemistry with the music that was different from what I had known. It was a predominantly African-American student body, what people would refer to back then as the inner cities, and it pretty much was. I had not had that much exposure to African-Americans in my community. And so, I think that alone, had I not been into music, that provided the opportunity to start meeting people from different cultures, basically. It opened my world up.

Miles also had experiences within the LBGT community when he moved to San Diego while working on a theatre production. He stated the following about his experiences:

> When I was 19, I was hired to do a show called [musical name] that was in San Diego. So I had to move to San Diego for four months. It was a fascinating time for me. It was a fascinating experience altogether. I was working within the artistic community, I had exposure to the culture of lesbians and gays, transgendered, and bisexual, I mean, it really, really opened my entire world up, it was very open sexually. The show that I performed in was an all gay cast except for myself and the drummer. Being straight, that was definitely something that happened that made a significant impact on me. And it's helped me as a human being, there's no doubt about that.

He further described how living in this environment caused him to question his preconceived ideas about the LGBT community and then how to manage the questions he received from his straight counterparts:

> I was asked questions like, "Why in the world would you ever opt to go live with this gay community when basically everybody in the cast is gay, except yourself, maybe one or two other people?" They questioned why I would want to do that.

It was the strong reactions from some of his friends that caused Miles to also ask himself some questions. For example, he stated that he asked himself:

> Does that make me gay? Does that make me a sympathizer for LGBT? You know, for gay rights or marriage, or anything like that. And I realized that what they had to say about my experience didn't really have any influence on me. They weren't there. I think it's okay for a straight person to be friends with somebody from the LGBT community. I think some of my friends grew to think the same way . . . except for some of my more macho friends.

He continued to reflect on how his involvement with the African American and LBGT communities influenced him in positive ways. He stated:

> I realized that no matter how much people care about you and how much you care about others, they can contribute in a way that you wouldn't imagine. That sounds so dramatic, but I really believe that's true. Because they're bumping up against their own judgments and stereotypes about what others different from themselves, and what that means . . . And then what that means for them to have a friend who's friends with someone from the LGBT community, for example.

Miles reflected on the transformative learning that can occur by involvement with groups different than one's own. He had a similar experience when attending his graduate degree at a university where the majority of the student body was international. He stated:

> When I think of all my experience there, it has definitely helped to shape some of my opinions. I learned about different cultures, and gained an appreciation for them. I wish I had known more when I was younger. I feel like I was very naïve growing as far as other cultures and races.

Norm also had opportunities with diverse groups when he lived in Mexico temporarily with his wife. He stated that the Mexican culture "is very class based . . . not as bad as India. In Mexico people have a chance to move up classes." He reflected about being raised in the Midwest and how he, regrettably, didn't have many encounters with people different then himself. He said, "[Our encounter with different people] all comes back to our parents and, you know, how we were raised. Who we are is based on where we come from."

Renee described her experiences of being a White, middle-class, female and how she's benefited throughout her life from experiences with diverse groups. She recalled a time when she worked in a cafeteria during college. She stated:

> I was amazed going into an environment where there was somewhat representation according to society, but from my eyes, just a lot more people of color. I was really amazed and I started talking with people, and some people were more open to my "stupid" questions than others, but I talked to one kid who stands out. He was from Israel and he was there to become an engineer. He said he was only there for two years because "I need to go to into the Army." I said, "you're going to drop out of school to go to join the Army?" It was so foreign to me, he's like, "I fight for my country, that's how we survive, it's men and women both." And he opened my eyes to the fact of how other people live other lives, and I knew nothing about it, and I felt kind of sheltered.

She also described an experience during her undergraduate education:

> I remember taking a class on Race in Film, and it was probably one of the most amazing classes I ever took. It was a seminar, it was a small class, and we watched the Color of Fear and I remember getting out and just crying and crying, because even though I had friends at this point that were African American or Hispanic, I guess I never considered what it was like to live in a racist society. So it really hit me, and I kind of really struggled with what does that mean, how, what can I do, and for a while it was really tough. I just felt like nothing I was doing was necessarily changing it.

Renee described how she became discouraged living in a racist society and wanted to learn more to, hopefully, become an agent of change in some context. She described her

career path and how she specifically has chosen to work with children of color. She

stated:

> I took the route of communication studies, looking at how our media portrays
> people, women, people of color, and elderly people, and what does that mean for
> how people feel about themselves and how people relate to the world, and relate
> to other people. And I was just so frustrated. I graduated and tried to explain to
> people what my degree was about, and it was difficult. I mean, I explained why I
> was prepared to be a journalist or public relations person, but I didn't really feel
> like I got a real degree. I felt like I got an incredible education, but more of that
> was in the relationships I had outside of school, than necessarily the classes I took.
> So, I worked for a while, and in a corporate career, but felt like I wasn't doing
> anything meaningful. I just decided that I wanted to be a school counselor, I
> wanted to work especially with kids who are of color and maybe economically
> disadvantaged. I wanted to work with kids who may not have someone else to
> work with them, and provide some avenues that would assist them in the
> academic field, but also everything that goes into that. I mean, the way that they
> are coming to school as far as do you have what you need, are you getting enough
> food, are you getting the shoes that you need, are people harassing you on your
> way, and then, are you being taken care of. So looking at creating an environment
> where kids, our kids, are being treated well and being treated with respect, while
> also being taught to treat others with respect and . . . teaching them how respect is
> cultivated.

Renee was influenced directly and indirectly by those different than herself. She had

encounters with students during college that caused her to reflect on her privilege as a

middle class, White woman and also experienced feelings of disbelief as she learned

about those marginalized by institutional racism. It affected her significantly enough to

make a career change to help those less fortunate than herself.

Participants experienced personal and professional growth through encountering

individuals different from themselves. They were confronted with their preconceived

ideas and assumptions about other races, cultures, and classes, which caused them to view

themselves and others differently.

Commitment to Personal Work. The final subtheme that falls within the universal theme of participants' Experiences Out of Training (EOT) that affected their personal and professional development was their commitment to personal work and self-care. Carrie discussed her commitment to personal exploration during her relationship break up. She described what she learned about herself in the process:

> It was so interesting . . . just getting that whole new level of awareness and insight. I focused on what I did wrong in the relationship and could take responsibility for it. I learned what did and did not work so that I know what to watch for future relationships, so that, hopefully, both people can have a healthy and meaningful relationship.

As stated previously, Renee benefited from the supportive outlet her school counselors offered her during difficult times during her childhood. She mentioned that she learned about the gift of helpful people and having a comforting place to be during times of stress. Renee described her "tireless" desire for reading counseling and self-improvement books as well as literature pertaining to marginalized populations.

Similarly, Cece has also committed herself to self-care through her past involvement in personal counseling, time with her daughters and family, and "taking days off for fun." Miles also has committed himself to therapeutic activities through his music, which he stated, "calms me." He stated that the most significant thing that has impacted his life has been music. He stated:

> I had a pretty easy childhood . . . no major traumatic events. I try not to take that for granted. I think, well, I had very loving parents, despite the fact that I wasn't really close with one of my parents, that didn't affect me too greatly. I think it's easy to be in my skin sometimes because of that. When I do get overwhelmed with work or stress, I relieve the pressure by playing music.

Thelma described her experiences in personal counseling with a Cognitive Behavioral Therapist who helped her to overcome and heal her childhood wounds. She

further reflected about her commitment to her personal work, stating, "I think as long as I continue to try to learn, to read, to work on myself that I will continue to be able to help others." She described her approach to personal work by saying:

> If it seems uncomfortable, all the more reason to go learn more . . . I can only take a client as far as I've gone, meaning if I ever stop there is going to be a client that I can't help.

She also described her limitations as a therapist, "I wouldn't make a good play therapist, I could do it, but it's not my thing. I like to really think things through, because the better I understand them, the better I can feel them." When describing her approach to working with parents, she stated, "I tell parents the same thing that I had to tell myself if something is not going right with your child, look at your self first." She later stated that:

> I basically had to do work in me before I could be a good parent. I figured out what was triggering me by the things that she [her daughter] was doing or not doing and realized that I was actually the trigger—my own shortcomings. I had to get myself in a beautiful place before I could be a good parent.

Thelma described her use of self-awareness and reflection through her own personal work that benefited her relationship with her daughter. Her commitment to personal growth and development has not only improved her relation with herself and her daughter, but also has guided her clients toward better parenting.

Several themes emerged from counselor trainees' perceptions of their experiences of personal and professional growth and development during their graduate education. The first universal theme that emerged was the Experiences In Training (EIT) which consisted of four subthemes: Experiences with Colleagues, Faculty Mentorship, Practicum/Internship Experiences, and Other Training Experiences. The second universal theme that emerged was the Experiences Out of Training (EOT), which also consisted of

four subthemes: Challenges in Personal Life, Childhood Experiences, Experiences with Diverse Groups, and Commitment to Personal Work.

Life Story: Third Layer of Analysis

The use of life story method was used in the first layer of analysis to offer descriptive information about each participant's perceptions of their identity and the contributing factors to their personal growth and development. The second layer of analysis used phenomenological methods to provide themes of personal growth and development across participants. This third layer of analysis will revisit the life story method to provide a thorough narrative of one participant's experiences of personal growth and development in light of the themes that emerged from the phenomenological method. The purpose of the multilayered analysis is to provide a deeper and richer description of participants' experiences of personal growth and development.

Thelma's story was chosen to be analyzed for this third layer of analysis because her life experiences and how she shares them is compelling and best represents the overall process of all participants in their personal growth and development.

There are several life experiences that have contributed to Thelma's personal and professional development and this began early in her life. Thelma's life was rather unstable, unpredictable, and traumatic for most of her childhood and early adolescence. Her early childhood experiences significantly influenced the course of her life. She was born to a mother and father who were members of a cult in the Western United States and was raised in a communal living environment where rigid adherence to rules was expected. Thelma recalled frequent, ongoing experiences of physical, sexual, emotional,

and mental abuse at the hands of her father and other cult members. She had several siblings with whom she found reprieve and playfulness; however, she recalls "living in fear" most of her life as her father frequently referenced the "end of the world and eternal damnation." She often anticipated and feared criticism and abuse from her father, who wielded such methods as a means to gain control. At age 13 she left her family to live with friends unaffiliated with the cult.

Thelma finished high school while living with her new family and later married in her early 20s. She and her husband had a daughter soon after. It was when Thelma had her daughter that she began to really deal with the trauma she experienced during her childhood.

> When she was born, I remember thinking, Oh my God, what'd I do? I can't protect her now. What am I going to do? I had this horrible life, how am I going to make sure that she doesn't have a horrible life.

She was aware of the wounds from her past and sought guidance and healing over the years from a few different therapists; however, she continued to experience challenges in her personal relationships and intrapersonal experiences. The relationships in her personal life, with her biological family, her husband, and her daughter shaped who she was becoming.

Thelma began to see significant results in her healing from the past from her counseling with a cognitive behavioral therapist. She recalls that this therapist taught her how to challenge the beliefs and messages that were so deeply ingrained a result of the "manipulation and brainwashing" of the cult. In four sessions, Thelma experienced significant improvement in dealing with her past. "It was a load off and I could really move on with my life." Her experiences in cognitive behavioral therapy helped her to see

results from the several years she had committed to her personal growth that would later influence her career decisions.

As a wife, mother, administrative assistant and now college student, Thelma enjoyed pursuing courses related to her major in communications. She described herself during this time as "being on a learning spree" as she immersed herself in new knowledge. As she fulfilled the duties of wife, mother, and student she began to view her marriage differently. She was coming to the awareness about the unhealthiness of her marriage. Upon reflecting upon the challenges between her and her husband at that time, she had to make several major life changes at once. "I got to the point where I said, okay, you can either put up with this forever, or you can make a change. And I chose to make the change." She was greatly shaped by these experiences:

> Getting divorced in 2002 definitely shaped me . . . for the better of course. I could see, then, all along [getting married] was not a good idea . . . The marriage itself was not great and I could see mistakes in it, but I also owned up to what was mine. So, when I went through the divorce, moving in with my mom . . . I quit my job of 12-1/2 years, got a divorce after we had been married 10-1/2 years, moved my daughter and myself to where we could go to college. So I basically did three or four of the major life stressors at the same time.

After "internally screaming for two weeks and then calming down," Thelma was able to resume her education and life with her daughter. Those experiences gave her "a lot of internal strength to know I really could do all the things I'd been afraid I didn't have the strength to do." She later described that this phase of adversity and subsequent growth provided her new perspectives.

> If it's not a life and death situation, it's not worth getting upset over. My reference point is, with everything that I have lived through, there's nothing left to be worried about. I mean, as long as my loved ones are safe, I'm safe . . . then it's good. If the house burns down, okay, as long as everybody got out.

Following her divorce, job change, and relocation, Thelma ultimately completed her bachelor's degree in communications. She decided soon after graduation that she wanted to continue her education. She applied and was admitted to a graduate community counseling program where she planned to help others through adversities similar to her own.

During her graduate education, she described several experiences that facilitated her personal development, including the support from her colleagues and faculty, internship experiences, and courses such as theories and multicultural counseling. Thelma was greatly influenced by her colleagues during her training as they went through the experience together and offered one another encouragement. She was apart of a formal cohort and benefited from taking classes with her colleagues and sharing in the process together. She also described an experience in one of her classes with a professor that helped her learn about setting boundaries with clients.

> I think a lot of [what I've learned] professionally were through mistakes that professors had made when they first started with clients, like too much disclosure, maybe giving out a phone number. One in particular I remember the professor worked at a mental health hospital. One of her teens she had given her home phone number "If you ever need something let me know." The teen called her and said she was going to commit suicide. So instead of just calling the hospital and saying this person is going to commit suicide and putting the person on suicide watch, she rushes to the hospital and tries to take care of her herself, instead of letting the procedures that are already in place handle it. She let herself be drawn in too much. That's one of my examples, where I learned not to own someone else's problems. Where I left off and someone else begins.

She benefited from learning from her professor's mistakes while also gaining support and encouragement from some of them.

In addition, to her experiences with her colleagues and faculty, Thelma benefited from her internship experiences and coursework. As previously mentioned, she described

how her first client was a woman who had been sexually abused. Thelma was told that the counselors are assigned clients they are meant to have and believed this was the case with this particular client. She was able to guide the woman through similar experiences she had had, while also further processing her own experiences. Thelma also described how her coursework provided a foundation of knowledge for her to integrate with hers and the experiences of others to offer effective guidance to her clients.

Thelma has been further shaped by her experiences in her relationships with her children. She remarried a man with two children from a previous marriage which further emphasized her role as parent. Throughout the interview, Thelma frequently mentioned her children and the importance of her parenting them differently than what she had been taught by her parents. Her experiences of learning from her mistakes with her children have transferred to her work as a counselor. She works as a domestic violence counselor helping women to heal from abusive relationships. While doing this work, she comes across women who use physical violence as a means to discipline their children. She described how she did the same with her daughter because it was all she knew; however, she learned over time that there were more effective methods. This learning has shaped her work as a counselor by passing this message and related skills onto her clients. She believes an important part of her role is to help clients to "know that there are other options."

When describing how her personal development has shaped her professionally, Thelma described her upbringing and how she worked to overcome her obstacles. She described the benefits of her receiving cognitive behavioral therapy and how she trains her clients to think differently about themselves and the world around them in order to

experience positive changes. She believes that her personal and professional growth influence one another:

> As a person, I am a counselor. I'm just a trained one now. I don't differentiate between the two, I have to for some professional things, but I've noticed if I watch a movie, if I have a conversation with somebody, I'm still taking it apart and looking at it closely. I can't separate the two anymore.

In Thelma's experience, her personhood and her role as counselor are one in the same. They are indivisible and evolving.

Thelma's life story highlights the contributing factors of personal growth and development that emerged from the collective experiences of the participants in this study. She described how her early childhood experiences foreshadowed the challenges and learning opportunities she had throughout her life. She described her personal journey of healing and eventually led to her pursuance of a graduate degree in counseling. The relationships with her graduate school colleagues, professors, and clients have further contributed to her personal and professional development. She also described the importance of her relationships with her children that continually cause her to reflect on her knowledge of effective parenting, learning that transpired from her healing from challenges with her parents as a child. Thelma values highly the commitment to personal growth and development and believes one's personal experiences greatly influence their counseling abilities.

Summary

Participants of this study shared stories, experiences, and perceptions about their personal growth and development. They have given insight into the complex and

multifaceted nature of personal growth through the telling of their life experiences before, during, and after graduate counselor training. The three layers of analysis that were explored in this chapter gave descriptive information about each of the participants, their perceptions of themselves, and their processes of personal growth and development throughout their lives. Their experiences were categorized by those that occurred within and out of their graduate education. The subthemes that emerged from the data when using phenomenological methods were explored in depth and one participant's life story was told and the aforementioned themes were highlighted.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter includes an overview of the results and how they relate to existing counselor development research. The unique results that this study contributes to existing counselor education research are also discussed. Next, the implications of these findings in counselor education and counselor trainee development will be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research will be explored.

Overview of Results

This study was conducted to gather rich, descriptive information about the experiences of counselor trainee personal growth and development while in graduate training. Six counselor trainees who had graduated with their master's degree in counseling within 18 months of the commencement of the study were interviewed. Participants were asked a series of questions related to their experiences of personal growth and development in and out of their graduate counselor education. Their interviews were transcribed and analyzed to reveal several stories and themes related to their personal growth and development.

Life story and phenomenology were the methodologies used to analyze information about counselor trainee personal growth and development in training. The first layer of analysis was conducted using the life story method and included details about participants' understandings of themselves and their experiences that contribute to

their personal and professional development. Phenomenological methods were in the second layer of analysis to reveal the themes of participants' experiences of personal growth and development. There were two universal or overarching themes that emerged from their descriptions of their growth. The first theme was named Experiences In Training (EIT) and described the occurrences during their graduate counselor education that facilitated their personal development. The second theme was named Experiences Out of Training (EOT) and described the occurrences not associated with their graduate training that contributed to their personal growth.

Several subthemes emerged within each of these universal themes that further revealed the contributing factors to the participants' personal growth and development. The subthemes associated with the first universal theme, Experiences In Training (EIT), included the contributions from their relationships and training. The first subtheme, Support from Colleagues, described their value in collegial relationships. Participants indicated that the support they received from their colleagues was especially helpful with navigating graduate school and sharing in a common experience. The second subtheme, Faculty Mentorship, described the benefits they received from faculty who invested in their personal and professional development. The mentorship they received from faculty contributed to their acquisition of professional knowledge and skills while also facilitating important personal abilities such as practicing self-care and boundary setting. The third subtheme, Internship/Practicum Experiences, described their personal and professional learning through clinical practice. Participants discussed how their initial experiences of "sitting with the client" elicited feelings of self-doubt and self-consciousness that challenged them to examine themselves and question any

preconceived notions about what it means to be a counselor. The fourth subtheme, Other Training Experiences, described the courses and assignments that provided opportunities for self-examination and reflection that contributed to their overall personal growth and development.

Several subthemes also emerged within the universal theme of Experiences Out of Training (EOT). The first subtheme, Challenges in Personal Life, described the adversities they were faced with throughout their lives and how the process of persevering contributed to their personal growth. The second subtheme, Supportive Personal Experiences, described the relationships and events that were helpful during life transitions and personal losses. The third subtheme, Personal Counseling, described the participants' commitment to their personal growth and development through therapy and/or small group activities. The fourth subtheme, Opportunities with Diverse Groups, detailed a few participants' experiences with groups of people different from themselves that challenged their beliefs and biases while also identifying commonalities among them.

The themes and subthemes that emerged were further supported by the narrative of one participant's experiences of personal growth and development throughout her life. This participant described numerous adversities she faced being raised in a cult and the subsequent process of growth and healing. She mentioned several supportive relationships that encouraged and motivated her to overcome her fears and setbacks. After spending several years in therapy with minimal results, she finally met with a cognitive behavioral therapist who taught her how to challenge her irrational thinking and deeply ingrained, maladaptive belief system. She described seeing this particular therapist for only four visits before feeling a significant progression in her healing. These experiences,

in part, resulted in her decision to pursue a career in counseling where she currently treats domestic violence survivors. She further described several experiences during her counselor training and those associated with raising a family that has contributed to her personal growth and development.

Discussion of Results in Light of Existing Counselor Education Literature

The following section will describe how the experiences of personal growth and development of counselor trainees' compares to the existing literature in counselor development. There are two areas within the existing counselor education literature that are further supported by the results of this study and include: The Indivisibility of the Person and Professional, and Factors of Counselor Personal Development. The Indivisibility of the Person and Professional refers to the integration and complexity of these identities and how they continually build on one another. The Factors of Counselor Personal Development includes the personal characteristics, relationships, and practices that promote personal wellness and growth. Following the discussion of how these results support existing counselor education literature, there will be a description of the unique contributions this research provides the profession.

The Indivisibility of the Person and Professional

The results of this study support previous research that found that counselor personal and professional development is a multifaceted, complex, and dynamic process that occurs over time (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Ronnestad and Skovholt discovered several themes of counselor development that are consistent with the findings of this

study, including the counselor's level of commitment to the profession, their ability to integrate the personal and professional, and the influence of clients on the counselor's development. Participants of this study demonstrated a level of commitment to advancing their skills and integrating their personal learning into their professional work. All participants referred to an experience with a client in their practicum and/or internship that either challenged them or offered an experience to increase their confidence as practitioners. Four participants described experiences of questioning their abilities as professional counselors and their fear of making mistakes and desiring to do it perfectly. These experiences are also consistent with other research findings in the area of counselor development (Denicola, 2001; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Before they are helping professionals, counselors are first individuals who have a responsibility to their clients and broader profession to be as skilled and healthy as possible.

The personal and professional are indivisible because the two are integrative. Life experiences, personality traits, and intra-/interpersonal relationships influence (and are influenced by) all aspects of counselors' lives as evidenced by prior research (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This is further supported by the experiences of participants in this study as indicated by how they made career decisions, negotiated graduate training, and managed their relationships with themselves and others. For example, Carrie described her upbringing in a close family with a stay-at-home mother and her challenges related to separation anxiety when it was time to attend school. Her transition was made easier by her first grade teacher with whom she remains in close contact. She also described the challenges she faced in her first long-term

romantic relationship and all that she learned about herself in the process. These experiences not only affected her personally by challenging her previous beliefs about family, closeness, and love, but also motivated her to pursue a career in counseling in order to facilitate others' during times of change and adversity. Furthermore, she recalled experiences of her clients dealing with domestic violence and applied some of her own feelings of fear and insecurity from her relationships when helping them.

Thelma also described experiences of how the personal and professional are integrated. She described being greatly influenced by her upbringing in a cult. After committing to her own healing process she decided to facilitate others through theirs by counseling domestic violence survivors. While working with others to assist them in healing, she was also reminded of her own personal work and chose to revisit and maintain her growth and commitment to self. Similarly, due to experiencing financial hardships as a young girl, Renee has committed to helping children who are marginalized by race, socioeconomic status, and gender. Her professional work as a counselor is consistent with her life experiences and personal characteristics that are supported by psychological theorists and researchers alike (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Jennings et al., 2003; Jennings & Skovholt, 1999; Lambert & Barley, 2001; Paris et al., 2006; Raskin & Rogers, 1980; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Another example of the integration of the personal and professional is demonstrated in counselors' theoretical orientations. Thelma recalled being in therapy for several years to overcome her past wounds, and it wasn't until she had a cognitive behavioral therapist that she experienced significant progress. She later adopted this

theoretical orientation in her work with clients having had experienced significant growth in her own life.

Training to become a counselor involves the integration of life experiences and personal traits with professional knowledge and skills. This process of integration seems to occur over time in a cyclical and repetitive manner. Each time counselors come upon unfamiliar professional experiences they draw from their point of reference, their own life experience, as a means to navigate uncharted territory. They also draw from support, experience, and wisdom from others around them as indicated by the participants' continual mention of supportive faculty, colleagues, and family. Counselors in training may also apply their professional knowledge and skills in their personal relationships and experiences to better communicate or problem solve. The integration of the personal and professional is a dynamic and complex process and the two cannot be differentiated.

Factors of Counselor Personal Development

The process of counselor personal development consists of several factors as described by these participants and that supports existing counselor education literature. Counselors' development is greatly influenced by experiences, relationships, self-perceptions, and practices both in and out of counselor training. Participants in this study indicated that several life experiences (e.g., childhood events, health issues, death of family/friends) shaped their views of themselves, the world and their approach to counseling. This notion is similar to what is found in the counselor development literature (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Counselors' views about themselves and their clients are very important because their perceptions are

indicators of their level of effectiveness and abilities to demonstrate empathy and self-control (Jackson & Thompson, 1971; Ricks, 1974; Wicas & Mahan, 1966). In addition to counselor perceptions, Jennings and Skovholt (1999) indicated that master therapists are those who demonstrate are committed to learning from their accumulated life experiences and who are committed to their own well-being. In fact, competent counselors are ordinary people invested in their greatest human potential, a commitment that was embodied by the participants of this study (Skovholt et al., 2004).

Counselor development literature has had much discussion about implementing a personal counseling requirement in training due to stressors associated with being a counselor (Biermann, 2003; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Donati & Watts, 2000; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Hazler & Kottler, 1994; Murr et al., 2002; Paris et al., 2006; Slotnick, 2001). Several participants of this study described their commitment to their personal work through counseling, or growth groups that facilitated their personal development. Their experiences further support that a commitment to personal work is beneficial to developing personally.

Importance of the counselors' relationships in facilitating their personal and professional development is also supported by the literature (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006). Several participants recalled their relationships with their families and friends that shaped who they are and subsequently their work as counselors. Some of the experiences were supportive while others were challenging. Supervisory and mentoring relationships were also found to be important factors in the development of counselors and is also confirmed by counselor education literature (Bischoff et al., 2002; Paris et al., 2006; Stoltenberg et al., 1998). Supervisory relationships focused on multicultural

competencies have been demonstrated to be important in training multiculturally competent counselors (Fong & Lease, 1997; Fukuyama, 1994; Helms & Cook, 1999; Ladany et al., 1997; Robinson et al., 2000); however, these participants did not describe such experiences in this study. Rather, several participants described gaining multicultural awareness and skills through their relationships with colleagues.

<div align="center">Unique Contributions to Counselor Education</div>

There were two findings from this study that are unique and contribute to previous research in counselor development that includes the benefits of cohort-oriented counselor education and experiential multicultural education.

Benefits of Cohort-Oriented Counselor Education

There is little research in the area of using cohort formats in counselor education; however, all the participants of this study indicated that the relationships with their colleagues were important to their development. Participants described the benefits of beginning and ending their graduate training with the same individuals. They developed bonds with one another as they navigated the trials and celebrated their achievements in graduate school. In fact, four of the participants were in formal cohorts, while the other two created their own. Although their programs did not employ a cohort format, these participants arranged to enroll in courses and arrange study groups with their colleagues. This suggests that cohort counselor education provides universality and support for graduate students that can deeply influence their personal growth and development.

Benefits of Experiential Multicultural Education

The results of this study also provide unique contributions in the area of experiential multicultural education. Although the counselor education literature has described the importance of experiential activities for promoting personal growth (O'Leary et al., 1994; Wheeler et al., 1998), there is minimal information about experiential activities to promote multicultural competence (Sevig & Etzkorn, 2001).

Three participants described involvement in experiential activities among diverse populations that contributed to their personal growth and multicultural development. These results are unique and meaningful contributions to the profession. For example, Miles, a Caucasian musician, had the opportunity to attend a predominantly African American Center for the School of Arts during his college years. He described the experience as facilitating his growth as a musician, but also his knowledge of his privilege as a Caucasian American. His preconceived notions and unconscious biases were exposed and challenged throughout his experience. Miles also lived among the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered community in Los Angeles while pursuing theater during college. As a straight man, he described the ridicule from his straight friends regarding his friendships with his gay and lesbian cast mates while also navigating their questions about his own sexual orientation. He recalled that this experience caused him to examine his privileges of being straight and to question the value of his friendships. He stated that he learned to no longer be concerned with how others viewed him or if they questioned his sexual orientation because he valued the friendships he established with

his gay and lesbian cast mates. Miles recalled that both experiences caused him to appreciate diversity and see the humanity in everyone regardless of differences.

Norm and Renee also described experiences among diverse groups that facilitated their multicultural development. Norm, a Caucasian, native Michigander, had recently moved to Mexico with his wife due to her work transfer at the time of our interview. He believed that his multicultural knowledge and experiences had greatly increased since his international move, more than any of his graduate coursework. He described that the language, cultural, and especially the class differences caused him to examine his belief system and question his multicultural competence. Similarly, Renee, who is a Caucasian female, fulfilled her school counseling internship in an elementary school where with predominantly Students of Color and of lower socioeconomic status. She believed that her experiences during her internship with this population prepared her far more with regard to multicultural knowledge and skills than any of her graduate coursework.

In summary, the results of this study support existing literature in counselor education that describes the importance and process of counselor personal growth and development. First, the person and professional of counselors cannot be differentiated because they are deeply embedded within the structure of the Being, or the entirety of the individual. The personal and professional are integrated and cyclical and as new experiences inform one area (the personal) the other (the professional) cannot help but to also be influenced. Similarly, as one develops professionally, it also influences him or her personally. Counselors are continually actualizing and evolving when they are aware of the process of their development.

In summary, there are several factors that contribute to counselors' personal growth and development that includes their relationships, training experiences, and commitment to personal work. Last, there were two unique contributions of this study to the body of counselor education literature. Counselors value the collegial nature of cohort-oriented counselor education; in fact, they create their own cohorts when they were not instituted by the training program. Also, counselors benefited from experiential multicultural education as a supplement to their graduate coursework.

Implications

This study underscores the multiplicity of factors that contribute to counselor trainee development that have been documented in previous literature (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The results of this study provide detailed and descriptive information about the complexities and nuances of counselor personal and professional development. This section describes the implications of the results of this study and how they might influence the profession of counselor education.

The American Counseling Association (ACA, 2005) and the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2008) have developed ethical codes and standards of practice designed to promote the competence and welfare of those seeking counseling services. Professional entities such as ACA and CACREP provide the profession with expectations of competent and ethical counseling and training standards. Specifically, it is required that counselors demonstrate personal competence in addition to professional knowledge and skills. Despite these professional guidelines, there has been ample research that demonstrates counselor personal

impairment and the potential harm of clients (Carroll et al., 2003; Eichenfeld & Stoltenberg, 1996; Forrest et al., 1999; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Jordan, 2002; Muratori, 2001; Woodyard, 1997). The results of this study provide additional information into the complexities of counselor personal development that may further inform those invested in counselor education.

Counselor Education Departments

Counselor educators, supervisors, and administrators play an important role in training and gate-keeping counselors in training. In fact, there has been much attention in the literature regarding the identification of and remediation strategies for impaired counselors (Carroll et al., 2003; Eichenfeld & Stoltenberg, 1996; Forrest et al., 1999) in an effort to protect the welfare of clients. There has also been discussion in the literature about the potential benefits of adoption of a wellness model that focuses on the developmental and personal needs that could supplement the professional training in counselor education (Furr & Carroll, 2003). The results of this study suggest that fostering relationships, enhancing wellness, and expanding methods of multicultural education may facilitate counselor personal growth and development. It is reasonable to suggest that embracing a wellness/developmental model within counselor education departments may facilitate counselor trainees in their personal growth and development.

A component of fostering an environment of personal growth might include an emphasis on relationship building between students, faculty, and students and faculty. The results of this study provide important information regarding the benefits of cohort-oriented counselor education. Department administrators and faculty could establish

formal cohorts with the intention of providing students with the support, accountability, and universality with their colleagues. Additionally, counselor trainees might benefit from a mentoring program between newly enrolled counselor trainees and the veteran counselor trainees as well as mentorship between faculty and students. Department administrators could provide team building activities for faculty and small group exercises for students as a way to promote relationship building.

The training of multicultural competent counselors has been widely discussed in the literature over the past few decades (Fong & Lease, 1997; Fukuyama, 1994; Helms & Cook, 1999; Ladany et al., 1997; Pope-Davis, & Ottavi, 1994; Panici, 2002; Robinson et al., 2000). This ongoing discussion in the literature has included teaching methods and supervision techniques to promote multicultural competency. The results of this study suggest that experiential multicultural education might further enhance counselors' learning and skills beyond the classroom alone. Department administrators, educators, and supervisors might consider the implementation of internship and practicum experiences in areas of diverse populations to enhance their multicultural education and training. Implementing multicultural group supervision designed to increase counselor self-awareness, examine stereotypes (Torres-Rivera et al., 2001), and explore racial identity (Vinson, 2000) in light of their experiential multicultural education might enhance their learning.

Counselor Educators and Supervisors

Counselor educators have a responsibility to promote the personal growth and development of counseling students to assure that they are able to effectively solve their

personal and professional problems that could, if not addressed, potentially impact the effectiveness of their work with clients (Donati & Watts, 2000; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Paris et al., 2006). Counselor educators and supervisors can facilitate counselor personal and professional development by committing to approaching these two components of training equally. Since there has been less emphasis on the personhood of the counselor in recent decades, counselor educators and supervisors may need to reemphasize this component of counselor training. This would begin with them supporting departmental recommendations and/or mandates regarding personal growth activities and the implementation of cohort-oriented training, for example. Counselor educators may consider implementing a wellness/developmental philosophy, including counselor self-care throughout their curriculum.

Counselor Trainees and Professional Counselors

Personal growth and development of counselors really begins with their awareness of and commitment to the process. Counselors' life experiences and histories greatly influence their personalities, beliefs, and attitudes that can contribute to or hinder their personal growth and development. Their relationships with family, friends, faculty, and colleagues also factor into their personal competence due to the support and guidance they receive. It is important that counselors take an active role in their own personal growth and development. Counselors in training may facilitate their personal development by engaging in personal growth activities, such as counseling, small groups, and/or other self-enhancing pursuits.

Summary of Implications

The implications of this study pertaining to the profession of counselor education were discussed. Despite the professional standards of practice and ethical guidelines, there continues to be concern within the literature regarding counselor impairment. The results of this study suggested that counselor trainees' personal growth and development is a complex and dynamic process which was facilitated by several factors. Two unique components that contributed to counselor personal growth and development were cohort-oriented training and experiential multicultural education. Counselor education administrators, educators, and supervisors might consider adopting a developmental/ wellness model that reemphasizes the importance of counselor personal development through foster relationships and promoting wellness.

Limitations of the Study

As with all research there are some limitations in this study. This study is limited by participant demographics, research generalizability, and data collection methods. First, there were six participants in this study, all of whom were Caucasian, which limits the diversity of perspectives and experiences. There would be varied experiences with a more diverse group of participants. Second, as with all qualitative research the results of this study cannot be generalized to all counselor trainees. The results of this study provide rich descriptive information about counselor personal development; however, as with all qualitative research, there are not randomized samples of participants that allow for the generalizability of results. However, as consistent with qualitative research, the results are

generalizable to theory. Third, all of the interviews were collected by phone, which could have created a barrier for the researcher in her inability to read body language and make eye contact.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Future Research</div>

In further exploring the personal and professional development of counselor trainees, there are several recommendations for future research. First, it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study with People of Color to gather detailed information about their experiences related to the identified themes. People of Color will likely have different experiences from the majority population that contributes to their personal and professional development. Second, it would also be beneficial to know more about the potential benefits of multicultural experiential education. A comparison study between traditional classroom and experiential multicultural education could be conducted to determine which is most effective related to counselor personal and professional development. Similarly, it would be beneficial to compare the personal growth and development of counselor trainees from cohort-oriented and noncohort-oriented programs.

Another important area of future research is how a personal growth/wellness model in counselor education corresponds with counselor competence. It would be informative to counselor training methods to know if a developmental/wellness model contributes to counselor competence. It would also be helpful to know if counselor trainees who practice wellness over time are likely to become burned out or impaired. A longitudinal study could provide helpful information about counselors' experiences of

burn out and/or impairment over time. It might also be beneficial to know more about counselor educators and supervisors' current experiences, practices, and barriers to practicing wellness themselves.

Conclusion

Phenomenological and life story qualitative research methods were employed in this study in an effort to gather rich and descriptive information about counselors' experiences of personal growth and development. The results of this study indicated that counselors' personal development is facilitated by several components in and out of their counselor training. Counselors' personalities, attitudes, and beliefs are shaped by their early childhood experiences and the relationships with their parents and siblings. Throughout their lives they experience numerous adversities and achievements that contribute to their understandings of themselves and the world around them. One predominant theme throughout this study is the effect the participants' relationships, whether it be with family, friends, colleagues, faculty, and/or supervisors, had on their personal growth experiences and overall well-being. The results of this study also indicated the importance of internship, practicum, coursework, and assignments had on them practicing self-reflection and awareness. The importance of cohort-oriented counselor training and experiential multicultural education were unique contributions this study has offered the existing body of counselor education literature. Personal growth and development of counselor trainees is an important component of training as it assures the welfare of the clientele, the well-being of the practitioners, and the reputation of the profession.

REFERENCES

Agnew, T. (2000). Peer group clinical supervision fosters confidence and professionalism. *Professional School Counselor, 4*, 6-12.

American Counseling Association (ACA). (2005). *Code of ethics and standards of practice*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Ancis, J. R. (2004). *Culturally responsive interventions: Innovative approaches to working with diverse populations*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Arlow, J. (2000). Psychoanalysis. In R. Corsini & D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (6th ed.) (pp. 16-53). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock.

Aten, J. D., & Hernandez, B. C. (2004). Addressing religion in clinical supervision: A model. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 41*, 152-160.

Bandura, A. (1961). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*, 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1967). Behavioral psychotherapy. *Scientific American, 216*, 78-86.

Bandura, A. (1969). *Principles of behavior modification*. Oxford, England: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Oxford, England: Prentice Hall.

Barrett-Lennard, G. T. (1962). Dimensions of therapist response as causal factors in therapeutic change. *Psychological Monographs, 76*, 1-33.

Bemak, F., Epp, L. R., & Keys, S. G. (1999). Impaired graduate students: A process model of graduate program monitoring and intervention. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 21*, 19-30.

Bentancourt, H., & Lopez, S. R. (1993). The study of culture, ethnicity, and race in American psychology. *American Psychologist, 48*, 629-637.

Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (1998). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Biermann, B. (2003). When depression becomes terminal: The impact of patient suicide during residency. *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry, 31*, 443-457.

Bischoff, R., Barton, M., Thober, J., & Hawley, R. (2002). Events and experiences impacting the development of clinical self confidence: A study of the first year of clinical contact. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 28,* 371-382.

Blatt, S. J., Zuroff, D. C., Quinlan, D. M., & Pilkonis, P. A. (1996). Interpersonal factors in brief treatment of depression: Further analysis of the National Institute of Mental Health treatment of depression collaborative research program. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 64,* 162-171.

Bohart, A. C., Elliot, R., Greenberg, L. S., Watson, J. C. (2002). Empathy. In J. C. Norcross (Ed.), *Psychotherapy relationships that work: Therapist contributions and responsiveness to patients* (pp. 89-108). New York: Oxford University Press.

Bozarth, J. D., Zimring, F. M., & Tausch, R. (2001). Client-centered therapy: The evolution of a revolution. In D. J. Cain & J. Seeman (Eds.), *Humanistic psychotherapies: Handbook of research and practice* (pp. 147-188). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Brendel, J., Kolbert, J., & Foster, V. (2002). Promoting student cognitive development. *Journal of Adult Development, 9,* 217-227.

Capuzzi, D., & Gross, D. R. (2001*). Introduction to the counseling profession* (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Carroll, L., Gilroy, P., & Murra, J. (2003). The effect of gender and self care behaviors on counselors' perceptions of colleagues with depression. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 81,* 70-77.

Constantine, M. G., Gloria, A. M., & Ladany, N. (2002). The factor structure underlying three self-report multicultural counseling scales. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology, 8,* 334-335.

Cook, D. (1994). Racial identity in supervision. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 34,* 132-141.

Corsini, R. (2000). Introduction. In R. Corsini & D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (6th ed.) (pp. 1-16). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2001). *Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP): The 2001 Standards.* Alexandria, VA: Author.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2008). *Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP): The 2008 Standards.* Alexandria, VA: Author.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cummings, L. J. (2005). Implementation of developmental supervision: Evaluation of theory in practice (Doctoral dissertation, Antioch University, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 65,* 5394.

D'Andrea, M., & Daniels, J. (1992). *Do the leaders of counselor education programs think graduate students should be required to participate in personal counseling: A national survey.* Greensboro, NC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 349 508)

Denicola, J. A. (2001). The internship year: Transition from student to professional. In S. Walfish & A. K. Allan (Eds.), *Succeeding in graduate school: The career guide for psychology students* (pp. 335-349). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Deutsch, C. J. (1985). A survey of therapists' personal problems and treatment. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 16,* 305-315.

Donati, M., & Watts, M. (2000) Personal development in counselling psychology training: The case for further research. *Counselling Psychology Review, 15,* 12-21.

Douglas, C. (2000). Analytical psychotherapy. In R. Corsini & D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (6th ed.) (pp. 99-132). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock.

Duan, C., & Hill, C. E. (1996). The current state of empathy research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43,* 261-274.

Eichenfield, G., & Stoltenberg, C. (1996). The sub-level I trainee: Some developmental difficulties encountered with counselor training. *The Clinical Supervisor, 14,* 25-37.

Ellis, A. (1959). Rationalism and its therapeutic applications. *Annals of Psychotherapy, 1,* 55-64.

Ellis, A. (1962). *Reason and emotion in psychotherapy.* Oxford, England: Lyle Stuart.

Ellis, A. (1979). A biological basis of human irrationality: A reply to McBurnett and LaPoint. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 35,* 111-116.

Ellis, A. (2000). A continuation of the dialogue on issues in counseling in the postmodern era. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 22,* 97-106.

Estrada, D., Frame, M. W., & Williams, C. B. (2004). Cross-cultural supervision: Guiding the conversation toward race and ethnicity. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 32,* 308-319.

Farber, B. A., & Lane, J. S. (2002). Positive regard. In J. C. Norcross (Ed.), *Psychotherapy relationship that work: Therapist contribution and responsiveness to patients* (pp. 174-194). New York: Oxford University Press.

Fong, M. L., & Borders, L. (1997). Becoming a counselor: A longitudinal study of student cognitive development. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 37,* 100-115.

Fong, M. L., & Lease, S. H. (1997). Cross-cultural supervision: Issues for the White counselor. In D. B. Pope-Davis & H. L. Coleman (Eds.), *Multicultural counseling competencies: Assessment, education and training, and supervision* (pp. 387-405). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Forrest, L., Elman, N., Gizara, S., & Vacha-Haase, T. (1999). Trainee impairment: A review of identification, remediation, dismissal, and legal issues. *Counseling Psychologist, 27,* 627-686.

Frame, M., & Stevens-Smith, P. (1995). Out of harm's way: Enhancing monitoring and dismissal processes in counselor education programs. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 35,* 118-129.

Freud, S. (1910). The origin and development of psychoanalysis. *American Journal of Psychology, 21,* 181-218.

Freud, S. (1936). Inhibitions, symptoms, and anxieties. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 5,* 261-279.

Fukuyama, M. (1994). Critical incidents in multicultural supervision: A phenomenological approach to supervision research. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 34,* 142-151.

Furr, S., & Carroll, J. (2003). Critical incidents in student counselor development. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 81,* 483-489.

Garret, M., Borders, D., Crutchfield, L., Torres-Rivera, E., Brotherton, D., & Curtis, R. (2001). Multicultural SuperVISION: A paradigm of cultural responsiveness of supervisors. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 29,* 147-158.

Gladding, S. T. (2000). *Counseling: A comprehensive profession.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Goodyear, R., & Bernard, J. (1998). Clinical supervision: Lessons from the literature. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 38,* 6-22.

Granello, D. (2000). Contextual teaching and learning in counselor education. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 39,* 270-283.

Halkides, G. (1958). *An experimental study of four conditions necessary for therapeutic change*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, Illinois.

Hazler, K., & Kottler, J. (1994). *The emerging professional counselor: Student dreams to professional realities*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Heesacker, M., Heppner, P., & Rogers, M. E. (1982). Classics and emerging classics in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 29*, 400-405.

Helms, J. E. (1990). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: England Greenwood Press.

Helms, J. E. (1995). An update of Helms' White and People of Color racial identity models. In J. Ponterotto, M. Casas, L. Suzuki, & C. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 181-198). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Helms, J. E., & Cook, D. A. (1999). *Using race and culture in counseling and psychotherapy: Theory and practice*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hird, J. S., Cavalieri, C. E., Dulko, J. P., Felice, A. D., & Ho, T. A. (2001). Visions and realities: Supervisee perspectives of multicultural supervision. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 29*, 114-130.

Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: A general introduction to pure phenomenology*. New York: Collier Books.

Irving, J., & Williams, D. (1999) Personal growth and personal development: Concepts clarified. *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling, 27*, 517-526.

Jackson, M., & Thompson, C. L. (1971). Effective counselor: Characteristics and attitudes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 18*, 249-254.

Jennings, L., Goh, M., Skovholt, T. M., Hanson, M., & Banerjee-Stevens, D. (2003). Multiple factors in the development of the expert counselor and therapist. *Journal of Career Development, 30*, 59-71.

Jennings, L., & Skovholt, T. M. (1999). The cognitive, emotional, and relational characteristics of master therapists. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 46*, 3-11.

Jordan, K. (2002). Clinical training of graduate students: The need for faculty to balance responsibility and vulnerability. *The Clinical Supervisor, 21*, 29-38.

Kensit, D. (2000). Rogerian theory: A critique of the effective of pure client-centered therapy. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 13*, 345-351.

Kirschenbaum, H. (2004). Carl Rogers's life and work: An assessment on the 100th anniversary of his birth. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 82,* 166-124.

Kirschenbaum, H., & Jourdan, A. (2005). The current status on Carl Rogers and the person-centered approach. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 1,* 37-51.

Kohlberg, L., & Hersh, R. H. (1977). Moral development: A review of the theory. *Theory into Practice, 16,* 53-59.

Kohlberg, L., & Kramer, R. (1969). Continuities and discontinuities in childhood and adult moral development. *Human Development, 12,* 3-120.

Ladany, N., Britten-Powell, C. S., & Pannu, R. K. (1997). The influence of supervisory racial identity interaction and racial matching on the supervisory working alliance and supervisee multicultural competence. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 36,* 284-303.

Lambert, M. J., & Barley, D. E. (2001). Research summary on the therapeutic relationship and psychotherapy outcome. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 38,* 357-361.

Leong, F. T. L., & Wagner, N. S. (1994). Cross-cultural counseling supervision: What do we know? What do we need to know? *Counselor Education & Supervision, 34,* 117-131.

Linde, C. (1993). *Life stories: The creation for coherence.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Looney, J. G., Harding, R. K., Blotcky, M. J., & Barnhart, F. D. (1980). Psychiatrists' transition from training to career: Stress and mastery. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 137,* 32-36.

Luborsky, L., McLellan, T. A., Woody, G. E., O'Brien, C. P., & Auerbach, A. (1985). Therapist success and its determinants. *Archive of General Psychiatry, 42,* 602-611.

Lumadue, C., & Duffey, T. (1999). The role of graduate programs as gatekeepers: A model for evaluating student counselor development. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 39,* 101-109.

Maeder, T. (1989). *Children of psychiatrists and other psychotherapists.* New York: Harper & Row.

McCracken, J. A. (2005). An intensive single subject investigation of clinical supervision: In-person and distance formats (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 65,* 6663.

Mintz, L. B., Bartels, K. M., & Rideout, C. A. (1995). Training in ethnic minorities and race-based availability of graduate school resources. *Professional Psychology, Research, and Practice, 26,* 316-321.

Misch, D. (2003). When a psychiatry resident's patient commits suicide: Transference trials and tribulations. *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry, 31,* 459-475.

Mosak, H. (2000). Adlerian psychotherapy. In R. Corsini & D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (6th ed.) (pp. 54-98). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock.

Muratori, M. (2001). Examining supervisor impairment from the counselor trainee perspective. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 41,* 41-56.

Murr, A., Miller, C., & Papadakis, M. (2002). Mentorship through advisory colleges. *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges, 77,* 1172-1178.

Neukrug, E., Lovell, C., & Parker, R. (1996). Employing ethical codes and decision-making models: A developmental process. *Counseling & Values, 40,* 98-106.

Norcross, J. C. (2001). Purposes, processes and products of the taskforce on empirically supported therapy relationships. *Psychotherapy, 38,* 345-356.

Ochs, N. (1994). The incidence of racial issues in white counseling dyads: An exploratory study. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 33,* 305-313.

O'Leary, E., Crowley, M., & Keane, N. (1994). A personal growth training group with trainee counsellors: Outcome evaluation. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 7,* 133-141.

Orlinsky, D. E., Grawe, K., & Parks, B. K. (1994). Process and outcome in psychotherapy. In S. L. Gargield & A. Bergin (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.

Panici, R. (2002). Ego development, personal and educational experience, and multicultural counseling competence among counseling students (Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia, 2002). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 62,* 2981.

Paris, E., Linville, D., & Rosen, K. (2006). Marriage and family therapist interns' experiences of growth. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 32,* 45-57.

Ponterotto, J. G. (1998). Charting a new course in multicultural counseling training. *Counseling Psychologist, 26,* 43-68.

Pope-Davis, D., & Ottavi, T. (1994). Examining the self-reported multicultural competencies and demographic variables of counselors. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 72,* 651-654.

Pope-Davis, D. B., & Coleman, H. L. (Eds.). (1997). *Multicultural counseling competencies: Assessment, education and training, and supervision.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Raskin, N., & Rogers, C. (1980). Person-centered therapy. In R. Corsini and D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (6th ed.) (pp. 133-167). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock.

Richards, T. J., & Richards, L. (1994). Using computers in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516-529). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ricks, D. F. (1974). Supershrink: Methods of a therapist judged successful on the basis of adult outcomes of adolescent patients. In D. F. Ricks, M. Roff, & A. Thomas (Eds.), *Life history research in psychopathology.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Robinson, B., Bradley, L. J., & Hendricks, C. B. (2000). Multicultural counseling supervision: A four-step model toward competency. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 22,* 131-141.

Rogers, C. R. (1942). *Counseling and psychotherapy: New concepts in practice.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1951). *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of psychotherapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21,* 95-103.

Rogers, C. R. (1958). The characteristics of a helping relationship. *Personnel & Guidance Journal, 37,* 1-16.

Rogers, C. R. (1959). The essence of psychotherapy: A client-centered view. *Annals of Psychotherapy, 1,* 51-57.

Rogers, C. R. (1980). *A way of being.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Ronnestad, M., & Skovholt, T. (2003). The journey of the counselor and therapist: Research finding and perspectives on professional development. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 30,* 5-44.

Rowan, J. (1997). The future of primal integration. In S. Palmer & V. Varma (Eds.), *The future of counselling and psychotherapy* (pp. 112-131). London, England: Sage.

Scott, A. E. (2004). Counselor development through critical incidents: A qualitative study of intern experiences during predoctoral internship (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2004). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 65,* 1681.

Sevig, T., & Etzkorn, J. (2001). Transformative training: A year-long multicultural counseling seminar for graduate students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 29,* 57-72.

Sexton, T. L., & Whiston, S. C. (1994). The status of the counseling relationship: An empirical review, theoretical implications, and research directions. *The Counseling Psychologist, 22,* 6-78.

Skovholt, T. M., Jennings, L., & Mullenbach, M. (2004). Portrait of the master therapist: Developmental model of the highly-functioning self. In T. M. Skovholt and L. Jennings (Eds.), *Master therapist: Exploring expertise in therapy and counseling* (pp. 178-191). Boston: Allyn Bacon.

Slotnick, H. (2001). How doctors learn: Education and learning across the medical-school-to-practice trajectory. *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges, 76,* 1013-1026.

Smith, D. (1982). Trends in counseling and psychology. *American Psychologist, 37,* 802-809.

Sommers-Flanagan, J., & Sommers-Flanagan, R. (2004). *Counseling psychotherapy theories in context and practice: Skills, strategies, and techniques.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Spruill, D., & Benshoff, J. (2000). Helping beginning counselors develop a personal theory of counseling. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 40,* 70-80.

Stoltenberg, C. D., McNeill, B., & Delworth, U. (1998). *IDM supervision: An integrative developmental model for supervising counselors and therapists.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1999). *Counseling the culturally different* (3rd ed.). New York: Wiley.

Sue, S. (1998). In search of cultural competence in psychotherapy and counseling. *American Psychologist, 53,* 440-448.

Sumerel, M., & Borders, D. (1996). Addressing personal issues in supervision: Impact of counselors experience level on various aspects of the supervisory relationship. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 35*, 268-286.

Torres-Rivera, E., Phan, L., Maddux, C., Wilber, M., & Garret, M. T. (2001). Process versus content: Integrating personal awareness and counseling skills to meet the multicultural challenge of the twenty-first century. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 41*, 28-40.

Traux, C. B., & Mitchell, K. M. (1971). Research on certain therapist interpersonal skills in relation to process and outcome. In A. E. Bergin & S. L. Garfield (Eds.), *Handbook on psychotherapy and behavior change* (pp. 299-344). New York: Wiley.

Tummala-Narra, P. (2004). Dynamics of race and culture in the supervisory encounter. *Psychoanalytic Psychology, 21*, 300-311.

Vinson, T. (2000). The relationship between racial identity development and multicultural competencies. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 28*, 177-192.

Walfish, S., & Allen, A. K. (Eds.) (2001). *Succeeding in graduate school: The career guide for psychology students*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Wampold, B. E. (2001). *The great psychotherapy debate: Models, methods, and findings*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Watt, S. K., Robinson, T. L., & Lupton-Smith, H. (2002). Building ego and racial identity: Preliminary perspectives on counselors-in-training. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 80*, 94-100.

Wheeler, S., Goldie, J., & Hicks, C. (1998). Counsellor training: An evaluation of the effectiveness of a residential outdoor pursuits activity weekend on the personal development of trainee counsellors. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 11*, 391-405.

Wicas, E. A., & Mahan, T. W. (1966). Characteristics of counselors rated effective by supervisors and peers. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 6*, 50-56.

Wierzbicki, M., & Pekarik, G. (1993). A meta-analysis of psychotherapy dropout. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 24*, 190-195.

Wiggins, J. D., & Weslander, D. L. (1979). Personality characteristics of counselors rated as effective or ineffective. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 15*, 175-185.

Wilson, T. (2000). Behavior therapy. In R. Corsini and D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (6th ed.) (pp. 133-167). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock.

Witztum, E., & Goodman, Y. (1999). Further reflections on therapy, psychology, anthropology, and the Haredim. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 36*, 465-475.

Woodyard, C. (1997). Indicators of impairment in incoming and ongoing master's level counseling students (Doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University-Commerce, 1997). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 58*, 0755.

Ziegler, D. J. (2002). Freud, Rogers, and Ellis: A comparative theoretical analysis. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, 20*, 75-91.

Appendix A

Program and Demographic Questionnaire

Program and Demographic Questionnaire

The researcher provided this questionnaire to each participant prior to the first interview.

1. What was your age when you entered your counseling program?

2. What is your gender?

3. What is your race and ethnicity?

4. What state do you live in?

5. What was your work history prior to pursing your graduate degree in counseling?

6. What is the highest level of degree you have obtained?

7. How long were you enrolled in your Master's counseling program?

8. What is your current employment status?

9. What type of counseling program did you graduate from (e.g., marriage and family, school, community, rehabilitation, mental health, or substance abuse counseling)?

10. How many credit hours were required to complete your program?

11. Approximately, how many full time faculty members were in your program?

12. Did your program require any extra curricular activities related to counselor personal development?

13. What influenced you to become a counselor?

14. How did you select your counseling program?

15. What were your internship experiences?

16. What experiences, outside of your counseling training, have influenced you as a counselor?

Appendix B

Screening Questionnaire

Screening Questionnaire

The researcher provided this to participants prior to the first interview. The information was used to select appropriate participants for this study.

1. Have you had experiences in your life that have contributed to your growth as a person?

2. If yes, would you be comfortable sharing these experiences, using details and depth, with the researcher?

3. Do you consider yourself to be a talkative person? Why or why not?

4. Do you have any interest in contributing to research about counselor trainee personal growth and development? Why or why not?

5. Will you be willing to offer approximately 3 hours of your time to participate in this research?

6. Will you be available in approximately 2 or 3 months for the second interview?

Appendix C

Consent Document

(WMU Letterhead)

Consent Document

Counselor Trainees' Perceptions of their Personal Growth: A Qualitative Inquiry
Department of: Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology
Principal Investigator: Suzanne M. Hedstrom, Ph.D.
Student Investigator: Ericka L. Souders, M.S.

Dear Colleague:

Counselors who have recently graduated from a graduate counseling program are invited
to participate in a study about their personal growth and development while in training.
Your participation in this study will facilitate understanding about counselor trainee
personal development. This project is Ericka Souders's dissertation project, which is
being supervised by Suzanne Hedstrom.

You will be asked to participate in two, audio-taped interviews, either in-person or by
telephone. These private, 60-minute interviews will be conducted by Ericka Souders. You
will be asked to meet Ericka Souders at a university in your area, if you live within 150
miles of her. Otherwise, the interviews will be conducted by telephone. The first
interview will include **twelve questions** about your personal growth and development
while in your graduate counseling training program. For example, you will be asked to
"Describe the experiences that have shaped who you are," and "Tell stories about how
you have grown as a person." Before the second interview you will be provided with a
summary of your first interview to reflect upon. The second interview will consist of
additional questions related to your personal development, particularly with regards to
when you were in training. For example, you will be asked to "Tell stories of experiences
in your Master's training that helped to shape you as a person," and "Describe how you
understand yourself as a professional."

You will also be asked to provide general information about yourself, such as age,
gender, ethnicity, previous work history, highest level of degree obtained, current
employment, and information specific to the program which you graduated (e.g., type of
program, approximate number of full time faculty, number of credit hours, program
requirements of personal growth activities, and cohort or non-cohort format).

Once the interviews are completed, they will be assigned codes before being transcribed
by a professional transcribing company. The typed interviews will be entered into a
computer software program to be analyzed. Your responses will remain confidential.
Ericka Souders and Suzanne Hedstrom will only have access to the data. Your individual
responses will only be known by Ericka Souders and Suzanne Hedstrom. You will be
given a code and your name will not be included with your responses. Interview data will

be saved on a USB drive that will be locked in a cabinet, along with the audiotapes when not in use. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may decide not to participate at any time without penalty. Signing and returning this document to the researcher indicates your consent to participate in this study and for the use of the information you provide.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. If you should experience discomfort regarding the interview topic, you can share your concerns with either Ericka Souders or Suzanne Hedstrom. You may also experience loss of time as a result of your participation.

One way in which you may benefit from this activity is by having the opportunity to talk about your personal growth and development while in training. You may benefit from reflecting upon how you have changed as a person and counselor since your training. You will also add to the body of knowledge about counselor personal development.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact either Suzanne Hedstrom at (616) 742-5069 or Ericka Souders at (269) 342-0606. You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the vice president for research at 269-387-8298 with any concerns that you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Consent obtained
by: _____   _____
                               initials of researcher   Date

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participants were prompted with the following comments and questions in two 60 minutes semistructured interviews. Items were discussed in order. The second interview was an extension of the first and picked up where the first interview ended.

1. Describe how you came to choose counseling as a profession.

2. How would you describe yourself as a professional?

3. Describe what has shaped your understanding of who you are as a professional.

4. When you think back on your life, describe your experiences that have shaped who you are today.

5. What is difficult/easy about being you?

6. Describe how you have grown as a person.

7. Describe your feelings about your experiences of developing as an individual.

8. Describe your experiences in your Master's counselor training that shaped you as a person.

9. Describe your feeling about the experiences in training that shaped you as a person.

10. Describe your experiences in your Master's training that shaped you as a counselor.

11. Describe your feelings about the experiences in training that shaped you as a counselor.

12. Describe how your personal growth and development has shaped you as a counselor.

Appendix E

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: May 8, 2007

To: Suzanne Hedstrom, Principal Investigator
        Ericka Newton, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 07-04-05

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Counselor Trainees' Perceptions of their Personal and Professional Development in Training" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: May 8, 2008

Walwood Hall, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5456
PHONE: (269) 387-8293 FAX: (269) 387-8276