ENCOURAGEMENT IN COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY: THE LIVED

EXPERIENCES OF EXPERT ADLERIAN THERAPISTS

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by

Lisa M. Hand

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the greatest encouragers in my life: to my

grandmother, Emilia Garcia; to my father, Joseph Garcia; and to my sister, Victoria M.

Breting-Garcia.

ABSTRACT

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Encouragement is a foundational aspect of Adlerian theory and therapy, yet there has been no formal research to date designed to discover, specifically, how encouragement is being used in counseling sessions with clients. This study was conducted to fill that identified research gap: to serve as both an introductory exploration into Adlerian encouragement and a foundation to build upon in order to more fully understand this integral part of Adlerian therapy. Specifically, this phenomenological qualitative study was based upon the research question: "What are the lived experiences of Adlerian experts using encouragement in counseling sessions with their clients?" The following eight themes emerged from the data in this study: (a) purpose, (b) qualities, (c) learning, (d) feel or sense it, (e) intentionality and awareness, (f) client change, (g) flexibility and creativity, and (h) encouraging theoretical tenets. The expert participants' responses to the three grand tour research questions overwhelmingly supported the tenets of Adlerian theory, as well as the conceptualizations of Adlerian encouragement found in the literature. Additionally, the participants' rich descriptions also provided information that may prove relevant to the teaching, learning, and practice of Adlerian encouragement. Findings from this study provide future Adlerian researchers many opportunities to add to the current research base by duplicating or building upon this study in order to explore and discover more about the definition and the uses of Adlerian encouragement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Adlerian therapy is an encouragement-focused counseling approach developed by Alfred Adler based upon his psychological theory known as Individual Psychology. Adler built a framework for his theory on the foundational concepts of prevention and education regarding client mental health, as well as upon his belief that all humans possess strengths, assets, and abilities that can be utilized to confront and overcome their life difficulties (Watts, 2012; Watts, 2015). Adler drew from his years of experiences as a medical doctor with training in neurology and psychiatry, and from his passionate study of science, philosophy, and religion to develop, over approximately three decades, a comprehensive theory about human nature. He used his knowledge and experience to theorize about all phases of human development. Ferguson (1989) described Adler's theory as one that encompasses and integrates individual and group processes, and includes individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and motivations. It is, overall, described as holistic and optimistic.

Adler's primary aim was to practice and teach creative interventions that would encourage individuals to become persons who are fully engaged in life. In sum, he conceptualized individuals as complex unified beings who are able to achieve healthy functioning when they act with courage to cooperate and contribute to the well-being of themselves and others in the accomplishment of their life tasks (Watts, 2013).

Philosophical Influences

In addition to his medical and scientific understanding of humans, Adler incorporated several philosophical concepts into his theory of human nature (Ansbacher

& Ansbacher, 1956; Stone, 2011; Watts, 1999; Watts, 2013; Watts & Phillips, 2004). For example, Adler was influenced by Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy which promotes the use of critical thinking skills to clarify problems, issues, and concepts (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Adler noticed that individuals' suffering was often the result of rigid thinking about their lives that was primarily based upon concepts of causality and determinism (Stone, 2011). Adler also observed that individuals received and organized their sense data, or data taken in through their senses, according to their self-ascribed cognitive processes. He understood that individuals' subjective ways of interpreting data shaped their personality styles. He explained that it was through individual personality styles that people created their private interpretations about life, or their "private logic" (Stone, 2011, p. 20). Thus, Adler witnessed evidence of Kant's ideas in his work with patients and he included relevant aspects of critical philosophy in his theory of human nature.

Adler was also influenced by Hans Vaihinger's fictive, or "as if", thinking that describes how individuals construct systems of thought as their realities and then behave "as if" the world matches their models (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006; Watts, 2013). Adler recognized that people treated their individually created fictions as if they were reality, and often used them as coping and problem-solving strategies. He noted that this process occurred apart from one's conscious awareness (Stone, 2011; Carlson et al., 2006). Adler utilized Vaihinger's philosophical concept in the development and application of his theory. He encouraged clients to, during and in between therapy sessions, behave outside of their fictitious beliefs by acting "as if" they were the persons they aspired to become. He found that through this process, clients practiced and learned

how to alter their behavior accordingly. Adler discovered that as clients used courage to act in new and different ways, they were confronting their real challenges and difficulties in life rather than living in the confinement of their self-constructed fictions. In this way, Adler incorporated Vaihinger's "as if" concept into his conceptualization of human nature as well as into his development of a therapeutic strategy to encourage individuals to create and act on new perceived realities.

A third philosophical concept that is found in Adler's theory is that of phenomenology. Phenomenology, according to the philosopher Edmund Husserl, is a theory of essences that includes suspending one's concerns about existent actuality while simultaneously placing one's focus upon another's lived experience (Husserl, 1931/2013). Although Adler did not use the term "phenomenology" in the description of his theory, he practiced an unprejudiced approach to his clients (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). He based his understanding of his clients' unique lived worlds on their communication and he used empathy to capture a phenomenological understanding of their subjective experiences. Adler explained that to understand someone is to see with his or her eyes and to listen with his or her ears (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1979) asserted that Adler made a meaningful contribution to the understanding of human nature when he elucidated that the quality of one's empathy and the degree of one's understanding of people's subjective experiences are the equivalent of the individual's social feeling. Thus, the phenomenological lens of human experience found in Adlerian theory illustrates Adler's early humanistic stance in understanding and treating clients from their unique subjective positions (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Background of the Study

Adler's integration of these philosophical concepts into his theory poised him as one of the first theorists to develop a constructivist theory and approach to counseling (Carlson et al., 2006). Other therapeutic concepts similar to Adler's are found in existential therapy, cognitive and behavioral theories, family systems counseling approaches, and postmodern counseling theories (Watts, 2017). Adler, however, was unique in his position that empathically and phenomenologically understanding an individual's subjective experience or helping an individual to critically evaluate one's life situations to arrive at more socially useful solutions was, in themselves, sufficient for client change. In order for a solution to be useful, Adlerians believe that it must be based upon a useful goal (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Adlerians avoid making value judgements about clients' goals and behaviors so they refrain from eschewing "good" versus "bad" and "right" versus "wrong." Adlerians do, however, consider if a client's behavior is leading to the achievement of the goal and whether the objective itself is worthwhile. They examine if clients' goals and behaviors are "useful" because they benefit the client and others, or if they contrarily are "useless" in that they do not benefit the client or others, and/or because they might result in harm (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). For clients to learn to live in socially useful ways, Adler postulated that encouragement is a necessary therapeutic ingredient in the counseling process and in the client-counselor relationship (Dreikurs, 1967; Mosak, 1977).

Encouragement was described by Adler as a critical component of Adlerian therapy (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Encouragement is understood to have therapeutic qualities and to subsume all aspects of Adlerian counseling and techniques

used in therapy. Adlerian therapists believe that all persons who present to counseling are in some way discouraged and are in need of courage to make changes or reach goals. Encouragement, therefore, is necessary and should be used continuously throughout all phases of Adlerian counseling (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Adler taught that a therapist's lending of courage to a client would help the client to learn to live on the useful side of life and to overcome the feelings of inferiority that ruins a person (Adler, 1920/2014).

Adler described and defended the use of encouragement as an essential aspect of his theory and therapy, yet his writings are unclear as to what, specifically, occurs in counseling sessions with clients that is "encouragement". Over several decades, Adlerian therapists have interpreted Adler's ideas, taken from his books, articles, papers, and lectures and subsequently described and practiced their understanding of therapeutic encouragement in various ways. Some Adlerian therapists described encouragement as a process (Carlson et al., 2006; Dinkmeyer, 1972; Dreikurs, 1957; Dreikurs, 1967; Yang et al., 2014). Some explained that it is a therapeutic "way of being" with clients (Carlson et al., 2006; Watts, 2000; Watts, 2013). Some Adlerian counselors described encouragement as a therapeutic method used to engender courage to others (Manaster & Corsini, 1982; Sweeney, 2009). Others stated that encouragement is a method used to increase a person's internal evaluation of self (Dinkmeyer, 1972; Dreikurs, Gunwald, & Pepper, 1989). Adlerian encouragement might be issued through a comment that recognizes effort and improvement, and offers acceptance, faith, or confidence (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1996).

Although absent of a clear or unified description, encouragement is identified by Adler and by subsequent Adlerian scholars and practitioners as a crucial element in the

success of Adlerian therapy because it represents the fulcrum of change in counseling (Dreikurs, 1967). Overall, Adlerian scholars and therapists report that change occurs in clients when they begin to act with newly discovered courage to face and resolve their difficulties.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous books and articles on the topic of the theory and practice of Adlerian counseling were located and examined for this study. Theoretically and anecdotally based descriptions of encouragement were found, as well as admonishment by Adlerian writers regarding the practice of it in Adlerian counseling. Absent from these sources, however, is a clear and consistent description of what Adlerian therapeutic encouragement is as practiced by Adlerian therapists; and more specifically how Adlerian counselors are conceptualizing and acting with encouragement in the process of counseling. Thus, former and contemporary scholars and practitioners of Adlerian therapy have failed to establish a clear description of encouragement, as it is understood and practiced by Adlerian therapists in counseling sessions with clients (Dinkmeyer, 1972; Wong, 2014).

The lack of consensus in describing Adlerian therapeutic encouragement can create challenges for Adlerian counselors because the absence of a universal understanding, and a co-occurring rationale for it in professional practice, may compromise the confidence, consistency, and therapeutic integrity of its use in sessions with clients. Further, until a description and understanding of Adlerian encouragement is discovered and identified, research cannot be conducted to measure and interpret the efficacy of encouragement practices in counseling. In the absence of this needed clarity, Adlerian scholars and educators will remain unable to teach and discuss specific

therapeutic aspects and benefits of encouragement to Adlerian students and practitioners that are based upon empirical evidence and rigor.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain through qualitative interviews with 20 Adlerian expert practitioners, rich descriptions of the in-session practice of encouragement. Data from the interviews will be collected in order to discover shared themes regarding the commonalities in the participants' experiences of using Adlerian encouragement in counseling and psychotherapy. Interpreted findings from the rich data collected will be confirmed by the participants in order to arrive at an understanding regarding the establishment of a theoretical description of Adlerian therapeutic encouragement in the process of counseling.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because no research to date has been conducted to discover a description of Adlerian encouragement as it is being practiced by Adlerian professionals in counseling and psychotherapy sessions with clients. Gaining Adlerian experts' rich descriptions of in-session Adlerian encouragement will benefit learners of Adlerian therapy, such as students and practitioners, as well as professional counselors from other theoretical orientations who desire to enhance their work with therapeutic encouragement. Unambiguous descriptions of in-session encouragement practices will provide neophyte and experienced students and practitioners with increased confidence when they possess an established framework from which to counsel with therapeutic encouragement. Further, an exploration into Adlerian experts' practice of therapeutic encouragement in sessions might be used to stimulate the establishment of an

operationalized definition of Adlerian encouragement that could be incorporated into an instrument used to test and measure its efficacy in counseling. This further research would provide the mechanism whereby anecdotal claims of the benefits of encouragement made by Adlerian practitioners over generations could be challenged or supported with validity. Overall, this current first study on the Adlerian use of encouragement in counseling might inspire future research inquiries, which could result in the identification of efficacious ways to create and improve techniques and methods of using encouragement in counseling.

Definition of Key Terms

        Adlerian expert. According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, expert is defined as, "having, involving, or displaying special skill or knowledge derived from training or experience" (*Merriam-Webster.com*, 2018). Etringer, Hillerbrand, and Claiborn (1995) explained that novice counselors gather declarative knowledge focused on general psychological principles, counseling skills, and skill application, whereas expert counselors, over time and through practice and feedback from others, translate declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge. Procedural knowledge makes processing more automatic, efficient, and rapid; results in increased accuracy in perception; develops more comprehensive and abstract schemas; and makes use of forward reasoning, which involves quickly analyzing and synthesizing problem features or information to reach the goal. Cummings, Slemon, and Hallberg (1993) described an "experienced" counselor as one who has attained between 5 and 15 years of counseling experience. These researchers reported that previous studies showed that "experienced counselors conceptualize clients in more complex ways than do novice counselors" and

that experienced counselors and their clients in their reported greater recall of therapeutic "insights, interpretations, and connections" (Cummings, Slemon, & Hallberg, 1993, p. 163).

For the purpose of this study, an Adlerian expert is defined as a professional therapist who meets the criteria of possessing special skill and knowledge about Adlerian theory and therapy from education and training and who also has earned a professional reputation as an Adlerian expert through scholarship and clinical experience in Adlerian therapy and technique. An Adlerian expert participant in this study will be an "experienced" counselor, possessing a minimum of five years of professional clinical experience in Adlerian therapy and techniques.

Courage. Adler believed that all persons who present to counseling are discouraged or are lacking courage. People demonstrate a lack of courage by choosing mistaken belief(s) in their private logic. Mistaken beliefs are those beliefs that people hold which lead them to move in life towards socially useless and unsatisfying endeavors instead of acting with courage to move towards more socially useful and satisfying ones (Yang, et al., 2010). Acting with courage to face and accomplish the life tasks of work, love, and social interest with cooperation and contribution is Adler's definition of mental health (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1979).

Adlerian therapists and scholars define courage in various ways. Adler described courage as a social function needed to meet the challenges of the life tasks (Adler, 1927/2017; Adler, 1930). Yang et al. (2014) described courage as seeking the common goodness in order to move towards personal actualization. They also described it as a mental strength used for the benefit of the individual and society. Some Adlerian

counselors described courage as a means of coping with adversity (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963; Dreikurs, 1950). Some described it as a means of accepting that failure and being imperfect are aspects of being human (Carlson & Maniacci, 2012; Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963). Others described it as an exercise in retaining feelings of self-worth to stimulate courage for the next time a same or similar task needs to be faced (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963). Over time, both budding and experienced Adlerian scholars and practitioners have contributed to the discourse on Adlerian courage.

Discouragement. Adler told that all persons who present to counseling are experiencing discouragement in one or more of the life tasks of love, work, friendship/society. Some Adlerian therapists conclude that all client problems are rooted in discouragement (Dreikurs, 1967; Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Manaster and Corsini (1982) suggested that there are millions of ways that people can show discouragement and that through time in counseling, the belief behind the discouragement can be discovered.

Adlerian therapists and scholars have defined discouragement in various ways. Some described it as an attitude, feeling, or belief that one is unable to succeed in constructive and cooperative ways (Yang et al., 2010). Others described it as one feeling inferior, inadequate or deficient at meeting life demands (Carlson et al, 2006; Dinkmeyer, 1972; Dreikurs, 1950, 1967; Kottman, 2003; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Others claimed that it often appears as difficulties setting goals and as not having the faith to cope with the consequences (Sweeney, 2009). Kottman (2003) stated that discouraged individuals choose self-defeating behaviors and negative mistaken beliefs. Dreikurs (1948a) explained it in terms of children's misbehavior. Carlson et al. (2006) noted that

discouragement leads to failure to take risks which results in also not taking opportunities to grow. In all of these Adlerian definitions of discouragement is the implicit requisite of the corrective antidote, encouragement.

Encouragement. Adlerian therapists and scholars define encouragement in various ways. It is described as a psychological and a spiritual concept, as a set of skills, a process, an outcome, and an attitude (Yang et al., 2010). It has been described as procedures involved in the encouragement process, such as those that emphasize the client's health, strength, and abilities (Dinkmeyer, 1972). Encouragement is defined as an intervention and a tool used to affirm, support, and enhance the positive attributes of another person (Sweeney, 2009; Yang et al., 2010). It is explained to be the essential factor in stimulating rehabilitation, adjustment, and client cure (Dreikurs, 1967). Some Adlerian therapists claimed that it can be used by practitioners to access or engender client courage (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Others have stated that it is used to help clients to take action to try something new or different and to replace client hopelessness by building hope and expectancy of success (Carlson, et al., 2006). It has been described by some as a set of skills, a process, an outcome, or an attitude, making it both a construct and an action (Yang et al., 2010). Watts and Pietrzak (2000) affirmed that all of the above attitudes and characteristics should be included in a definition of encouragement.

Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1979) warned that critics and would-be followers of Adler have misinterpreted him to say that encouragement at any price was the key of his treatment. They clarified, however, that "Adler never encouraged without laying open the problem for the solution of which courage was to be used" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1979, pp. 358-359). In other words, they explained that Adlerian encouragement is not

used for the sake of encouragement itself, but rather it is used within the context of client problems. Thus, the ultimate goal of encouragement is to assist individuals to use their courage to take responsibility for their problems (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1979).

Theoretical Framework

I chose Adlerian theory as the theoretical framework for this study because encouragement is a key aspect of Adlerian theory and no other counseling theory features the use of encouragement as a treatment intervention as primarily as it does. Expert Adlerian therapists are practitioners who actively incorporate encouragement into their work with clients and can provide a practical and accurate frame of reference for a study about Adlerian encouragement. I chose to narrow the focus of this study to Adlerian expert use of encouragement in counseling rather than broadening the study of encouragement to include counselors' use of it from a variety of theoretical orientations that do not emphasize therapeutic encouragement, in order to represent only expert opinions. I also chose Adlerian theory as the framework for this study because universal concepts about human nature are present in this theory, and this supports its multicultural applicability. Included in this study, and directly linked with Adlerian encouragement, are the Adlerian concepts of courage and discouragement.

Research Question

This study is based on the following research question: "What are the lived experiences of Adlerian experts using encouragement in counseling sessions with their clients?"

Limitations

One limitation of this study is transferability. The findings of this study might not be representative of how all expert Adlerian therapists practice encouragement, or the way that other Adlerian counselors practice it, from the novice level to the increasingly advanced. A second limitation is that not all participants are equally skilled at Adlerian encouragement. A third limitation is that not all of the participants are equally articulate and perceptive about their practices of encouragement. A fourth limitation is that whereas no two researchers will interpret data in exactly identical ways, it is not known how a different researcher might represent the data. An additional limitation is that this method does not allow for distinction regarding how people from diverse historical, cultural, and social contexts might interpret concepts such as "encouragement".

Delimitations

Because twenty expert Adlerian counselors were chosen for this study, this delimitation represents the views of encouragement as described by a limited number of experts. A larger number of participants might have resulted in greater transferability. These participants do not represent the views of all Adlerian expert practitioners, those at various other levels of expertise, or those of all other countries and cultures. Also, this study is limited to clinicians who identify professionally as Adlerian therapists. Practitioners from other theoretical orientations are not represented in the sample for this study. Therapists adhering to other theories may have described the use of encouragement differently, may not use it in counseling practice, or may not use it with therapeutic intentionality.

Assumptions

One assumption of this study is that each of the participants interviewed was an expert in Adlerian counseling. A second assumption in this study is that the participants answered the questions honestly. A third assumption is that the grand tour research questions were clear to the participants and were suitable to gain rich information that accurately reflected the participants' views. A fourth assumption is that I bracketed my personal biases as I conducted the participant interviews and as I interpreted the outcome data. A fifth assumption is that the methodology chosen offers an appropriate design to answer the research question(s) with fidelity.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I is an introduction to the study. It includes background information about the study, a statement of the problem, descriptions of the purpose and significance of the study, definitions of key terms, an explanation of the theoretical framework chosen, and a statement of the research questions. Chapter I concludes with the naming of identified limitations, delimitations, and assumptions. Chapter II contains an exhaustive review of the literature related to this study's topic of Adlerian encouragement, as well as relevant related information about Adlerian therapists' and scholars' views of courage and discouragement. Chapter III consists of a description of the research design, the participants, the instrumentation used, the data collection methods, and the data analysis of the study. In Chapter IV the study's results are presented and in Chapter V the conclusion and discussion sections provide an overview of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

A search for literature on the topic of *encouragement* according to Adlerian theory and Individual Psychology produced results primarily in the forms of books, book chapters, and educational and conceptual articles. Some of the sources that materialized were "secondary source" textbooks, and journal articles wherein information about the Adlerian use of therapeutic encouragement was not the primary topic of the work. Many of these texts were generations removed from the writings of the theory's originator, Alfred Adler. The search for literature on the topic of encouragement was broadened to include the Adlerian concepts of *courage* and *discouragement*, as well, because Adlerian scholars and professionals defend these concepts as ones that are intimately associated and interrelated with Adlerian encouragement.

The search for empirical research on the topic of Adlerian encouragement produced scant evidence of formal inquiry into the topic and no empirical data measuring attributes associated with Adlerian encouragement in counseling was secured. Studies were found that were peripherally associated with Adlerian encouragement. Most of these studies were those that reviewed outcomes of encouragement clinics, encouragement programs and instruments in the school setting and in parent training, social interest and encouragement scales, and other models and theories that include aspects of encouragement. Most descriptions of the use of Adlerian encouragement as a counseling intervention were found in psychotherapy case studies, provided by Adler and others, and in educational and conceptual articles related to the Adlerian view of counseling written by Adler and Adlerian clinicians and scholars. The texts located in this search represent a

broad range of ideas and views about the Adlerian concept of encouragement, pointing to a lack of consensual description of it among past and current Adlerian scholars, educators, and practitioners.

Overview of Chapter

I begin this chapter with an overview of Individual Psychology and Adlerian theory. Because the theory behind Adlerian therapy, Individual Psychology, is broad due to its strong philosophical underpinnings and its description of the nature of being human, I will attempt to comprehensively yet succinctly present the theory's key concepts and features in order to provide a foundation and rationale for the ensuing description and discussion of Adlerian encouragement. Quotes from Adlerian clinicians and scholars are included to provide a more comprehensive representation of the topic under investigation in this review. The Adlerian view of mental health and an Adlerian discussion of social interest are included in this review due to their significant connection with Adlerian encouragement and their relevance to it in this study. Following the introduction, the key terms *discouragement*, *courage*, and *encouragement* will be defined and explored according to the writings of Adler and others, although a more exhaustive investigation of the literature on encouragement is provided. Prior and related research surrounding Adlerian encouragement is presented, as well as Adlerians' postulations regarding the benefits of therapeutic encouragement. The section will conclude with a summary of the literature review findings.

Overview of Individual Psychology and Adlerian Theory

The epistemological roots of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, and the ensuing development of his theory, are drawn from the philosophies of Immanuel Kant

and Hans Vaihinger, and were influenced by the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich

Nietzsche about the social nature of people and societies (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956;

Stone, 2011; Watts, 1999, 2000, 2004). Adlerian theory provides a holistic and a socio-

teleological approach to therapeutic practice. According to Adler, man is an indivisible

social being whose every action is directed by a purpose. These actions are self-

determined and creative. As a social creature, man's primary motivation is the desire to

belong. Adler explained that the innate goal of connection possessed by all humans

requires a spirit of cooperation with others. From the earliest days of childhood, however,

as people begin to face the difficulties of life, Adler explained that they often try to cope

with adversity or overcome challenges by identifying and adopting mistaken goals. These

goals are mistaken because instead of moving individuals towards connection with

others, they move them into withdrawal away from or against cooperation. Adler

recognized that oftentimes people have learned to manage the difficulties in life in ways

that inhibit "that necessary intimate contact with our fellow man" (Adler, 2017/1927, p.

3). Adler proposed that individuals are in need of resolving the issues of life so that "the

social feeling and the communal consciousness play a more important role" (Adler, 2017,

p. 14). The term Adler used to capture the essence of this social interest is the German

word, *gemeinschaftsgefühl.* He described the social interest qualities of

gemeinschaftsgefühl as the tendency for individuals "to unite themselves with other

human beings, to accomplish their tasks in cooperation with others" (Adler, 1970/1930,

p. 115). Social interest, as described by Griffith and Powers (1984), is "the individual's

awareness of belonging in the human community and the extent of his or her sense of

being a fellow being" (p.7). Ferguson (1989) explained that persons with fully developed

gemeinschaftsgefühl know that they belong and are worthwhile members of the human community and that they strive for contribution and cooperation with fellow humans. Yang et al. (2010) stated that Adler's measurement of one's success and the development of a healthy personality are equivalent to the extent to which an individual embodies gemeinschaftsgefühl.

Adler identified man's basic *life tasks* that are born out of the needs of the human community and ones that all individuals must face with courage (Adler, 1920/2014; Adler, 1927/2017). Adler named these three life tasks that humans strive to master as work, love, and friendship (or social) (Dreikurs, 1953; Sweeney, 2009). Adler described the *normative ideal* of each of these tasks, which are the ways in which mentally healthy and socially cooperative individuals approach the tasks through social interest (Yang et al., 2010). For example, the life task of work requires individuals' work to include contribution to the welfare of others. The life task of love involves building an intimate relationship bond with at least one person. The life task of friendship embraces social relations with friends and relatives and can extend to an ideal concept of friendship with community and humankind, at large. Overall, these tasks are based on the objective of cooperating with and contributing to oneself and others, because humans are socially embedded and are understood to exist within the contexts of their relationships. Later, other Adlerians named additional life tasks. Dreikurs and Mosak (1967) described a fourth, or *being* task, and a fifth, or *belonging* task (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967). The *being* task allows one the ability to be in harmony with oneself and *belonging* is described as being in harmony with the universe, including gaining a sense of belonging with family, the community, and of finding one's place in the world. Manaster and Corsini (1982)

stated, "For Adler, religion was a manifestation of social interest" (p. 63) because like religions, social interest stresses one's responsibility to others. Mosak (1995) identified this religious tone to Adler's psychology and named a *spirituality* task. Cheston (2000) concurred that religiously oriented or spiritually oriented persons share Adler's ideas of encouragement and social interest. Later, a parenting and family task was added (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999).

Adler iterated that in every life task, healthy individuals are motivated by and their lives are permeated with social interest, or gemeinschaftsgefühl. Several Adlerians have described the socially embedded and relational nature of the Adlerian perspective on the tasks of life: love, society, work, spirituality, and self (Manaster & Corsini, 1982; Mosak, 1995; Watts, 1999; Watts & Phillips, 2004; Watts, Williamson, & Williamson, 2004). Overall, Watts explained that all of the life tasks address "intimate love relationships, relationships with friends and fellow beings in society, our relationships at work, our relationship with self, and our relationship with God or the universe" (Watts, 2012, p. 42).

Adlerian View of Mental Health

As a growth model, Adlerian theory holds an optimistic view of people as unique, creative, capable, and responsible beings (Watts, 2012). Preferring a nonpathological perspective, Adlerians do not view people as sick, but rather as persons who are discouraged in their attempts to act with social interest as they engage in their life tasks. Thus, Adler identified an individual's social interest as the key to his or her growth and development and to one's mental health (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006; Watts & Phillips, 2004). The experience of failure in exercising social interest in the

accomplishment of the life tasks is described by Adlerians as living with maladjustment, neurosis, or psychosis (Abramson, 2015; Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Carlson et al., 2006). Evans, Dedrick, and Epstein (1997) stated it this way: "Those who are discouraged fail to operate on the useful side of life and seek to find belonging through neurotic symptoms" (p. 163). Abramson (2015) described the initial factors necessary for the development of a neurosis as "the feeling of inferiority, the striving for superiority, and an undeveloped social sense" (p. 433). Watts (2012) summarized that it is one's striving vertically, or seeking personal gain without contribution to society, that signifies maladjustment. Vertical striving is in contrast to horizontal striving, which seeks the greater good and usefulness for both self and others and is the Adlerian criterion for mental health.

Why persons seek counseling. According to Individual Psychology and Adlerian therapy, people present to counseling when they are not apt or prepared to solve the problems of life, or to accomplish the tasks of life. As such, their attention becomes self-focused, and represents insufficient social interest. Adler stated that "all the main problems in life are problems of human cooperation" (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 131). He believed that all human suffering originates from difficulties with the life tasks and that underdeveloped, unsuccessful attempts to meet the tasks of life and a decreased social interest were indicators of neurosis or a neurotic disposition (Oberst & Stewart, 2003). Manaster and Corsini (1982) explained that neurotic people move away from, rather than towards, others and asserted that individuals experience maladjustment as a result of pursuing narcissistic self-interest rather than social interest. In contrast, Adler asserted that healthy, nonpathological people were those who could meet the

various tasks with courage and common sense (Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000). Thus, helping individuals to courageously approach the life tasks with social interest is the primary goal of therapy.

Adler (1927/2017) asserted that failure on the part of individuals to engage in the life tasks with courage and with social interest in mind results in a person's felt sense of being "less than" or "inferior." He understood that people faced difficulties in their attempts to resolve the incongruity of a life style that acts upon social demands with social interest versus one that does so with self-interest. He found that in response to these challenges people often experienced feelings of *inferiority.* Mosak and Maniacci (1999) asserted that inferiority feelings can encourage individuals to reexamine situations and decide what they can do to change them, and that responding to feelings of inferiority can be used for the useful side of life if they "allow us to grow, both individually, and as a species" (p. 81). Adler (1927/2017) explained that to resolve the discrepancy between self-interest and the effort required for social interest, individuals most naturally responded to their inferiority feelings with a desire to gain mastery, or *superiority*. Watts (2012) clarified that superiority is "the individual's creative and compensatory answer to the normal and universal feelings of insignificance and disempowerment, and the accompanying beliefs that one is less than one should be (i.e., feelings of inferiority)" (p. 42). Adler taught that individuals strive to move from inferiority to superiority through compensation (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Compensation. Compensation occurs naturally due to the inferiority that starts in infancy when babies are small and helpless and begin their lives dependent on others. As young children grow and develop and are confronted with the reality of their deficits,

they become increasingly aware of feeling inferior. "This feeling of inferiority is the driving force, the starting point from which every childish striving originates" (Adler, 1930/2017, p. 70). Kottman (2003) described this natural process in children as an opportunity for them to either face and overcome obstacles through inspiration, or to respond with discouragement. Adler (1927/2017) described children who develop a way of optimism as those who are confident that they can solve the problems that they encounter and who will grow up to consider the tasks of life within their power. This type of child will exhibit the development of courage, openness, frankness, responsibility, industry, etc., which are needed to gain superiority over one's feelings of inferiority. This exemplifies good compensation in that it is used for socially useful purposes. Discouragement, on the other hand, can be seen in the acting out behaviors of children, which are merely socially useless distractions used to compensate. Adlerians promote meeting a child's discouragement with encouragement in therapy because the compensating acting out behaviors that begin in childhood are often pervasive and endure into adulthood. Adler told that "the fulcrum of our science, and a great many researches were dedicated to the first years of life" (p. 7) in order to understand how early experience shapes an individual's life and to discover ways to change fundamental behavior patterns. Adler (1927/2017) believed that one's childhood should be understood because people do not naturally change their attitude toward life after the pre-school period unless the individual comes to recognize his or her faults and errors.

In sum, "good" compensations lead persons towards social responsibility, to act with social courage and to cooperate with both humanity and with one's self. They are used to help individuals transform perceived minuses in their lives into perceived pluses,

or to move from a position of inferiority in the life tasks to a position of superiority

(Adler, 1927/2017). Contrarily, "bad" compensations are not socially useful, such as

when individuals depend upon success in one life task to compensate for failure in one or

more of the others, or when people seek to defend themselves when they experience

pessimism and lack the confidence they need to access courage to accept life's failures

and disappointments. These examples represent overcompensation and

undercompensation, respectively.

      Overcompensation and undercompensation. Adler (1927/2017) explained that

overcompensation occurs when an individual's striving for superiority is based on

chasing one's fictitious goal of perfection. He taught that when a child fears that he or she

is unable to compensate for weakness, that "the danger arises that in his striving for

compensation he will be satisfied not with a simple restoration of the balance of power;

he will demand an over-compensation" (p. 75). Yang et al. (2010) described this type of

striving for superiority as a maladaptive attempt at self-preservation, which is aimed at

alleviating a person's "fears of not making it, not being good enough, or of rejection"

because it occurs at the expense of social interest (p.90). "This psychological movement

is motivated by our innate creative power that manifests itself in our adoption of behavior

strategies and emotions, and safeguards devices for self-preservation" (Yang et al., 2010,

p. 7). Adler (1927/2017) reasoned that the striving for power and dominance could be

called pathological when it is exaggerated and intensified. Adler (1930/2017) further

explained that an exaggerated, intensified, and unresolved feeling of inferiority that is

matched with a goal which demands peace and equilibrium is expressed as a striving for

power over the environment and one's fellow man. Over-striving in the life tasks can

explain overcompensation, and under-striving or avoiding life tasks can explain undercompensation.

Undercompensation represents individuals' efforts to evade the tasks of life in order to attempt to avoid failure or the fear of rejection (Dreikurs, 1950). These fears induce persons to respond to challenges with "blaming, wishful thinking, self-centering, double mindedness, competition, … and other methods that create a need for undue attention" (Yang et al., 2010, p. 8). Yang et al. (2010) explained that by undercompensating individuals evade responsibilities and attribute their lack of contribution to hopelessness or helplessness.

Overall, individuals who operate from fear move toward self-interest; they overcompensate or undercompensate using socially useless safeguarding devices. In contrast, individuals who act with courage move towards social interest; they compensate with cooperation and contribution which lead to "perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of encouragement" (Yang, et al., 2010, p. 134). Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1996) said, "The antidote to fear is courage. And that courage is produced by encouragement" (p. 1). In this way, courage and encouragement are seen to strengthen each other and are the treatment for over- and undercompensations.

Maladjustment and treatment. Because Adlerians do not subscribe to the deficit or medical model to assign diagnoses for maladjustment, but instead prefer a nonpathological perspective regarding mental health (Carlson et al., 2006; Watts & Phillips, 2004), they view etiology and treatment of many diagnosable disorders through an Adlerian lens. Thus, descriptions found in the literature of the Adlerian view of maladjustment center primarily around client discouragement, and treatment is focused

on helping clients to access courage and to discover new ways to live responsible and productive lives. For example, Mosak & Maniacci, (1999) stated that Adlerians believe that psychopathology is a discouraged attempt at belonging. Sperry (1993) described the development of specific types of maladjustment, such as depression, as one's trying to overcome inferiority feelings and to gain superiority which ultimately leads to losing feelings of cooperation and social interest. Dinkmeyer and Sperry (2000) asserted that sometimes depressed persons are able to gain the superiority they long for through methods which do not consider social interest or social feelings. For example, they may enjoy superiority through the way friends and family members respond to them with caring and compassion, rather than gaining superiority through taking personal responsibility. Other depressed individuals might use their real or assumed deficiency as an excuse or an alibi for non-participation and withdrawal, or as a way to get treated specially (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). An individual might use the symptoms of another maladjustment, obsessive-compulsive disorder, to keep others in his or her service, to avoid the life task responsibilities, and to detour around the central problems of life (Rasmussen, 2002). These symptoms might be alleviated by one's trading rigid self-sabotaging thoughts and statements for those that are related to community feeling in order to move the client towards the more socially useful choices (Carlson et al., 2006). Anxiety neurosis was viewed by Adler as often a means of trying to control others (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). It might also be used as an escape from doing something one is supposed to do. "In this way, one is not tested and found wanting" (Manaster & Corsini, 1982, p. 108). Anxiety, which is based on feelings of inferiority, can assist one to avoid demands and/or avoid getting defeated. Adler found that "so-called resistance is

only lack of courage to return to the useful side of life" (Quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 338). "The fear of worthlessness and lack of courage to be imperfect energizes reluctance expressed by resistant clients" (Rasmussen, 2002, p. 148). Dreikurs (1967) explained that in psychotherapy, often medications and prescribed rules of behavior can be given with the best intentions yet can be harmful because they fail to strengthen the client's self-confidence, which is what can really help him solve the problem of himself and his own life, and of his relationships with others. Dreikurs claimed that what is most important in every treatment is encouragement and that the most effective therapeutic factor is shown to be the uncovering of unjustified feelings of inferiority.

Thus, rather than viewing clients as "sick", Adlerians view clients as discouraged because their vertical striving has proven to be socially useless. Adler (1930/1970) explained that "there is no doubt that the social feeling is superior to the individualistic striving" (p. 116). Adlerian therapy, therefore, consists not of curing clients but of encouraging them towards participation in the useful side of life (Carlson et al., 2006; Manaster & Corsini, 1982; Oberst & Steward, 2003; Watts 2015). According to Dreikurs (1950), "The therapist's first objective is not to cure symptoms, but to persuade the discouraged patient to fulfill his tasks" (p. 89). Yang et al. (2010) explained that helping clients to reorient towards social interest occurs as clients overcome the problems of living that occur in their life tasks. Adler described the reorientation of a client towards social interest in this way: "As soon as he can connect himself with his fellow men on an equal and cooperative footing, he is cured" (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 347).

Cooperation and social interest. According to Adler (1927/2017), healthy people are those who strive towards connection and belonging with others. They are living lives with social interest because they care about others and the world of humankind. Although Adler introduced the concept of gemeinschaftsgefühl, or social interest, as the foundation of his theory and the key to mental health, he explained that it is not an inborn instinct, but "an innate potentiality that has to be consciously developed" beginning with a child in the midst of his or her life because social interest "can come to life only in a social context" (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p.134). Yang et al. (2010) suggested that gemeinschaftsgefühl represents an ideal or a concept that implies courage, initiative, and creativity based upon movement and improvement, and belonging and cooperation (p. 31). They explained that while Adler's original translation was "social feeling", the term has come to be known to Adlerians to also connote social feeling, community feeling, fellow feeling, a sense of solidarity, communal intuition, community interest, and social sense. Others described social interest as "one's willingness to participate in the give and take of life and to cooperate with others" (Carlson et al., 2006, p. 11). Ansbacher (1991) enhanced the translation of social interest to community feeling in order to evoke a deeper sense of a community connection that extends to all of humankind. He clarified Adler's distinction that social interest is "the action line of community feeling" (Ansbacher, 1992, p. 405). Watts (2015) iterated that both social interest and community feeling should be taken together when conceptualizing gemeinschaftsgefühl. He distinguished social feeling, with cognitive and behavioral aspects of contributing to the common good, from community feeling which encompasses affective and motivational aspects including a sense of belonging, empathy,

caring, compassion, acceptance of others, etc. Hanna (1996) claimed that "reports from across culture, class, gender, and education indicate that community feeling is experienceable and identifiable by a person phenomenologically" (p. 28). Bitter (2012) explained that gemeinschaftsgefühl, or Adler's community feeling, can be seen in qualities such as cooperation, courage, contribution, caring and empathy, and compassion and engagement. Evidence of social interest and community feeling can be seen where people are encouraged and are encouraging others (Carlson et al., 2006).

The idea of social interest and personal cooperation found in gemeinschaftsgefühl subsumes all aspects of Adler's Individual Psychology. The ability to cooperate toward belonging is a measure of the development of an individual's social interest (Dreikurs, 1950). Well-adjusted individuals who possess a sense of self-interest feel affirmed with self-worth and a willingness to participate in social living (Yang et al., 2010). Those who do not choose to cooperate toward belonging move away from social interest as they attempt to accomplish their life tasks. Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956) described this as a process of an "infinite series of failures or abnormalities, or of the attempts of more or less discouraged people to solve their life-problems without the use of cooperation or social interest" (p. 299). Yang et al. (2010) stated that people who move towards self-interest do so with fear while those who move toward social interest do so with courage. Dreikurs (1967) explained that, overall, social interest is an expression of a sense of belonging that leads to cooperation, and therefore Adlerian psychotherapy is concerned with "establishing a psychological basis for cooperation" (p. 39). He identified four attitudes that are essential for cooperation and their counterparts: 1) social interest – hostility; 2) confidence in others – distrust and suspicion; 3) self-confidence – inferiority

feelings; 4) courage – fear. Adler explained that a clash occurs in a person's life when one's style of life lacks social interest while one's outside problems demand it (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Adler explicated, "For every solution of a problem a developed social feeling is necessary" (Stein, 2005, p. 205).

Style of life. Adler explained that the way one moves through life, either towards useful goals based on social interest or towards mistaken goals which move people away from social interest, is one's law of movement. The movement of an individual is generated from his or her unique creative force that originates in the person's mental world and is expressed in one's memory, perceptions, emotions, imagination, and dreams and conveys how a person thinks, feels, and acts (Yang et al., 2010). "The law of movement in the mental life of a person is the decisive factor for his individuality" (Adler, in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 195). It guides how a person interacts with one's inner and outer worlds, or how one assimilates impressions, accepts or rejects challenges, interprets subjectively, and evaluates how to interact socially (Yang et al., 2010). "The more inadequate and unsure one feels about his worth, the more narrow and rigid will be the life style chosen", and this narrow and rigid life style "shows itself most easily in difficult situations" when the individual's mistaken goals become apparent (Croake, 1975, p. 514). It is the creative aspect of the law of movement, however, that provides a person with the capacity for constructive growth and change in life. Through creativity an individual has the ability to shape his or her personality because heredity and one's environment alone cannot determine personality but are merely building blocks from which the individual constructs the kind of person he or she wants to be (Adler, 1956; Carlson et al., 2006; Croake, 1975; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999; Watts, 2015).

"Because of this creative power, people function like actors authoring their own scripts,
directing their own actions, and constructing their own personalities within a socially-
embedded context" (Watts, 2013, p. 460). Adler and other Adlerian therapists agree that
people can also use their creativity to make constructive changes in their lives and that
change is more likely to occur in a relationship with a person who is encouraging (Adler,
1979; Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1996).

Overall, the law of movement in one's life is expressed through his or her unique
style of life. Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956) stated that the style of life is equated with
the self, one's personality, the unity of the personality, one's unique form of creative
activity, the method one uses to face problems, one's opinions about self and the
problems of life, and one's attitude about life and others. It is an unarticulated set of
guidelines that a person uses to move them forward towards their goals in life (Mosak &
Maniacci, 1999). Watts (2003) succinctly described it as one's "master plan or cognitive
blueprint for coping with the tasks and challenges of life" (p.15) that is uniquely created
and progressively refined by a person throughout his or her life. Adler noted that one's
individuality in the style of life always stands out clearly (Ansbacher & Ansbacher,
1956).

Adlerian Discouragement

As individuals approach their life tasks through their style of life, they often
experience a lack of hope, confidence, resources, support, ability, direction, etc.
Dinkmeyer (1972) explained that a person who is unable to see possibilities, potential,
and alternatives is discouraged. "Discouragement refers to a condition and a process that
restricts one's courage to the extent that it prevents him from acting" (Dinkmeyer, 1972,

p. 179). Yang et al. (2010) described discouragement as an attitude, feeling, or belief that one is unable to succeed in a constructive and cooperative manner. Discouragement can begin at early age and Edgar (1985) asserted that "children who are discouraged often become the adult called neurotic in later years" (p. 484). Mosak and Maniacci (1999) defined Adlerian discouragement as "the process by which individuals begin to doubt not only their place in their social world, but their ability to usefully compensate for or cope with life's challenges" (p.173). Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs (1963) provided a comprehensive definition of discouragement as "the final outcome of a process of testing and trying, of groping and hoping; it is the stage that is reached after one has hoped against hope, tried without expectation of success, and finally given up in despair" (p. 35). This feeling of discouragement leaves the individual feeling inadequate at meeting his or her life demands. Sometimes discouragement can be so great that it restricts courage and prevents one from acting (Dinkmeyer, 1972). Carlson et al. (2006) stressed that if people are discouraged, "they will not take risks; they will hold onto their convictions and not seek to change or grow" (p. 58). Sweeney (2009) found that discouraged persons are those who "have difficulty setting goals and having faith to do what the situation requires for them to cope successfully with its consequences" (p. 64). Dreikurs (1950) described neurotic choices as "the result of an ambitious person who has lost courage" (p. 64). Overall, every deficiency is believed to be due to discouragement (Dreikurs, 1967).

Causes of Discouragement

Discouragement can manifest from feelings of inferiority at achieving the life tasks. Sometimes individuals can become so discouraged from inferiority feelings that they no longer move towards achievements on the useful side of life (Dreikurs, 1950). Sometimes discouragement comes from the fear of what life has to offer or the prospect of a challenge (Lingg & Wilborn, 1992). Other times discouragement is rooted in problems of life based upon mistaken beliefs, or "ideas about self, others, and the world that are self-defeating and negative" (Kottman, 2003, p. 25). Mistaken beliefs are used to create one's private logic, which is a person's unique way of looking at and interpreting the world and reality as "quite different than most people do" (Oberst & Stewart, 2003, p. 25). This private logic becomes the self-perpetuating and reinforcing movement of one's fictional world that when based on errors leads to neurotic character traits. Manaster and Corsini (1982) suggested that "the most central core aspect of neurosis is discouragement" (p. 132). Adler believed that if individuals would abandon their dream worlds and feel that they are equal among others, they would feel less dependent on the opinions of others and their courage would rise. Adler described this as helping people to replace their Private Sense with Common Sense (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Manaster & Corsini, 1982).

Adlerians believe that "most interpersonal problems are the result of discouragement" (Sherman & Dinkmeyer, 1987, p. 50). For example, Dreikurs (1948a) explained that childhood acting out behaviors are the result of the child experiencing discouragement from trying to find his or her place usefully. An alternative behavior to find belonging is not apparent to the child or does not fit into his or her discouraged view

of one's self or of one's life circumstances. Adler (1932/2010) concluded, "We must recognize the specific discouragement which he shows in his style of life; we must encourage him at the precise point where he falls short in courage" (p. 49).

Adlerian Courage

Adler (1930) described courage as a social function and asserted that courageous individuals as those who meet the challenges of the life tasks with cooperation and contribution. Adler understood that people often experience fears and anxiety, or feelings of inferiority, associated with approaching and gaining superiority in the life tasks. He explained that these fears of failure distract people into pseudo-activity which takes them further away from their desire to connect in socially useful ways. Yang et al. (2010) explained that fear prevents forward movement and can hinder one's sense of being and belonging. Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1996) stated that fear and courage are interrelated, influence one's progress through life, and are differentiated only by the direction of movement: courage is a movement plus and fear is a movement minus. Often fears are mistaken perceptions and faulty ideas that become self-created stumbling blocks. Yang et al. (2010) summed it up in this way: "The threat to our courage comes largely from our lack of preparedness, which is masked as our fear" (p. 8).

Courageous people find ways to belong, to be valued, and to gain the respect of others that promote social interest (Adler, 1927/2017). Adler held that it requires courage for individuals to see themselves as part of the whole and to be willing to work to improve the difficulties of the culture. Courage as a social function, to Adler, is the expression of social interest. "Courage and social interest are universal values, which are both the ends and the means of personal and social well-being" (Yang et al., 2010, p. xx).

Yang et al. (2010) further explained that the role of courage is to seek the common goodness and that this is done as a means of moving towards personal actualization. Courage as a personal psychological construct is a mental strength that is stimulated simultaneously for the benefit of the individual as well as for the benefit of society.

Adlerians have also described courageous people as those who can see adversity or challenges as opportunities rather than barriers. "The courageous person can look at a situation, a task, or an event in terms of possible actions and solutions rather than potential threats and dangers" (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963, p. 32). Dreikurs (1950) explained that if a child has not become discouraged then he will face his difficulty with courage by attempting to overcome it. "He wants to master his difficulties and the requirements of life at the same time" (Dreikurs, 1950, p. 30). When a situation cannot be overcome, however, courage can be used as a means for coping with adversity. Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs (1963) defined courage as "confidence in oneself and one's ability to cope either with the particular situation at hand, or even more importantly, with whatever situation may arise" (p. 33).

Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1996) asserted that "courageous people have beliefs that direct the way they meet the challenges of life" (p. 215). Further, courageous people have a clear goal that guides the actions they take in major situations in their lives. They act decisively and promptly. They can accept making mistakes, they know their limits, and they do not blame others. People can increase their courage by becoming aware of the stumbling blocks that hinder one from being courageous in work, relationships, and friendships. Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1996) taught that, "You either develop, possess,

and own courage and then eventually act upon it, or you function as a fearful, discouraged person" (p. 217).

The greatest courage, according to Adler, however, is the "courage to be imperfect". Acceptance of being imperfect and "using it as a catalyst for growth and change will bring more to life than the mere striving to overcome a perceived deficit" (Bahlmann & Dinter, 2001, p. 273). Walton (2012) explained that social interest *requires* (emphasis mine) individuals to act with the courage to be imperfect. He clarified that this kind of courage would be an essential ingredient for social interest because it would be difficult for an individual to be genuinely interested in the social good while simultaneously striving to self-protect or self-promote. Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs (1963) explained that courage is required to accept that failure and being imperfect are aspects of being human, and that having the courage to be imperfect provides a "built in protection against discouragement" (p. 34). In this way, one's courage helps one to retain feelings of self-worth and it stimulates courage for the next time the same or a similar task needs to be faced.

Adlerians have overwhelmingly agreed that courage is required in order to be a connected and cooperative individual. Adlerians have also agreed that there are societal consequences due to members lacking courage to engage in socially responsible behaviors. Yang et al. (2010) concurred that it is the absence or presence of one's courage that determines which actions individuals will take. "No trick, but merely his own growing insight and regained courage can help him to change his attitude and behavior" (Dreikurs, 1967). Sweeney (2009) asserted that persons with low social interest will act irresponsibly by using situations as excuses to not exercise courage. These

consequences can be felt in the loss of human and financial resources by those persons who are not contributing (Sweeney, 2009). Adler also held that great achievements may come less from original aptitude, and more from courageously overcoming obstacles (Yang et al., 2010). Courage expressed this way, according to Adler, is more important that talent or ability alone as it is also related to character. Thus, Adlerian practitioners support and promote helping discouraged clients access courage in various ways.

Adlerian Encouragement

Adlerian counselors understand that some individuals will enact changes after gaining insight about their difficulties. They believe, however, that insight alone is insufficient for most and that those individuals require other incentives for reorientation. Dreikurs (1967) explained that the most essential one that Adlerian counselors rely on is encouragement because he told that every deficiency is based on discouragement. Encouragement is "the essential factor in stimulating rehabilitation, adjustment, and cure" (Dreikurs, 1967, p. 12). Other Adlerian therapists agree that encouragement is the most important Adlerian counseling and psychotherapy intervention (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Carlson et al., 2006; Sherman & Dinkmeyer, 1987; Yang et al., 2010). Sherman and Dinkmeyer (1987) asserted that "Encouragement is considered by Adlerian therapists as perhaps the most important technique available for the promotion of change" (p. 50). It is the antidote to the discouragement that often comes naturally from inferiority feelings, or those feelings that stimulate one towards healthy, normal striving and development (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Descriptions of Encouragement

Adlerian scholars, educators, and practitioners have described encouragement in many different ways. Some have asserted that it is an integral component of human growth and development (Bahlmann & Dinter, 2001; Carlson et al., 2006; Watts, 2015; Watts & Pietrzak, 2000). It has been described as a process whereby individuals can increase their courage or develop needed courage to face the life tasks and to move towards social interest (Watts, 2012; Watts, 2013). Yang et al. (2010) explained that encouragement can be understood as a psychological concept and a spiritual concept. They said it can also be understood as a set of skills, a process, an outcome, or an attitude. It is a both a construct and an action; it is something that persons possess for their use (Yang et al., 2010). Yang et al. (2010) further explained that when defined by using the root meaning of *courage*, encouragement is the process of facilitating one's courage and empowering (i.e., to give power) to discouraged individuals so that they can redirect their life movement (Yang et al., 2010, pp. 132, 134). Encouragement can occur in the form of various verbal and nonverbal procedures. For example, Nikelly (1971) said that encouragement can be a non-verbal attitude towards a client to communicate and enhance client esteem and worth. Main and Boughner (2011) described it as actionable hope that is instilled by the therapist. According to Yang et al. (2010), encouragement can be used as a tool to help clients establish goals, attitudes, and competencies needed in order to cope with life. They found that this is accomplished by tapping into one's intrinsic desires to discover, to develop mastery, and to enjoy life. Through this kind of encouragement process these desires are brought to the client's awareness (Yang et al, 2010). Dinkmeyer (1972) explained that "While the term *encouragement* may not be

described explicitly, procedures that work are inevitably in line with the encouragement process" (p. 177).

Engendering client courage. The primary therapeutic movement in Adlerian therapy rests upon the use of encouragement as a process of accessing or engendering client courage. Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956) described encouragement as the activating of social interest in a client. Adler equated courage with "activity plus social interest" (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 341). Yang et al. (2010) explained that it is the facilitator who "gives courage, empowering the individual to challenge his or her misdirected goals and see a new direction and take action" (p. 134).

Some Adlerians believe that encouragement is used to assist clients to take action to try something new or to do something different. Carlson et al. (2006) told that when people are encouraged, they will "risk doing things about which they are unsure, if it leads them to growth" (p. 58). Other Adlerians explain that encouragement can be used to help people find the courage to overcome or to endure a difficult situation. Sweeney (2009) explained that encouragement has as an end-goal, the nurturement of the quality of courage which can stimulate a person to believe that they will be able to cope regardless of the situation or circumstance that they face. Sometimes, encouragement is used to increase an individual's confidence and worth, which can be decreased by the fear of being inferior. Increasing one's confidence and worth is important to Adlerians because Dreikurs (1967) explained that when people recognize their worth and dignity, they do not live in fear of making mistakes and therefore will make fewer. Encouragement has been used to help others believe in their efficacy, and appreciate their intrinsic worth, their equality, and their place in the world (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999;

Sweeney, 2009). Carlson et al. (2006) described this as demonstrating belief in the client's abilities by encouraging the client's self-ideal. Overall, throughout the therapeutic process, Adlerian counselors aim to encourage discouraged individuals to activate social interest and to create meaning and purpose in their lives (Yang et al., 2010).

   Encouragement versus praise. Encouragement is more than patting someone on the back, offering a kind word, or telling someone that he or she is strong and capable, because these can seem empty and insincere to clients (Dreikurs, 1967). "Encouragement is not about telling a person how wonderful he is as this would be destructive pampering. Instead the aim of encouragement is for the individual to learn to take responsibility for his or her own self-esteem and belonging" (O'Connell, 1975). Although both praise and encouragement focus on positive behaviors or attributes, praise can be discouraging because it is a subjective evaluative statement given by an observer that can lead to the belief that one's worth depends on the opinions of others.

   Encouragement is based on a person's internal evaluation of him- or herself (Dinkmeyer & McKay; Dinkmeyer, 1982). According to Dinkmeyer (1972) the counselor does not reward, bribe, or praise clients, but rather emphasizes his or her health, strengths, and abilities. The counselor conveys to the counselee that he places value on the client's uniqueness and humanness. This serves to help correct the counselee's mistaken assumptions about his or her inferiority and enhances the client's self-esteem (Dinkmeyer, 1972). The therapist also coveys that he or she is convinced of the client's strength and power of decision. Overall, the process of encouragement is complex (Dreikurs, 1967). It is multidimensional and goes beyond mere use of positive statements,

although these are used, as well, when needed to facilitate counselee movement towards the life tasks and social interest.

      Unique qualities of Adlerian encouragement. Adlerian therapy is not the only counseling and psychotherapy theoretical orientation to use encouragement with clients. Some other therapies also include types of encouragement as part of the therapeutic process. Dinkmeyer (1972) pointed out that although encouragement is a necessary element of each of the major theories of counseling, encouragement used in Adlerian counseling is unique. Unlike any other theory, the Adlerian approach to counseling and psychotherapy is characterized by its deliberate efforts to encourage the client (p. 88). In Adlerian therapy, encouragement is considered "the key to personal growth and development" (Bahlmann & Dinter, 2001, p. 273). Dreikurs (1967) described it as one of the most essential factors of all corrective endeavors. It is the only therapy that identifies encouragement as the fulcrum of change. In Adlerian therapy, it is the core of all interventions for discouraged clients (Yang et al., 2010). The use of encouragement is essential to the therapeutic relationship (Dreikurs, 1967). It is used by the therapist to stimulate client change. "Encouragement focuses on the counselor's influencing the counselee's beliefs and perceptions about himself and others" (Dinkmeyer, 1972, p. 176). Without the client having faith in himself restored by the therapist, he cannot see the possibility of doing or functioning better (Dreikurs,1967). Sweeney (2009) highlighted the benefits of a therapy model that focuses on the use of encouragement as an intervention because "research and experience have revealed that most people are not particularly effective listeners or communicators" (p. 77). Sweeny explained that Adlerian counselors practice empathic listening and communicating, use nonverbal

communication skills, and create a facilitative challenge when appropriate, all through an encouragement lens.

Adlerian encouragement is also unique in that it is an intervention that continues throughout every phase of the Adlerian counseling process (Carlson et al., 2006; Dinkmeyer, 1972; Watts, 2000, 2003). Dreikurs (1967) outlined this process in the following way: relationship, diagnosis, insight and reorientation. He explained, however, that it is not a linear process and that encouragement is continuously used in every phase. Yang et al. (2010) also described ways in which encouragement is an integral component of each of the four phases of Adlerian therapy. In the first phase of Adlerian counseling, the relationship phase, active listening and modeling convey encouragement and support, which they told is needed for all other components of facilitating client change. Yang et al. (2010) described the diagnosis phase as one of psychological investigation which includes encouragement of strengths. They told that encouragement is used in the third phase, or psychological disclosure, to assist clients' movement from self-realization to self-actualization. In the final stage, or reorientation, encouragement is used to encourage the implementation of actions. It is in this stage that the client's faith in self is restored, strength is realized, and ability and belief in one's dignity and worth is achieved. Dinkmeyer (1972) agreed that encouragement includes the use of procedures to enable a counselee to experience and become aware of his own worth. Overall, encouragement is crucial to all four stages of Adlerian counseling. "Revelation and challenge of the accustomed life plan, and encouragement: these are decisive factors with which our treatment is concerned" (Dreikurs, 1967, p. 36). Dreikurs (1950) added that "In essence,

any psychological treatment is an attempt to increase the patient's self-confidence and to encourage him directly or indirectly" (p. 88).

Not only is encouragement the focus of Adlerian interventions, encouragement serves a greater purpose in that it is often equated with the therapeutic modeling of social interest (Carlson et al., 2006; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Adler considered psychotherapy "an exercise in cooperation" that was used help the client "transfer this awakened social interest to others" (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, pp. 340-341). Watts (2013) explained that Adlerian therapy is a particular way of interacting or being with clients. As such, Adlerian counseling is a highly relational process of modeling of social interest (Carlson et al., 2006; Manaster & Corsini, 1982; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999; Watts & Pietrzak, 2000). Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1996) specified that people feel worthwhile when they feel that they are contributing and belonging, thus to encourage is to learn about and support a person in ways in which he or she can contribute and belong to feel accepted.

Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1979) pointed out that some critics and "would be" followers of Adler misinterpreted him that "encouragement at any price was the key of his treatment" (p. 358). They said, "Adler never encouraged without laying open the problem for the solution of which courage was to be used" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1979, pp. 358-359) because encouragement is not used for the sake of encouragement itself, but only in the context of the problem and using one's courage to take responsibility for it. They suggested that if a formula had to be made, it would be a balance of encouragement with responsibility. Manaster and Corsini (1982) explained,

"This is what Adlerian psychotherapy is about, changing discouraged people into courageous and responsible people" (p. 160).

Encouragement and the Facilitator Role

Adlerians over the decades have cited various ways that the counselor plays an integral role in successful therapy outcomes based on the therapist's use of encouragement as both an attitude and a process (Carlson et al., 2006; Dinkmeyer, 1972; Dreikurs, 1957; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964). Adlerian therapists assert that courage not only can be facilitated in the therapeutic relationship, but that it ought to be because it is understood to be a necessary component in successful therapy (Carlson et al., 2006; Dinkmeyer, 1972; Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000; O'Connell, 1975; Sweeney, 2009; Yang et al., 2010). In fact, Dinkmeyer and Sperry (2000) claimed that encouragement is the "prime element in stimulating change in the client" (p. 66). Sweeney (2009) reasoned that in its most basic form, encouragement is used by one person to affirm, support, and enhance the positive attributes of another person (p. 234). Dreikurs (1967) asserted that the therapist's ability to provide encouragement is the key to successful therapy, and that if therapy is not successful, it is primarily due to the inability of the therapist to encourage.

In Adlerian therapy, the therapeutic relationship is based upon mutual respect and trust and emphasizes goal alignment; thus, it is a relationship far beyond a mere establishment of rapport. Adlerian counselors are known to use the following encouraging behaviors: reassuring clients, active listening; reflecting feelings; paraphrasing; collaborative goal setting; acknowledging clients' efforts, recognizing clients' strengths and competencies; and making statements that emphasize the

egalitarian, optimistic, and growth-oriented nature of the relationship (Carlson et al., 2006). According to Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1996), the encouraging therapist offers effective listening, focuses on the positives, is cooperative and accepting, uses humor and hope, recognizes effort and improvement, is interested in client feelings, and bases the client's worth on just being. "Through the use of encouragement, the facilitator can win over the individual's cooperation to establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship, to engage in the life style assessment process, to acquire insight, and to redirect and take actions toward new life goals with new strategies" (Yang et al., 2010, p. 135). Dreikurs (1967) told that there must be therapeutic cooperation in order to establish an alignment of goals. He told that without cooperation a satisfactory relationship cannot be established, therefore, it requires constant vigilance on the part of the therapist to maintain a cooperative relationship.

The process of creating and maintaining a cooperative relationship has therapeutic value in itself and is part of the educational process for clients to learn how to cooperate with others. Adler considered psychotherapy "an exercise in cooperation" (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, pp. 340-341) and Dreikurs (1967) added that a relationship of close cooperation for many clients might be "the first good human relationship in which the give-and take of life can be accepted in good grace" (p. 8). He emphasized that in this process that the client needs to feel understood. Dinkmeyer (1972) explained that encouragement is used in the establishment of a cooperative relationship as a counselor focuses on a counselee through attending to the client's content, tone, feelings, and nonverbal cues. Being sensitive to clients' verbalized feelings and implied feelings is in itself encouraging (Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000). Adler

described this process as seeing with eyes of another, hearing with the ears of another, feeling with the heart of another (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Yang et al. (2010) described the one who encourages others as a courage facilitator. This Adlerian role of a courage facilitator can take different forms according to client needs. Yang et al. (2010) broadly described the courage facilitator as someone who "confidently encourages with feeling, sensitivity, and social purpose" and who "believes that social interest and agape is comprehensible and teachable via the development of courage" (p. 130). Dreikurs (1950) explained that the role of the therapist should like "a sympathetic friend helping a discouraged person to recover his own self-confidence" (p. 23). Mosak and Maniacci (1999) described one role as a person who takes the belated function of the mother who encourages and corrects, "a nurturer who teaches the client how to function more constructively in life" (p. 154). Other Adlerians explained that the therapist is a "nurturing partner in the process of change and development" (Sherman & Dinkmeyer, 1987, p. 127). They told that the most important part of any therapeutic intervention requires the person of the therapist, using all of his or her senses, beliefs, roles, attitudes, and convictions, to act with courage on behalf of the client to ask unasked questions, and to help the client look at pain and difficulties and face the tasks that have been avoided. Overall, encouragement by the facilitator is used to help a discouraged individual activate social interest and create meaning and purpose in life (Yang et al., 2010). Adler emphasized that therapists should not deviate from the path of encouragement (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Dreikurs (1967) asserted that deliberate and persistent encouragement by a therapist has the power to stimulate the client to develop a better and more accurate

picture of him or herself. He elaborated that every form of encouragement should be for the ultimate purpose of enabling the counselee to experience and become aware of his own worth (Dinkmeyer, 1972). Adlerians use encouragement with depressed individuals to facilitate movement towards new beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions that are not distorted and self-focused, but rather those which are expressions of cooperation and social feeling. "Counselor encouragement helps to correct the counselee's mistaken assumption that he is inferior to or not as able as others" (Dinkmeyer (1972, p. 177).

Some Adlerians discuss ways that encouragement can be used to address and change unproductive life style patterns. Yang et al. (2010) told that to encourage is to help people understand their life style and mistaken beliefs, reassess and reorient his or her belief system. Part of the encouragement process is to make the counselee aware that he has the capacity to change of his pattern and style of life (Dinkmeyer, 1972). "This will help him to accept himself with all his human foibles and errors and enable him to develop positive qualities which had been kept dormant for lack of this special courage" (Lazarsfeld, 1991, p. 95).

Dinkmeyer (1972) stressed that it is not what the counselor does that matters, but rather how the counselee is interpreting the counselor's actions and if the counselee perceives it as encouraging. In all interventions, encouragement is seen when the therapist respects clients, shows faith so that individuals can have faith in themselves, expects that a person has the ability to function satisfactorily, recognizes one's efforts, is cooperative, fosters belonging, supports coping skills and attitudes, utilizes interests and assets to further development, and volunteers encouragement unconditionally (Sweeney, 2009). Overall, the therapist can use encouragement to facilitate actionable hope in a

client by using "the client's 'reactance' and discouragement as a therapeutic aid to foster hope and resilience" (Main & Boughner, 2011, p. 271). Main and Boughner (2011) described the goals of the Adlerian therapist as working with clients to co-create an emotional case for change using direct and indirect messages of hope, inspiration, and encouragement.

Adlerian Encouragement with Various Populations

Adlerian therapy and the use of encouragement in counseling and psychotherapy are used, not just with adults, but with children and adolescents, as well. In more recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature about encouragement being utilized in counseling children and adolescents (Kottman & Meany-Walen, 2016). "Each child needs continuous encouragement just as a plant needs water" (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, p. 36) has been a common theme in Adlerian work with children. In counseling children, encouragement is used consistently throughout therapy as the key to building the therapeutic relations relationship and to help to reorient and reeducate the client (Kottman & Meany-Walen, 2016). Adlerian encouragement with children is tailored to be delivered in verbal and nonverbal developmentally appropriate ways.

Adlerian encouragement is also an integral part of other types of counseling and training including parenting and couple education, and family therapy (McBrien, 1993; Sherman & Dinkmeyer, 1987). McBrien (1993) used humor in encouragement as a tool in couples counseling to increase the number of positive experiences and strengthen the relationship. In group therapy, encouragement is used by the therapist to discover the assets and abilities of each group member which creates therapeutic space for members to consider alternatives (Carlson et al., 2006, p. 226). Adlerians also utilize encouragement

strategies in business settings. Some Adlerians have organized the concept of encouragement into books (Dinkmeyer, McKay, & Dinkmeyer, 1982; Losoncy, 1977; Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1980) or training programs (Bahlmann & Dinter, 2001; O'Connell, 1975). Maniacci, Sackett-Maniacci, and Mosak (2014) explained that "Adlerians consult and work with businesses, schools, clinics, hospitals, prisons, churches, and temples" (p. 79). They clarified that Adlerians "help people with neuroses, psychotic symptoms, personality disorders, medical conditions, adjustment disorders, interpersonal problems, vocational problems, career-counseling issues, business consultations, and school problems" (Maniacci, Sackett-Maniacci, & Mosak, 2014, p. 79). An exhaustive review of the various populations and specific client conditions in which Adlerian encouragement is used is outside the scope of relevance to this literature review.

Research on Adlerian Encouragement

A search for studies conducted to explore Adlerian encouragement, as it is used in counseling and psychotherapy, produced scant results. Few articles or research studies were located that claimed to be based solely or in part on principles of encouragement found in Individual Psychology and Adlerian theory. These texts were primarily about investigations into the effectiveness of newly developed or existing encouragement-based instruments or programs for use in educational or business settings, or in self-help or parent training. Many of the authors and researchers highlighted the lack of and need for a clearer description of Adlerian encouragement in order to qualify and quantify its use in practice.

Children and adolescents. Even though Adlerian encouragement is used with children and adolescents in counseling, much of the literature and formal research regarding Adlerian encouragement with this population is several decades old and is related to its use in educational settings and in parent training (Carlton, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006; Dinkmeyer, 1972; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964; Yang et al., 2010). Many of the instruments and programs remain in use.

Dinkmeyer, Carlson, and Michel (2016) stated that encouragement is a means to promote psychological growth in the classroom. Dreikurs and others encouraged teachers to develop techniques of encouragement because not much about effective encouragement practices in that setting were known (Dreikurs, 1968; Dinkmeyer, McKay & Dinkmeyer, 1982). A few studies were conducted to examine the outcome of encouragement interventions by teachers with students in the school setting (Rathvon, 1990; Van Hecke & Tracy, 1987). Dinkmeyer and others developed and measured intervention strategies based on Adlerian encouragement for children to be used by educators and parents (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963; Dinkmeyer, McKay, & Dinkmeyer 1982; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964). Overall results of these studies indicated that encouraging statements resulted in changes in student self-concepts, behavior, and achievement, and increases in teacher's encouraging behaviors toward children in the classroom (Ludwig & Maehr, 1967; Hillman & Shields, 1974; Umstead, 1974). Dagley, Campbell, Kulic, and Dagley (1999) used the Encouragement Scale for Children to measure the construct of encouragement in the classroom. They found that the coefficient alpha for the entire instrument was .92 and the split-half coefficient was .91, and thus concluded that the

study suggests that the instrument has promise for use by teachers and parents as an appraisal tool to measure the psychological construct of encouragement.

With regard to school teachers and administrators, Adler claimed that an educator's most important task was to ensure that no child was discouraged at school (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). It was discovered that teachers, like children, handle stressful situations and manage anxiety better when their environment is supportive and encouraging (Evans, 1996; Farber & Miller, 1981; Fimian, 1987; Gray & Freeman, 1987). Carroll and Harvey (2005) iterated the obvious importance of encouragement in the teaching and learning environment; however, after conducting a literature review Carroll (Carroll & Harvey, 2005) discovered that "there were no instruments, measures, or scales adequately designed to address the all-important Adlerian concept of encouragement" (p. 280), in general or with teachers. Carroll and Harvey (2005) developed the Frequency of Encouragement (FOE) scale to assess and identify the frequency of encouragement that teachers received from the leaders most involved with them in their teaching environment.

Adlerian parent training programs primarily admonished and taught parents to practice encouragement through a "continuous process aimed at giving the child a sense of self-respect and a sense of accomplishment" (Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 1973, p. 39). Dinkmeyer, McKay and Dinkmeyer (1982) designed a parent training manual based on Adlerian encouragement because a discouraged parent cannot encourage a discouraged child.

Encouragement-based training and instruments based on Adlerian therapy principles. Adlerians are known to train not only parents and educators in the use of

encouragement, but also persons in business and the general public. Dinkmeyer and Eckstein's (1996) book about practicing leadership through encouragement is one example. Bahlmann and Dinter (2001) examined the effectiveness of the Encouraging-Training Schoenaker-Concept, an Adlerian based training which teaches couples, parents, and educators how to encourage themselves and others. The results of their one-group pretest-posttest designed study revealed that the use of encouragement resulted in "an increase in self-confidence and psychological well-being, a more active and optimistic approach to problems, a decrease in several psychological and physical symptoms, a decrease in the tension felt in social situations, and an improvement in several social skills" (p. 273).

Evans et al. (1997) published an article explaining the development and validation of the Encouragement Scale, which is an instrument founded on Adlerian principles that measures the various dimensions of encouragement for educational personnel. It is an attitudinal scale designed to describe the characteristics of an encouraged person. According to this model an encouraged person has the following characteristics: an adequate and positive view of self (Self), an adequate positive view of others (Others), an openness to experience (Openness), and a sense of belonging (Belonging). Evans et al. (1997) reported support for the reliability (i.e., test-retest and internal consistency) and the validity of the scores and recommended additional research to address the construct validity. He suggested that the instrument could be useful as a research tool to evaluate the effectiveness of encouragement training and interventions in the enhancement of teacher and school staff attitudes and that of the school climate. They proposed that

"Information from these studies should help advance our understanding of encouragement and its role in improving human relations" (Evans, et al., 1997, p. 171).

Dagley et al. (1999) described the Encouragement Scale for Children as the fourth in a series of instruments developed to measure the construct of encouragement. They explained that it was adapted from three previous forms used with parents, teachers, and the general public in order to measure the degree of encouragement versus discouragement that a child experiences based upon the following dimensions of encouragement: a positive view of self, a sense of belonging, and the courage to be imperfect. Dagley et al. (1999) reported that after the administration of the scale to 611 students in grades 2 through 5 they found that "the instrument does measure a global construct comprised of the three factors" they named as encouragement. Further, the researchers recommended that educators use the instrument to measure a student's discouragement and that counselors use it to facilitate the clinical intake or initial interview. They concluded their study stating, "The scale may contribute to the need for a quantitative definition to the construct of encouragement as called for by Carnes and Carnes (1998) in their comprehensive review of the literature" (Dagley et al., 1999, p. 362).

Research Related to Adlerian Encouragement

In the absence of substantiated research on the topic of the use of Adlerian encouragement in counseling and psychotherapy, the search for research was extended to include research on topics most related to the Adlerian therapeutic use of encouragement. The broadened search included an inquiry into research related to the following: Adlerian social interest, because some Adlerians consider encouragement to be a feature of social

interest that stimulates client courage; positive psychology, because it incorporates client-encouraging aspects; well-being therapy, which has been described as an encouragement therapy; and neuroscience, because mirror neurons have been found to be associated with attachment theory and used in human encouraging behaviors.

Adlerian theory and social interest research. Adler described courage as a social function that expresses social interest. Adler and others taught that courage is a necessary part of one's acting with social interest (Adler, 1920/2014; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999) and therefore, to stimulate or engender a client to act with courage towards social interest is to encourage (Miller & Taylor, 2016). For example, when Crandall (1975) attempted to define Adler's social interest and develop a social interest scale with items based upon H. L. Ansbacher's (1991) definition of social interest as "interest in the interests of mankind" (p. 36), he clarified that no attempt was made in the definition or development of his Social Interest Scale (SIS) to assess or describe the concept of courage, however, he acknowledged that courage can be considered a component of social interest. McClain (2005) conducted a study to assess the relationship between encouragement and social interest. He reported that, "Consistent with Adler's theory of individual psychology, encouragement and social interest are highly related" (p.84). The results indicated that participants with higher levels of encouragement were those who were most likely to express high levels of social interest, and those with high levels of social interest were those who demonstrated high levels of encouragement. In Crandall's (1975) study on the social interest of 203 high school and undergraduate psychology students, he maintained that "preliminary findings indicate reasonable internal consistency and test-retest reliability for the Social Interest Scale" (Crandall, 1975, p.

194) and that several results established the validity of the SIS as a measure of social interest. Watkins (1994), in his article about measuring social interest, asserted that characteristics of social interest include encouraging behaviors.

The Sulliman Scale of Social Interest (SSSI) (Sulliman, 1973) is a self-report attitude scale developed to measure Adler's concept of social interest. Various researchers have used this instrument since its development. Mozdzierz, Greenblatt, and Murphy (1988) concluded that the SSSI appears to be "a promising measure of SI" (p. 33), and in 1994, Watkins and St. John reported concurrence with their findings. Fish and Mozdzierz (1988) reported that psychotherapy patients with high SSSI scores showed an inverse relationship with psychopathology and high scores on expectancy for success and Watkins and Blazina (1994) reported that the results of their study complemented and extended earlier research and help moderate support of the SSSI's test-retest reliability. In 2010, Stone and Newbauer conducted a study which examined the psychometric characteristics of the SSSI and discovered that, "The results are similar to those in the research literature reviewed in that they affirm the SSSI as useful for measuring Sulliman's (1973) construct of social interest" (p. 478). Research on the validation of the SSSI concluded that "the majority of the results supported moderate convergent and discriminant validity of the SSSI as a measure of general health" (p. 31) and an inverse relationship with measures involving pathology.

Another social index instrument is the Social Interest Index (SII). Its construct validity, criterion validity, and reliability have been supported through various studies (Bass, Curlette, Kern, & McWilliams, Jr., 2002; Greever, Tseng, & Friedland, 1973; Hjelle, 1975; Kaplan, 1978; Leak & Leak, 2006; Mozdzierz & Semyck, 1980; Watkins,

1994). More recently, however, Leak (2011) used three models to test the factorial validity of the scale and reported deficiencies and concluded that there was a "poor fit between the theoretical model and scale items" (p. 1).

Crandall (1980, 1981) summarized the results of several studies using his Social Interest Scale (SIS). Crandall (1975) also described the scale's reliability and validity. Crandall (1980) reported that "this series of studies has yielded consistently positive correlations between social interest and both self-report and indirect measures of adjustment and well-being" (p. 492). Further, he discussed the SIS and explained results in favor of its reliability and validity, and also described courage as being "intimately linked to social interest" (p. 24). Contrary to Crandall's (1980) findings, Bubenzer, Zarski, and Walter (1979) asserted that the results of the SIS did not correlate significantly "with personality characteristics previously found to relate to social interest" (p. 133). Watkins (1994) stated that with the inclusion of other variables the SIS had been found to possess good reliability and validity across a number of studies, and he encouraged future research to be conducted on clinical populations.

In 2002, Bass et al. published results of a meta-analysis of 124 empirical studies since 1977 on social interest. Each of the studies used at least one of the following five social interest instruments: Social Interest Index (SII), Social Index Scale (SIS), Sulliman's Scale of Social Interest (SSSI), Life Style Personality Inventory Social Interest Index (LSPISII), and Belonging/Social Interest (BSI) Scale of the Basic Adlerian Scales for Interpersonal Success Adult Form (BASIS-A). This study did not explore the construct of encouragement in social interest, but rather provided "a statistical summary of the intercorrelations of various social interest instruments, the magnitudes of the

correlations between social interest instruments and other psychological constructs, and information regarding its multidimensionality" (Bass et al., 2002, p. 6). The authors encouraged readers to use the results as an opportunity to refine or redefine the social interest/community feeling construct and its measurement, stating that their hope was that the meta-analysis "would provide an impetus for researchers to develop better operational definitions".

In a more recent study on the development and use of a Social Interest Scale for Iranian Children (SISIC) aged 4-12, the construct of courage was highlighted. The researchers concluded that "the questionnaire's psychometric characteristics affirm its validity and reliability and provide scientific evidence regarding the importance and usefulness of the construct of social interest" (Alizadeh, Ferguson, Murphy, & Soheili, 2017, p. 49). The authors further suggested that research should explore how social interest improves with counseling. Overall, most of the researchers of this meta-analysis, as well as the other studies presented in this section, recommended that the social interest scales are in need of further improvement and tests of validation.

Overall, the findings from these studies on social interest seem to support what Miller and Taylor (2016) asserted when they said that "theoretically, higher levels of social interest are correlated with higher levels of mental well-being, whereas lower levels of social interest are associated with feelings of isolation and inferiority and self-centered behaviors" (p. 113). The findings from these studies also indicate that acting with courage or encouragement may reflect features of social interest, yet the relationship remains unclarified.

Adlerian theory and Positive Psychology research. Some Adlerians have identified similarities in features of Individual Psychology with positive models of mental health, such as Positive Psychology (Carlson et al., 2006; Mozdzierz, 2015; Watts, 2015; Watts, 2017). According to LaVoy, Brand, and McFadden (2013) "Like Adler's Gemeinschaftsgefühl, Positive Psychology is grounded in evolution, based on the innate potential of the individual, and embedded in a social context" (p. 284). They maintained that "Both Positive Psychology and Adler arrived at the conclusion that relationship, cooperation, and reciprocity are a necessary part of life" (LaVoy et al., 2013, p. 284). Some Adlerians have pointed out that recent research indicates that social interest is related to numerous aspects of positive psychology (Barlow, Tobin, & Schmidt, 2009; Leak & Leak, 2006, Maniacci, Sackett-Maniacci, & Mosak, 2014; Watts, 2015). Watts (2015) argued that "Adlerian ideas are replete in the positive psychology literature but there is no substantive mention of Adler or Adlerian psychology" (p. 125). Maniacci, Sackett-Maniacci, and Mosak (2014) concluded that "Adler's focus on what is good with the individual, the emphasis on encouragement of the individual, and the notion of expanding social interest in the individual are all consonant with those elements outlined in positive psychology" (p. 62). Mozdzierz (2015), in his lecture designed to shed light on the relationship between Positive Psychology, Adler, and PTSD, provided evidence to support his view of Individual Psychology as the original Positive Psychology based on its "orientation to fictional finalism, striving toward completion/wholeness, growth motivation, empathic identification, and the need for belonging/significance" (p. 377).

Adlerian theory and Well-Being Therapy research. In a recent article by Johansen (2017), he explained that Well-Being Therapy (WBT), based on Ryff's (1989,

2014) multidimensional model of psychological well-being, is a product of the Positive Psychology movement and centers therapy around the tasks of life similar to Adlerian therapy. Combined with Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) techniques for cognitive restructuring, the short-term therapy is aimed at improving the patient's levels of psychological well-being (Ruini & Fava, 2009). Johansen (2017) described WBT as a therapeutic technique of encouragement, stating that, "Adlerian therapists may view it as a process of guided encouragement" wherein clients are taught to encourage themselves, to expand on their encouraging experiences, and "effectively manage obstacles that impede those encouraging experiences" (p. 236). Johansen (2017) explained, "These experiences of well-being are in and of themselves experiences of encouragement" (p. 237) which "reflect optimal self-regard and social belonging and further encourage the individual" (p. 240).

Ruini and Fava (2012) reported that "a decreased vulnerability to depression, mood swings and anxiety has been demonstrated after WBT in high-risk populations" (p. 291), including those who continued to present with impairments after other standard pharmacological or psychotherapeutic treatments. They added that interventions in schools have yielded promotion of well-being and decrease of distress compared with control groups (Ruini & Fava, 2012). As a relatively new model, research into the effectiveness of WBT is in its infancy, but reported outcomes of identified studies included the following: when combined with CBT and measured against an anti-depressant drug management group, significantly lower levels of residual symptoms when treating recurrent depression, including a lower relapse rate (Fava, Rafanelli, Grandi, Conti, & Belluardo, 1998b); significant and persistent benefits when treating

cyclothymic disorder (Fava, Rafanelli, Tomba, Guidi, & Grandi, 2011); a greater

decrease in depressive symptoms over the CBT only treatment group (Moeenizadeh &

Salagame, 2010); and clinical advantages of its addition to CBT in reducing anxiety in

the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder (Ruini & Fava, 2009). According to

Johansen's (2017) description of WBT to Adlerians as a process of guided

encouragement, these studies may suggest significance to the inclusion of encouragement

in counseling and psychotherapy, particularly with clients who present with symptoms of

affective disorders.

   Adlerian theory and interpersonal neurobiology. Recent empirical evidence

from neuroscience research supports the socially embedded nature of human beings. This

evidence is found in studies on attachment theory and on findings about mirror neurons

that are activated in the brain during interpersonal connection in acts of empathy and

other social behaviors (Coutinho, Silva, & Decety, 2014). Adlerian therapists understand

that empathy should go beyond merely reflecting others' feelings to more broadly include

an understanding of the intentions and purposes of other's feelings and attitudes, which

serves a relational and social purpose (Clark, 2016; Dinkmeyer, 1972). Clark (2016)

explained that empathy "is suggestive of a qualitative degree of social interest" (p. 239),

because it is "a facet of an individual's emotional connection and identification with

other people" (p. 247). Adlerian theory, which posits that people are relational beings

who thrive best in productive relationships with others is in alignment with the most

current interpersonal neurobiological research (Carlson, et al., 2006; Watts, 2003; Watts,

2015). Maniacci, Sacket-Maniacci, and Mosak (2014) explained that "attachment theory

shares with Adlerian theory an emphasis on the importance of the social field" (p. 61).

Miller and Taylor (2016) in their examination of Individual Psychology from a neuroscience perspective cited the following: McHenry, Sikorski, & McHenry's (2014) conclusion that social interest is consistent with neurobiological views of optimal well-being; Siegel's (2010) assertion that having concern for and action on behalf of the benefit of others is reflective of neural integration; Poulin and Homan's (2013) and Frederickson, Grewen, Coffey, Algoa, Firestine, Arevalo, . . . Cole's (2013) findings that compassion and kindness and prosocial behaviors stimulate oxytocin and mediate the negative impact of stress. Overall, these findings may suggest that the act of engendering courage through counselor encouragement in a therapeutic relationship aligns with the human relatedness and attuned communication found in current interpersonal neurobiological research and the function of mirror neurons (Siegel, 2006).

Dearth of Research

After an exhaustive review of the literature, no study was identified that was designed to investigate or explore the use of encouragement in Adlerian counseling and psychotherapy in order to gain an understanding of what expert Adlerian clinicians do in session with clients that is encouragement. Support for using Adlerian encouragement in counseling was found as anecdotal evidence gleaned from case studies and conceptual writings by Adler, and other Adlerian practitioners and scholars (Adler, 1920/2014; Adler, 1927/2017; Carlson et al., 2006; Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963; Dreikurs, 1957; Dreikurs, Grunwald & Pepper, 1989; Kottman, 2003; Manaster & Corsini, 1982; Oberst & Stewart, 2003; O'Connell, 1975; Sweeney, 2009; Watts & Pietrzak, 2000).

Benefits to Understanding Encouragement-based Counseling Interventions Catalyst for Change

Adlerian therapy stands on the precept that an encouragement-based counseling approach is one in which practitioners skillfully engender courage in their clients by providing them with encouragement-based interventions that act as a catalyst to increase client courage and inspire client initiative towards change. Adler (1920/2014) asserted, "If it is possible to lend courage, then a person will learn to train on the useful side. It is the lack of courage connected with an inferiority complex that ruins a person" (p. 174). He also told that discouragement is the surest sign of a neuroses and that discouragement forces an individual to put a distance between himself and necessary decisions (Adler, in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Dinkmeyer and Sperry (2000) added that not only does encouragement increase confidence and courage, and promote change; but also, as a reinforcing cycle, behaving with courage stimulates greater self-confidence (p. 66). Yang et al. (2010) proposed that a lack of preparedness for facing the life tasks is a mask for the root cause of discouragement in people, fear of rejection and fear of making mistakes. Engendering courage in clients, therefore, is paramount to helping them move away from safeguarding themselves and social disconnection, to using courage to interconnect with others and learn to live in harmony with self and society (Yang et al., 2010). Overall, the relevance of courage and encouragement in counseling and psychotherapy is explicated as "a necessity for a cognitive/behavioral/emotional/spiritual response in the presence of a perceived difficulty" (Yang et al., 2010, p. 14). Dinkmeyer (1972) put forth the following idea: "Imagine the improved efficiency of counseling if counselor educators

were as zealous about training students to encourage as they have been in teaching about empathy, reflection, congruence, and confrontation!" (p. 179).

Informs Practice

Sperry (2016) warned Adlerians that there is an increasing expectation and demand on clinicians for accountability in counseling treatments. He acknowledged that a main attraction of Adlerian psychotherapy is that it is an approach that is flexible and eclectic and is strong on assessment, yet he reminded that it lacks unique and defined treatment strategies. "It does not specify unique intervention method, nor provide compelling research data as evidence of its effectiveness" (Sperry, 2016, p. 7). In order for it to remain relevant and consistent with the demand for evidence-based practice, Sperry (2016) recommended that Adlerian therapy be extended to include "identifiable and unique treatment method or methods" (p. 7). Gaining an understanding, therefore, of how expert Adlerian clinicians skillfully execute encouragement-based counseling responses and interventions in the counseling relationship would represent a step towards defining this foundational aspect of Adlerian therapy. Information gleaned through initial research investigation into this topic might inspire further and deeper research inquiry, as well as inform clinicians regarding future empirically based education, training, and practice of therapeutic encouragement in Adlerian counseling.

Need for Expert Description of Encouragement

Over several decades, Adlerian have noted the need for formalized research on the topic of Adlerian encouragement in order to gain a clearer understanding and description of it. Dinkmeyer, (1972) addressed the need for understanding the use of encouragement in counseling as a treatment procedure. "The counseling literature

abounds with methods of reflecting, clarifying, empathizing, and confronting, all of which are certainly important components in effective counseling. However, little attention has been given to the significance of encouragement as a procedure" (p. 179). In 1982, after a review of research in support of Adlerian theory, Watkins (1982) concluded that "the need for continued research and refinement of instrumentation is of paramount importance" (p. 90). Rattner (1983) explained that, "to encourage a person is a skill that can be learned through the techniques of individual psychology, but only training and the most sensitive fellow feeling can develop to the degree of subtlety that is required in psychotherapy" (p. 89). Evans et al. (1997) asserted that, "Despite the longevity of encouragement, it seems not to have been fully understood" (p. 163). They explained that most people incorrectly think that encouragement focuses on improvement with praise or that it is equivalent to self-esteem, which they defined as a narrower concept involving performance dependent self-ratings. They developed the Encouragement Scale as an attempt to address this confusion. In 1998, Carns and Carns published their review of the professional literature on the consistency of the definition and application of Adlerian encouragement and discovered broad descriptions of encouragement found in the literature associated with marriage and family counseling, parent training, classroom management, self-esteem, academic performance, career counseling, and the health profession. Carns and Carns (1998) discovered that encouragement was not described or measured as an isolated construct in the articles and studies they reviewed, so they did not identify a consistent definition of encouragement. Thus, although they found that the results of encouragement practices were presented as favorable, none were empirically conclusive. For example, Carns and Carns (1998) reported that in a 1993 survey by

Evans, Dedrick, and Dinkmeyer of 328 members of the North American Society of

Adlerian Psychology, almost all of the marriage and family practitioners reported using

encouragement but a definition was not provided. They also reported that in a survey of

380 high school students, the researcher concluded that students believed they would

perform better if teachers would relate to them overall in an encouraging manner, but a

description of it was not provided. They discussed a study based on the report of 6,400

parents' childrearing practices and their children's academic achievement over two years

and found support for the Adlerian position on the use of parental encouragement. Carns

and Carns (1998) reported that in a study by Riley (1995), a statistically significant

difference on the pre- and post-measures of children's self-concept as measured by the

Piers Harris Children's Self Concept Scale; however, "since encouragement was not

operationally defined" they could not attribute the reason for the change in behavior to

encouragement. Carns and Carns (1998) also named the following writers who claimed

that "Adlerian encouragement is seen as beneficial in a wide variety of presenting

concerns" (p. 81): Baideme, Kern, & Taffel-Cohen, 1979; Carlson & Sperry, 1993;

Dinkmeyer, & Eckstein (1996); Fisher, 1993; McBrien, 1993; Powell & Gazda, 1979).

Although Carns and Carns (1998) discovered a wide variety of definitions of

encouragement, they reported that with few exceptions, "encouragement is perceived as

helpful in promoting behavior change" (p. 82). Following their extensive review, they

concluded, in 1998, that "there has been little done empirically to document the

effectiveness of Adlerian encouragement" (p. 84), and that "the greatest challenge to

research appears to be operationally defining encouragement" (p. 83). In 1999, Dagley et

al. concerned that although encouragement has been named as "a fundamental construct

in understanding human development" and in the "delivery of effective therapeutic interventions" the construct has "remained relatively ignored by empirical researchers" (p. 356). They complained, "Thus, there is a critical need for empirical investigations of the nature of encouragement" (Dagley et al., 1999, p. 356). Watts (2013) suggested that "there is an exponentially growing body of research in support of Adlerian theoretical concepts" (p. 469), however, many of these concepts, such as therapeutic encouragement, lack formal study.

Forty-two years after Dinkmeyer presented the issue, Wong (2014) published a review of his investigation of encouragement and reported that in current counseling psychology, encouragement still remains an understudied topic. In his article, Wong acknowledged that Alfred Adler was the first psychologist to theorize that encouragement is a core feature of human development and of therapeutic treatment, yet he pointed out that despite the frequent use of encouragement in every day social life and its inclusion in major theories of counseling, a clear description and definition of encouragement in counseling and psychotherapy does not exist. Wong (2014) affirmed that the use of encouragement enhances the quality of counseling practice; however, he posits that Adlerian scholars have merely described encouragement as a social phenomenon and a way of being, yet they have failed to consistently or clearly define encouragement. Wong's current views seem to resonate with what Dreikurs, in 1967, maintained, when he stated, "The trite use of the word 'encouragement' prevents a full recognition of its significance and the complexity of its application" (Driekurs, 1967, p. 13). Wong stated that Adlerian scholars admit that there are various ways to describe encouragement, but he argues "that for encouragement to be a psychologically meaningful construct, it needs

to have clearly defined conceptual boundaries" (Wong, 2014, p. 182). To address this deficiency, Wong attempted to construct a definition of encouragement based on several Adlerian concepts; however, Adlerian experts were not interviewed or consulted for his description of Adlerian encouragement. The current need for descriptions from expert Adlerian practitioners of what is occurring in counseling and psychotherapy sessions with clients represents a need and the rationale for this qualitative research study.

Summary

This literature review revealed that encouragement has remained a key feature of Adlerian theory since it was introduced, described, and practiced by Alfred Adler. Over the decades since Adler developed his theory, counseling and psychotherapy practitioners, educators, scholars, and business persons have been incorporating encouragement into their activities according to their unique perspectives and conceptualized understanding of the word. Throughout this timeframe, individuals have understood and expressed encouragement in many ways and formats.

For this review, in addition to seeking a comprehensive understanding of the concept of Adlerian encouragement in counseling, the concepts of Adlerian courage and discouragement were also explored due to their relation and relevance to the use of encouragement in Adlerian counseling. Unique qualities of Adlerian encouragement were identified. Articles presented in this review overwhelmingly supported the view that encouragement is beneficial and necessary for client growth and change in Adlerian counseling relationships. The texts also represented views that promote the use of encouragement practices in other settings, as well.

The search for extant research did not produce one study that was designed to explore and describe the Adlerian use of encouragement in counseling and psychotherapy according to Adlerian expert practitioners. Studies were found that examined the development, use, and/or effectiveness of various encouragement instruments, practices, or programs according to principles of Individual Psychology and Adlerian theory for use across settings such as education, parenting, business, and career counseling. Although overlap was seen in some of the descriptions of encouragement, no two studies represented a shared view. These findings included favorable outcomes for The Encouraging-Training Schoenaker-Concept and validation for the Encouragement Scale and the Encouragement Scale for Children. The FOE was developed for use in the school setting because the creators were unable to locate an assessment for defining or measuring encouragement.

Due to the lack of research on Adlerian encouragement, the search in this review was expanded to explore findings from related counseling concepts or theories that align with Adlerian therapeutic encouragement. Additional research included inquiry into the relevance of social interest, Positive Psychology, Well-Being Therapy, and Interpersonal Neurobiology to client encouragement or the engendering of client courage. Research related to social interest was explored because Adlerian literature named courage as a feature of it. The development and use of social interest scales such as the SIS, SSSI, SII, were discussed. Overall, most of the studies cited in the review indicated validity and reliability for the instruments and the researchers suggested future research to better refine the instruments and to better describe and define Adlerian courage and encouragement. A review of research on Positive Psychology and Adlerian theory

emphasized its link to social interest and the unified emphasis on positive and affirming statements and beliefs. An examination of research on WBT showed that it has been referred to as a process of guided encouragement, similar to the process of encouragement and the way of being encouraging found in Adlerian therapy. Initial studies reported favorable results. Finally, a look at the possibility of similarities between Adlerian encouragement in the therapeutic relationship and attuned communication found in interpersonal neurobiological research and in the function of mirror neurons was considered.

For the purposes of this study, a more comprehensive definition and description of the key term encouragement was sought. The literature review of this topic revealed overlap, as well as discrepancies, in the definitions and descriptions of the key term, encouragement as provided by Adlerian clinicians and scholars in the professional counseling field. In the following chapter I will outline and discuss the methodology for this study and how it was designed to gain a clearer and more unified description and understanding of encouragement as it is practiced in counseling. Specifically, I will address how the chosen methodology will answer the research question, "What are the lived experiences of Adlerian experts using encouragement in counseling sessions with their clients?". I discuss how information gained from this research is both relevant to the practice of Adlerian therapy and is overdue in filling the identified research gap.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of Adlerian experts' use of Adlerian encouragement with clients in counseling sessions. In this chapter, I discuss the methods that I used to gain an understanding of how Adlerian expert clinicians described their lived experiences of using encouragement in counseling sessions with their clients. I describe the study's research design, the participants of the study, and the instrumentation that I used to explore this phenomenon. I also explain the data collection and the data analysis processes. I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of the methodology that was utilized in this study.

Research Design

Maxwell (2013) asserted that research questions ought to be used to direct the focus of a study. He explained that research questions are directly linked to the study's goals and framework. Maxwell (2013) added that research questions also provide guidance on how to conduct a study because they point to the methods that should be used, and that appropriate methodology increases the argument for a study's validity.

The research question in this study, about Adlerian experts' lived experiences of using encouragement in counseling sessions with their clients, led to a qualitative research design. According to van Manen (2014), "human experience is the main epistemological basis for qualitative research" (p. 39). He explained that in the field of psychology, theories about human processes and problems often leave their central concepts "impoverished of experiential meaning" (p. 67). He suggested that theories'

central concepts can be enriched when they are translated back into "experiential realities". Thus, a qualitative research design was chosen for this study because the research question was an investigation into expert Adlerian clinicians lived experiences with a central concept of Adlerian theory, encouragement.

Qualitative research design. Qualitative research involves an inquiry process that investigates a social or human problem or issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, qualitative research is used to gain a detailed understanding of a problem or issue within the context of the lives of the individuals whom experience it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher aims to understand individuals' perspectives in context by closely examining their words, actions, and/or records. The qualitative researcher organizes patterns of meaning that emerge through interpretation of the data (Moustakas, 1994). Overall, the researcher avoids broad generalizations and aims to contextualize (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenological research. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that a qualitative researcher must identify an approach to his or her research inquiry that structures the study and provides the means of organizing, presenting, and assessing it. A phenomenological approach to inquiry was chosen for this study because phenomenological studies place an emphasis on a single concept or idea to be explored that is experienced by a group of individuals. The aim of this approach was to explore both the subjective and objective experiences of the phenomenon as lived by the members and described by them through interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that the purpose of a phenomenological study is to describe "the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (p. 75). In

phenomenological research, the inquirer identifies a phenomenon to explore and collects data from individuals who have experienced it in order to create a composite description of the essence of the experience that tells "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it.

      Transcendental phenomenological approach. Creswell and Poth (2018) described Moustakas' procedures for transcendental phenomenology as a particular model of qualitative phenomenological research. They listed the first key steps of this model as "identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). They explained that the remaining steps of Moustakas' model were taken from the methods of Amedeo Giorgi, which Giorgi (2009) described as a modified Husserlian approach, and from the data analysis procedures of Van Kaam. According to Moustakas (1994), Van Kaam operationalized the empirical phenomenological approach as one in which the researcher obtains "comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience" (p. 13). Moustakas (1994) also explained that Amedeo Giorgi outlined two descriptive levels for data collection and analysis: the first level is comprised of collecting participant descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue, and the second one consists of the researcher describing the structures of the experiences based on reflective analysis and interpretation of the participants' accounts or stories. Specifically, Giorgi (1985) directed that after reading the entire description in order to get a sense of the whole, "the researcher reads the same description more slowly and delineates each time that a transition in meaning is perceived with respect to the intention of discovering the

meaning" (p. 83). Hein and Austin (2001) clarified that, "One of the characteristics of empirical phenomenological research, then, is its emphasis on the structure of the phenomenon of interest, that is, the commonality that is present in the many diverse appearances of the phenomenon" (p. 8). The structure reveals "what", as the lived meaning of the phenomenon. Hein and Austin (2001) also stated that empirical phenomenological research "tends to rely on the actual words that participants use to communicate their experiences" (p.8), reflecting empiricism because it "relies on factual data collected from participants" (p.8), therefore emphasizing rigor in their approach more than creative aspects.

Moustakas' empirical phenomenological model, as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) was chosen for this study to gain rich data and a descriptive understanding of the lived experiences of Adlerian experts' practicing Adlerian encouragement in counseling sessions. This model was chosen because the interpretation of the data in this model is "focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of the participants" (p. 78). Creswell and Poth's (2018) outline of Moustakas' model was also chosen for this study because it offers an organized structure and processes to guide the exploration of the research questions in this study, including methods for data collection and data analysis. Further, Creswell and Poth (2015) suggested that the use of this method "helps provide a structured approach for novice researchers" (p. 80).

Creswell and Poth (2018) outlined the process of phenomenological research based upon Moustakas' approach by offering procedural steps. According to their outlined procedures, the researcher first begins with the following steps which were

accomplished in this study: determine the appropriateness of a phenomenological approach to the research problem, identify and describe a phenomenon of interest, and distinguish and specify the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

The next procedural steps of Moustakas' approach outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) include the collecting of data from the participants using in-depth interviews and the generating of themes from the analysis of significant statements to use for the development of the "essence" of the phenomenon. In this study, interviews were conducted with 16 Adlerian practitioners who met the qualifications as "expert". The interviews were professionally transcribed and the dialogues, as well as researcher notes taken before, during, and after interviews, served as raw data for the study. From the transcribed interviews, I set out to discover significant participant statements and to uncover common themes based upon participant responses and descriptions of Adlerian encouragement in order to discover an essence of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). "In qualitative research, themes (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 328). Creswell (2014) explained that the analysis of the significant statements should result in the generation of meaning units that lead to the development of the essence. Through my data collection and analysis processes, meaning units were identified and the data was moved from narrow units (significant statements) of analysis to broader ones (meaning units).

The final steps of Moustakas' phenomenological research, as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018), include reporting the essence of the phenomenon with a

composite description which focuses on the common experiences of the participants, as well as presenting an understanding of the phenomenon in an organized written form. Thus, textural and structural statements were identified and synthesized into a composite description of the meanings and essences of the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The analysis of the data, including the composite description, was organized and presented in written form in the results section of this study.

Creswell and Poth (2018) acknowledged that an inherent challenge in phenomenological research is for researchers, throughout the study, to bracket their personal experiences; however, they punctuated that bracketing is a necessary component of Moustakas' research method. Bracketing, or epoché, is the suspending of one's presuppositions, biases, judgements, or knowledge of the phenomenon obtained from personal and scholarly sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Creswell and Poth (2018) encouraged researchers to embrace this idea, yet warned that, "Moustakas admits that this state is seldom perfectly achieved" (p. 78). Included in bracketing is the researcher's responsibility to practice reflective awareness and to make personal assumptions explicit through articulation of them as they are discovered or experienced. Throughout the data analysis, I continued to reflect upon and practice bracketing and to look for ways in which my prior knowledge of Adlerian theory and therapy might taint the interpretation.

Research Participants

After receiving approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB), I obtain signed informed consent forms (Appendix A) from participants in which they acknowledged

their agreement to participate in this study and confirmed their understanding of the conditions of the research. Participants were informed of their rights to voluntarily withdraw from the study, of the central purpose of the study, of how their confidentiality would be protected, and of the possibility of risks and benefits related to their participation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Sampling method. Purposive criterion sampling was used in this study because in order to answer the research question, it was necessary to interview participants who have characteristics specifically relevant to the research questions (Creswell, 2014). Expert Adlerian counseling practitioners were chosen according to their professional experience and reputation. Participants were required to have been actively practicing as an Adlerian therapist for a minimum of five years at the time of this study. Participants additionally were required to possess years of experience in teaching, writing, or making professional presentations on the topic of Adlerian therapy in order to increase their credibility to be deemed an expert in Adlerian theory. These Adlerian experts were identified through the membership directory of the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology (NASAP), which was founded in 1952 and whose mission is "to foster a promote the research, knowledge, training, and application of Adlerian Psychology, maintaining its principles and encouraging its growth" (NASAP, 2015).

Sample size. Creswell (2014) explained that sample size in qualitative studies depends upon the research design chosen. Heuristics customarily defines the use of from 1-20 participants in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Maxwell (2013) explained that qualitative studies can be framed more in "case" terms, wherein a particular group of individuals is studied in a particular context. The selection of the case

may involve representativeness so that one can develop an adequate description, interpretation, and explanation of the case. Maxwell (2013) said, "Interview studies, in particular, sometimes employ a 'sampling' logic; selecting interviewees to generalize to some population of interest" (p. 78). Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended that researchers interview 5-25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. In this study, a diverse sample of 24 participants were chosen and invited to participate in an interview to provide data about expert Adlerians' practice of therapeutic encouragement in counseling sessions with clients. This number was chosen in order to gain sufficient representative data by interviewing a sample large enough to gain varied views, and small enough to allow the time needed to mine rich data from the participants. Sample sizes in qualitative research allow for researchers to probe deeper in order to gain rich descriptions. This number was also chosen because, according to Green and Thorogood (2009), "the experience of most qualitative researchers is that in interview studies little that is 'new' comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people" (p. 120). I received assent from 20 individuals. Due to scheduling issues, four of them could not participate. The study was conducted with 16 Adlerian experts.

General description of participants. In order to represent diversity in the outcome data, Adlerian experts of varied gender, age, and diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were purposively chosen for this study. Gender was represented by eight females and eight males. Participants were adults aged from 34-75 years old. Participants current or country of origin included the United States, Canada, Turkey, Taiwan, and Russia. All participants possessed a doctoral degree as their highest level of education.

Participants' past and current professional counseling sites included schools, agencies, and private practice.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation for this study consisted of participant interviews, the researcher as a key instrument, and researcher notes.

Participant interviews. Prior to answering the interview questions, the participants completed a demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) in which they provided the following information: name, gender, age, ethnicity, education, type of training, professional activity (i.e., experience in writing, teaching, and/or presenting), type of work site, and number of years of practice as an Adlerian clinician.

Interviews were conducted with participants in order to understand their points of view, the meanings of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world of experiences in practicing Adlerian encouragement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participant interviews in qualitative research allow for interviewee subjectivity, which is assumed and embraced (Maxwell, 2013). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that data collection methods can include face-to-face, telephone, and skype person-to-person interviews. Most participants in this study were interviewed person-to-person via skype, unless a poor connection forced the interview to continue via facetime or telephone. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interview questions were structured and semi-structured and were aimed at eliciting the views and descriptions given by the participants regarding their counseling practices of Adlerian encouragement (Creswell, 2014). Each of the participants were asked to verbally respond to the following grand tour questions:

(a) How do you define Adlerian encouragement?

(b) How do you know when you are practicing Adlerian "encouragement" with clients?

(c) "What *specifically* do you do in sessions with clients that you consider "encouragement"; that is, interventions, techniques, skills, attitudes, etc.?

According to Maxwell (2013), "you will need to *learn* what your participants' perceptions and understanding are of you and your research in order to develop useful and ethically appropriate relationships with them" (p. 93). Thus, prior to the interview, I checked in with participants to see if they had any questions regarding the informed consent, the study, or about me. At the conclusion of the interview, time was allowed for participants to suggest a question or comment about Adlerian encouragement that they felt was relevant and should have been asked and discussed.

Researcher as instrument. Creswell (2014) argued that in qualitative phenomenological research designs, the researcher is an instrument of the study. Maxwell (2013) stated that "you *are* the research instrument in a qualitative study, and your eyes and ears are the tools you use to gather information and to make sense of what is going on" (p. 88). Qualitative researchers gather the information themselves rather than rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers (Creswell, 2014). The face-to-face interactions with participants allow researchers to observe non-verbal cues of participants, as well as verbal ones.

Maxwell (2013) further explained that relationships with the research participants are the means by which the research gets done; therefore, he stressed that researchers grasp the importance of establishing and maintaining a good research rapport because the researcher/participant relationship is complex and changing. He maintained that the state

of the relationship can serve to facilitate or hinder aspects of the research such as participant selection and data collection. He noted that researchers can get away with errors such as phrasing questions awkwardly, however, they cannot afford to fail to partner with the interviewee to produce useful material. Therefore, recognizing myself as an instrument of this study, I remained committed to create and maintain a rapport and good working relationship with each of the participants in order to facilitate the collection of the data. I attempted, throughout the data collection process, to partner with participants to produce data that was representative of the phenomenon according to their individual perceptions and behaviors. Following the interviews, I maintained contact with the participants to receive feedback regarding the accuracy of the interview data.

Reflexivity. Maxwell (2013) also highlighted the role of researcher "reflexivity", or the way in which the researchers are part of what they study and therefore cannot avoid influencing it or being influenced by it. As such he warned that researchers must strive to maintain awareness of biases and assumptions. Maxwell (2013) advised that, throughout the researcher process, investigators should practice "critical subjectivity" wherein they possess a quality of awareness that raises their primary experience to consciousness so that they can use it as part of the inquiry process. As an instrument of this study, I attempted to practice awareness in reflexivity throughout the research process.

Bracketing of biases and assumptions. A key feature of Moustakas (1994) phenomenological method is researcher bracketing. Creswell and Poth (2018) described bracketing, or "epoché," in which research investigators set aside their experiences as much as possible in order to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under

examination" (p. 78). This should be done even before proceeding with the experiences of others (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Although a researcher's ability to maintain a perspective that is completely void of presuppositions is unattainable, I mindfully attempted to bracket my personal experiences by reflecting upon and sharing my perspectives, as well as to approach the data I discovered openly. I attempted to bracket my feelings of personal interest in the topic of encouragement as well as my prior personal and scholarly knowledge about encouragement in order to reduce their influence on my study. I also practiced reflexivity throughout the study by creating written notes about my reactions and reflections (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I took specific steps to remain aware throughout every part of this study to bracket my biases and assumptions. At the start of the study I journaled my ideas and beliefs about encouragement and discussed these with my dissertation committee. I acknowledged that I have read numerous books and articles about encouragement and about Adlerian encouragement that could influence my understanding and interpretation of the data collected. I also recognized that I have a personal interest in the phenomena of encouragement because after reading the bible for many years, I have developed a strong curiosity about the numerous reported benefits of receiving encouragement that is recorded in its text. Also, I have personal experience with the phenomena of Adlerian encouragement in counseling because I attempt to practice therapeutic encouragement with clients in my work as a counselor in private practice. Overall, I admit that my personal feelings about and knowledge and support of the use of encouragement may

influence my interpretations and also may create a tendency for me to lend higher credibility to the importance of this research than may be warranted.

The chairperson of my dissertation committee, Dr. Richard Watts, also practiced bracketing throughout the research process. Dr. Watts is an Adlerian practitioner and is considered an expert in Adlerian theory and therapy. He strove to bracket his biases and assumptions and to adopt and maintain an attitude of curiosity about the data generated in order to remain neutral. The remaining committee members, Dr. Susan Henderson and Dr. Sinem Akay-Sullivan, were committed to practicing bracketing, as well. All committee members have noted that they did not know what or how Adlerian expert clinicians experienced encouragement in counseling sessions with their clients. By positioning and maintaining ourselves in postures of "not knowing" about the lived experiences of the participants, we reduced our assumptions and biases about our understanding of how Adlerian experts experience the phenomenon.

Other instruments. Additional data that was used in this study were my researcher memos written during and after data collection. "Memos are short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the researcher" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 188) which are used to synthesize into higher level analytic meanings. The memos provided me with an opportunity to reflect upon what I was experiencing, and also served as reminders to look more closely at possible connections in participants' responses. They also provided me with a method of noting personal thoughts, questions, and insights as they occurred to me. Reading over my memos provided me another opportunity to step back from my experience in order to practice bracketing. Overall, memos were effective tools for me in my self-reflection and in my data analysis process.

Data Collection

Prior to any data collection, an application was submitted to and approved by Sam Houston State University's (SHSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) in order to ensure that the research design and methodology for this study followed the institution's guidelines for conducting ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participant interviews are often used in qualitative research to elicit data (Creswell & Poth, 2018, Maxwell, 2013). Thus, the primary source of data collection for this study was participant interviews, which were conducted primarily via person-to-person skype sessions. Before conducting the interviews, I developed an interview protocol, according to the recommendation of Creswell (2014). My interview protocol consisted of a form which included the date, the participants identification number, the interview questions, probes for the interview questions, spaces for responses, and a statement of appreciation for participation. Before the start of each interview I gave participants the opportunity to ask clarifying questions about the study, about me, and about the informed consent. I also reminded them that the interview was semi-structured and that I would allow them time at the conclusion to add a question or comment about Adlerian encouragement that they felt should be included. Each interview last from 45 minutes to an hour, which allowed the interviewees adequate time to answer open-ended questions and additional emergent clarifying questions. Thick, rich descriptions about participants' Adlerian encouragement practices were collected from the interview questions. Maxwell (2013) warned of the importance of researchers understanding the distinction between research questions and interview questions. He explained that although the research questions identify the things that researchers want to understand, it

is the interview questions that generate the data needed to understand. I consistently reminded myself to ask interview questions that would produce textural and structural data and provide rich data.

Moustakas (1994) said, "In heuristic investigations, verification is enhanced by returning to the research participants, sharing with them the meanings and essences of the phenomenon as derived from reflection on and analysis of the verbatim transcribed interviews and other material, seeking their assessment for comprehensiveness and accuracy" (p. 18). Time limitations in this study would not allow for follow-up interviews to discuss essences with participants, however, time was allowed during the interviews to confirm the accuracy, and the researcher understanding, of the data collected. Following each interview, individual participants were provided with a written transcription of the interview and were allowed to confirm the recorded accuracy or make any preferred changes to their responses. Creswell (2014) recommended use of an observational protocol which includes the writing of reflective notes and descriptive notes during interviews. Thus, I also made written notes concerning my personal thoughts (including speculations, feelings, ideas, hunches, impressions, or questions) and observations (including participant non-verbal cues) when appropriate.

The data for this research was stored using multiple methods, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018). I used two high-quality reliable recording devices to record each interview. All computer files were backed up and stored on two external drives and were password protected. All of the data was stored inside of a locked safe inside of a locked closet and will be stored for three years.

Data Analysis

According to Moustakas (1994), "Hermeneutic science involves the art of reading a text so that that the intention and meaning behind the appearances are fully understood" p. 9). He explained that the hermeneutical method enriches empirical phenomenology because the researcher's experience and comprehension of the phenomenon being researched assists in elucidating and interpreting the meaning. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), data analysis in qualitative research is context-dependent and relies upon the use of the researcher's inductive and emergent logic in the data analysis process.

Because data collection and data analysis proceed hand-in-hand and data in qualitative studies can be analyzed during and after participant interviews, I did not wait until the completion of the participant interviews before analyzing the data (Creswell, 2014). I began data analysis immediately following my first interview. I utilized the Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis that Moustakas succinctly outlined in steps and Creswell and Poth (2018) described. First, for each of the participants, I reviewed the verbatim transcriptions of the interview more than once to ensure accuracy. I read over the data numerous times in order to gain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning. I printed the interviews and wrote notes in order to start recording general thoughts about the data (Creswell, 2014, Creswell & Poth, 2018). After reading for general thoughts, I read over the text line by line. Reviewing the text, I analyzed it to identify significant statements which represent invariant horizons, or statements which are not repeated or overlap. I highlighted all significant statements and words. I began color coding with the first and each subsequent interview. I checked the codes and grouped them into themes with each additional

interview. Due to the extensive amount of data that was achieved from the transcribed interviews of 16 participants, I aggregated the data into clusters of meaning through the process of "winnowing" the data in order to focus on some of the data while disregarding other parts (Creswell, 2014). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that qualitative researchers reduce data into themes "through a process of coding and condensing the codes" (p. 183). They recommend a "lean coding" (p. 190) approach which begins with five or six coded categories that can be expanded to no more than 25-30 through review and re-review of the data as new data is collected. The code list can then be combined and reduced into five or six themes from which the narrative is drawn (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 190). I began with seven coded categories which grew to 28 before being reduced to eight final themes. No data analysis software was utilized in the analysis; however, the data was recorded on a table to provide a visual overview of the themes that emerged from the interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that "the real analytic work takes place in your head" (p. 181). Verbatim statements made by the participants were included. Textural descriptions of what the participants experienced as well as structural descriptions that described how they experienced the phenomenon of Adlerian encouragement were developed. These textural and structural descriptions were integrated and synthesized into a composite description of the meanings and essences of the participants' lived experiences of Adlerian encouragement practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Maxwell (2013) said that it is appropriate to present tables to represent numerical data in qualitative studies. "Numbers are important for identifying and communicating the diversity of actions and perspectives in the setting and

populations you study" (p.128). Therefore, tables are provided within this study to offer a quasi-statistical representation of the results.

Finally, I provided a written summary of the entire study. In the findings I discussed the literature review to discover the ways in which it related to or differentiate from the study's findings and then noted how the results of this study concur with, differ from, or contribute to the description of Adlerian encouragement in the existing literature.

Saturation

The term "saturation" appears in qualitative research, particularly when referring to grounded theory research where the goal is to saturate the categories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Regarding phenomenological research, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that saturation may occur within each interview of an individual participant, rather than at the level of the dataset as a whole. Legard et al. (2003) concurred when they said that "Probing needs to continue until the researcher feels they have reached saturation, a full understanding of the participant's perspective" (p. 152). This position aligns with Maxwell (2013) who said that qualitative studies can be framed more in "case" terms, wherein a particular group of individuals is studied in a particular context. The selection of the case may involve representativeness so that one can develop an adequate description, interpretation, and explanation of the case. Nelson (2016) asserted that the term "saturation" can be problematic, overall, because it indicates a fixed point or completeness of the data. He argued for saturation as a conceptual depth of the data based upon the researcher's interpretation of the analysis. Saunders et al. (2018) explained that based on incremental readings, "the analysis does not suddenly become 'rich' or 'insightful' after that one additional interview but presumably becomes rich*er* and *more*

insightful" (p.1901). Thus, they explained that the researcher makes the decision about how much saturation is enough, because it is an ongoing, cumulative judgment that one makes. Bernard (2012) stated that the number of interviews needed for a qualitative study cannot be quantified, rather he advised that the researcher take what he or she can get, thus the number of interviews in phenomenological research varies according to the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that "In phenomenology, we have seen the number of participants range from 1 to 325" (p. 159). In this study, I identified 24 potential participants in order to achieve approximately 20 interviews, because Maxwell said that "little that is 'new' comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people". Overall, saturation per interview was reached within each of the 45-60 minutes; and the researcher's understanding of the conceptual depth of the data met saturation after 16 interviews.

Trustworthiness

Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that in qualitative research, "trustworthiness" is emphasized to support the validity of the research. They described trustworthiness as advancing efforts towards the "goodness" of research through methods that include disclosing researcher lenses, reporting negative case analysis, and implementing methods such as triangulation, member checking, participant collaboration, peer review, and generation of rich descriptions.

In this study, I addressed the need for trustworthiness in several ways. First, I articulated my biases and assumptions. After each interview, member checking was implemented through a verification process. Members were given the opportunity via email to verify the accuracy of their descriptions. This member checking process was

used to support the study's credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking, as well as confirming my understanding of participant explanations during interviews, represented my efforts towards obtaining rich descriptions as well as maintaining researcher/participant collaboration. I did this because Creswell and Poth (2018) advised that "engaging participants in the data analysis may foster collaboration in how the data is interpreted and ultimately represented" (p. 182). Peer review was conducted by two reviewers who are not stakeholders in this study or those who have previous affiliation with this research topic. These reviewers provided feedback on early data interpretations, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), in order to consider alternative understandings and to assess and articulate the researcher's developing understanding of the data. Other triangulation, or the testing of one source of data against another, was also used to enhance the study's credibility. Data from the demographic questionnaires, from interview questions and follow-up questions, and from reflexive journal and memo writing were used to triangulate data. Negative case analysis, or the investigation of discrepant findings, as well as transferability of this research is disclosed in the results and discussion sections of this report. Maxwell (2013) said that researcher bias and reactivity are two important threats to validity in qualitative research.

Generalizability. Maxwell (2013) distinguished between internal and external generalizability as it relates to validity in qualitative studies. He stated that although qualitative researchers rarely make explicit claims about external generalizability, he asserted that "sampling issues are particularly relevant to internal generalizability" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 137). He explained that a key issue is to understand the variation of a phenomenon in the setting or in the group being studied. In other words, diversity should

not be underestimated in qualitative research through inadequate sampling and emphasizing common features and themes while ignoring minimizing differences. One way that Maxwell (2013) recommended researchers to address this is to use numbers to represent the diversity. In this study, tables are provided to numerically illustrate diversity in the results of the phenomenon.

Validity threats. In this study, I attempted to bracket my biases; however, as an Adlerian counselor, my prior knowledge of the theory and therapy, as well as my goals and preconceptions may have influenced what "stood out" to me during the research process, resulting in researcher bias. Also, in my attempt to mine rich data from participants during the interview process, I may have influenced the participants' responses by the follow up and clarifying questions that I asked. Maxwell (2013) explained that in interviews, "what the informant says is *always* influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation" (p. 125). He added, however, that "trying to minimize your influence is not a meaningful goal for the qualitative research" (p. 125). He recommended that researchers understand the ways that they influencing the informant responses and how it might affect the validity of the inferences drawn. In this study, I mindfully attempted to balance the process of mining for data by avoiding leading questions while asking both open-ended questions and clarifying questions. I attempted to remain sensitive to stay with participants regarding the types and depths of the topics which participants chose to discuss. I also attempted to understand the phenomenon as interpreted by the interviewee to avoid imposing my meaning. Overall, Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the researcher interacts with participants to co-create interpretations, but that the research is "a chain of interpretations that must be

documented for others to judge the trustworthiness of the meanings arrived at in the end"

(p. 258).

Summary

This study was conducted in order to explore a phenomenon that represents a key theoretical concept in Adlerian theory that has not previously been researched. My qualitative inquiry is based upon Moustakas' empirical transcendental phenomenological method. I began my research following IRB approval from SHSU. Purposive criterion sampling was used to interview 16 Adlerian experts for this study. After obtaining participant consent, descriptions of their Adlerian encouragement practices in counseling session with clients were collected using semi-structured interviews. The data was explored for emergent themes. Moustakas' modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method was used for the data analysis process which broadly included a review of the participants' transcribed interviews, identification of significant and relevant statements, clusters of statements into themes, and interpretation of the essence of the participants' lived experiences. My efforts to increase the trustworthiness of this study included gaining thick, rich data, clarifying my personal biases, triangulating the data, employing member-checking, and using negative case analysis (Creswell, 2018). In the following chapter, I will discuss the results of the research findings.

CHAPTER IV

Results

In this chapter, I present the results of my research. The findings are based upon data gathered from 16 expert participant interviews. I begin the chapter with a description of the demographics of the individuals who participated in this study. In addition to demographic information, I provide descriptions of the participants' professional education, training, and experiences in Adlerian theory and Adlerian therapy in order to lend credibility to their positions in this study as Adlerian experts. Next, I describe my use of member checking, peer review, and horizontalization of the data to increase support for the validity and the reliability of the results presented. Following this, I provide an analysis of the data, based on Edmund Husserl's (Giorgi, 2006) transcendental phenomenology and Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. To provide rich context of the data, participants' direct quotes from the interviews are provided in the presentation of the results as they apply to each of the research questions. I provide textural descriptions of what the participants said they experience when they practice Adlerian encouragement with clients, as well as an overall composite textural description of those experiences. I also provide structural descriptions and a composite structural description that explain how contexts and situations influence the participants' experiences with encouragement. Maxwell, (2013) stated that any claim that some "themes were more common than others is an inherently quantitative claim, and requires some quantitative support" (p. 128). Thus, included within the text are tables which serve a "quasi-statistical" purpose and provide more clarity to the statements, "some" and "most", which are often used in the presentation of qualitative results (Becker, 1970). In

this study, I conducted 16 semi-structured interviews and the data collected was based on the following three grand tour questions:

(a) How do you define Adlerian encouragement?

(b) How do you know when you are practicing Adlerian "encouragement" with clients?

(c) "What *specifically* do you do in sessions with clients that you consider encouragement"; that is interventions, techniques, skills, attitudes, etc.?

Additionally, to ensure that participants were given ample opportunity to share relevant information about their experiences of using Adlerian encouragement in counseling sessions with clients, each participant was provided time at the end of the interview to include a question and/or comment about their experiences with encouragement that they felt had not been addressed or discussed during the interview.

Participant Data

In Creswell's (2018) description of procedures for conducting phenomenological research, he cited Polkington's (1989) recommendation that researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. In this study, sixteen Adlerian experts were interviewed to capture rich descriptions of their lived experiences of practicing Adlerian encouragement. Gender was represented by eight females and eight males. The age range of the female participants was 38-64 years and the age range of the male participants was 34-75 years. The participants work in locations in eleven states across the united states. Although most of the participants were born in the United States, a few of the participants were born and received a portion of their higher education in other countries, including Canada, Turkey, Taiwan, Lithuania/Poland, and

Russia. Ethnicity was represented by eleven individuals who identified as Caucasian, one as Hispanic, one as Turkish, one as Taiwanese, one as Lithuanian/Polish, and one as Ashkenazi.

Participants in this study were identified as expert Adlerian counseling practitioners, having expert knowledge of Adlerian theory and Adlerian therapy. Regarding their highest level of education, each of the participants reported the attainment of a doctoral degree in the fields of counseling or psychology: thirteen reported a PhD, two reported an Ed.D., and one reported a Psy.D. Regarding their Adlerian education and training, all of the participants reported having received Adlerian teaching and/or training at the graduate and/or post-graduate levels. All of the participants have been published in Adlerian and other professional counseling and psychotherapy journals. All of the participants have taught or are currently teaching in higher education; one of the participants stated that he is designing a course specifically based on Adlerian encouragement. The 16 participants reported a combined 408 years of Adlerian experiences that include teaching, training, presenting, publishing, practicing, and researching Adlerian theory and Adlerian therapy, as well as membership in or providing leadership service on boards of Adlerian professional organizations such as the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology (NASAP) and the International Association of Individual Psychology (IAIP). All participants have and most currently are counseling clients in private practice or in school settings.

Member Checking

In order to check for the accuracy of my collected data, following each interview, participants were provided with a copy of their interview transcriptions to review.

Participants were offered the opportunity to change their answers by making alterations, deletions, or additions. One participant chose to return the transcription with changes, which consisted of grammatical and clarifying edits, as well as the inclusion of in-text citations and a reference page related to the topics that he discussed; and another participant returned the transcription with minimal grammatical and modifier edits. Six of the participants contacted me to say that they did not want to make any changes. The remaining eight did not notify me to make any changes.

Peer Review

Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that, "The researcher might obtain peer feedback on early data interpretations" (p.195). They recommended that researchers do so in order to step back and reflect. They said, "This can be helpful for assessing, 'How do I know what I know or think I know?' because it requires the researchers to clearly articulate the patterns they see in the data categories." In keeping with this recommendation, I enlisted the help of two doctoral cohort members to serve as peer reviewers of my early data interpretations. Due to time constraints, these two cohort members offered to review the first six interview transcripts. After having time to previously review the first three transcripts, the two cohort members and I met and spent two hours reviewing the initial significant statements, codes, and themes I had identified. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that researchers decide what types of information to code. In phenomenological studies researchers look for individual experiences and the context of those experiences, thus, the reviewers challenged me to explain how I was identifying the significant statements and assigning them to codes to establish themes. Names for codes were discussed in order to determine those that most accurately represented the meanings of

the statements. In keeping with Creswell and Poth's (2018) process for developing interpretations, I engaged both my "creative and critical faculties in making carefully considered judgements about what is meaningful in the patterns, themes, and categories generated by analysis" (p.195). We repeated the process of examining the following three transcripts. Most of our initial findings of the first six interview transcripts were consistent and overlapping. This process of obtaining peer feedback on early data interpretations, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), was done to improve my procedures for development and assessment of data interpretation.

Horizontalization

I served as the researcher of this study and, as such, was responsible for all of the data analysis. I set aside six weeks from other obligations and distractions in order to dedicate daily time to review and reflect upon the participants' experiences as described in their own words within the interview transcriptions. I did so, also, to allow time to become intimately acquainted with the participants' descriptions of the phenomenon. This also allowed me time for adequate horizontalization of the data, because I was able to practice bracketing, as defined and explained in Chapter I, while extensively pouring over the transcripts to identify significant sentences, phrases, and descriptions that would develop into clusters of meaning and the emergence of themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Themes

Eight themes emerged from the participants' responses to the three grand tour research questions, as well as from clarifying questions that arose naturally during the interview process. Significant statements were identified in the textural descriptions ("what" participants experienced with the phenomenon) and the structural descriptions

("how" participants experienced the phenomenon) provided by the participants. The significant statements were aggregated into small categories of information and then assigned a label. This process is referred to winnowing the data because all of the information in a qualitative study cannot be used and some may be discarded (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Tentative codes were assigned using lean coding, where a researcher begins with fewer codes and then expands them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After expanding the codes to themes about participants' lived experiences of Adlerian encouragement in counseling sessions with clients, the following eight themes emerged: (a) purpose, (b) qualities, (c) learning, (d) feel or sense it, (e) intentionality and awareness, (f) client change, (g) flexibility and creativity, and (h) encouraging theoretical tenets.

Quasi-statistical Data

Maxwell (2010) acknowledged that "the use of numbers in qualitative research is controversial" (p. 475) but that there are times when it can be appropriate. Examples can be such as when the figures are used to support contextual knowledge and help explain how variables interact within the context of the phenomenon, or to show regularities or peculiarities in qualitative data. He explained that "quantitative data help you to adequately present *evidence* for your interpretations and to counter claims that you have simply cherry-picked your data for instances that support these interpretations" (p. 479). Maxwell (2010) summarized, "The use of numbers is a legitimate and valuable strategy for qualitative researchers when it is used as a complement to an overall process orientation to the research" (p. 480). Thus, tables representing numerical counts of the participants who shared descriptions within the context of the themes and subthemes of

the phenomenon are included to help clarify descriptors used in this study such as "some" and "most."

Table 1

Emergent Themes and Sub-themes: Interview Question #1

Themes	Subthemes	Topics	Responses
Purpose	Increase client courage towards social interest	Social interest	16
		Courage	15
		Tasks of life	11
		Counselor social interest and modeling	8
	Focus on client effort and movement	Effort	12
		Movement	15
	Create: belonging and contribution	Connection	16
Qualities	Verbal and nonverbal interactions	Verbal	11
		Nonverbal	6
	Therapeutic relationship	Counseling relationship	15
	Counselor encouragement	Attitude of encouragement	11
		Encouraging personality	7
		Way of being	7
		Personhood/Who you are	7
	Integral	To relationship and counseling	16
	What it is not	Not praise	9
		Not opposite of discouragement	4
		Not formally designed	6
Learning	Personal Background	With general encouragement	8
	Professional learning	With Adlerian encouragement	8
	Can be learned/improved	Students and professionals	10

Interview Question One

The first research question was: "How do you define Adlerian encouragement?" When asked this question, participants primarily defined Adlerian encouragement according to its purpose and to some of its notable qualities. Additionally, participants

talked about how their early life backgrounds, learning experiences, and other influences helped to shape their understanding and practice of Adlerian encouragement. Three themes emerged from research question one: (a) purpose, (b) qualities, and (c) learning.

Purpose. The major theme, *purpose,* emerged in the participants' responses to question one. Participant #9 said, "How do I define Adlerian encouragement? I think if you're going to define something in Adlerian terms, in order to be truly Adlerian, you have to define it by what its purpose is." In various ways, all 16 of the participants defined the overarching purpose and goal of their use of Adlerian encouragement in counseling sessions with client as a relationship process used to encourage clients to live with social interest in the service of themselves and others, because these behaviors lead to connected and engaged relationships with others and a feeling of belonging and contribution in the systems in which they live, such as intimate relationships, family, work, society, and human kind, at large. The three subthemes for purpose were: **(**a) increase client courage towards social interest, (b) focus on client effort and movement, and (c) create connection: belonging and contribution.

Increase client courage towards social interest. All 16 participants supported the idea that encouragement drives the therapeutic process, which is ultimately the client's movement towards socially interested choices. When defining the purpose of encouragement, the participants talked about encouragement related to social interest including a discussion of courage, the tasks of life, and the counselors' own social interest and socially interested role in the relationship.

Social interest. According to Adlerian theory, social interest is understood as the tendency for individuals "to unite themselves with other human beings, to accomplish

their tasks in cooperation with others" (Adler, 1970/1930, p. 115). When describing the purpose of encouragement, all 16 participants talked about encouragement's role in helping clients to engage in socially interested lives. Participant #16 said:

> I can see how social interest would develop in a person who feels encouraged because they would get this ability and a wisdom and bravery to act on their communal feeling, and to try something they've never tried before and to keep perfecting themselves.

Participants explained that an encouragement-based relationship and an encouragement-based process of counseling are used to help clients live socially interested lives, which includes clients both feeling subjectively encouraged and acting behaviorally with courage. Participant #1 said, "It's any kind of interpersonal action that helps a person, encourages the person, moves the person towards acting with more social interest." Participant #8 explained, "And so, to me, cultivating social interest is two parts. One is helping them to feel a better sense of belonging and collaboration, but also to contribute more, to feel like they have something to offer." Participant #14 defined encouragement as:

> I think it's a process by where we try to foster movement in the person, and also to foster a sense of an encouraged attitude, though it's both attitude and movement, helping the person to move forward, but also helping the person to subjectively feel encouraged.

Participant #8 explained:

> If you increase the client's social interest, you're going to see moving in the direction of, in safe ways, learning to trust others, to be vulnerable, to share with

others, as well as to stand one's ground when needed with other. So, you basically

are looking for more of a desire to connect in authentic ways with others.

Participant #16 summarized by describing what she understands is the essence of social

interest.

The essence is that each of the three original Adler's life tasks, if we want to use

that phrase, involve others. Intimacy involves others. Work involves others.

Friendships, fellowship involve others…. And the goal is very simple and that is

survival of humankind. It's both simple and complex; it's survival of humankind.

In addition to the term, social interest, two of the participants also used the term,

gemeinschaftsgefühl. Participant #1 said, "For Adlerian psychology or individual

psychology, I think the encouragement means encouragement to engage in behaviors that

have more gemeinschaftsgefühl." Participant # 11 explained, "Social interest,

gemeinschaftsgefühl*,* is the antidote to isolation, withdrawal, and self-absorption, and

those are the things that make up fear, depression, anger, and distress" because it is the

"rejoining with a community, in the community of humankind." Four of the participants

related encouraging social interest to the concepts of *capable*, *count*, *connected*, and

courage that are found in Betty Lou Bettner's Four Crucial C's (Bettner, 2006).

Participant #2 said:

When I was taught encouragement and how to use it and the purpose of it in any

relationship you're in, it's to build both. It's to build that sense of relationship and

connection in that moment, as well as to leave the other person you're interacting

with a good feeling of I matter, I count, I'm capable, I'm connected, again, those

four crucial C's.

Courage. When discussing social interest, 15 participants talked about increasing client courage through the use of encouragement. Some of them talked specifically about courage, some also explained the relationship of encouragement and courage, and some related courage to one's heart. Participant #3 said:

> I think encouragement is the heart of therapy, Adlerian therapy, of any therapy actually, I feel like. Courage, you know, has to do with the heart… it's the heart where people used to think your willpower, your strength, all those kinds of things came from.

Flush left Participant #16 said:

> To me it is rooted in the definition, in the meaning of the word courage. … We usually attribute wisdom to our mind, to the brain and I do believe that courage is a wisdom of one's heart. I call it a wisdom of one's heart. And then that we all have it as it's innate in us. We may not know that we have it. We may feel that we don't have it and then the encouragement, positive encouragement, would be helping people to start in believing that they have it and acting on it. And that would be encouragement.

Participant #1 explained it as:

> But I think encouragement to me has to be rooted in the word courage … Adler did use courage a lot in his original writings … I was amazed by learning, or relearning how often that he used courage in his own writings. … the concept called courage, which is the willingness and the ability to move on in the face of difficulties, simply put. And encouragement is to allow that to happen in whatever we think and do. Not to allow that to happen, that's discouragement.

Participant #9 also related encouragement to one's heart and said:

> The root word of encouragement is the word "coeur", C.O.U.R., which is Latin
>
> for the heart, and encouragement is to enlarge the heart, enlarge that feeling and
>
> sense of that you *can* do something. Or that you *have been* doing something. So,
>
> if someone is discouraged, they feel like "I'm no damn good. I can't do it. Or
>
> everything that I've done has turned bad." And encouragement is a way of helping
>
> a person see that they can do something and that they should attempt to do
>
> something. That they should feel the courage to be able to act or try again if they
>
> thought something failed.

Participant #14 said:

> When I was first taught encouragement I was always taught about the primary
>
> word in encouragement is courage. And so, it's about fostering courage, fostering
>
> courage to move forward, to solve a problem when we don't know what the
>
> answer is. You know life is always throwing us challenges.

Participant #8 explained, "So if you can increase their courage, you can encourage them
in the session or out of the session, it's kind of like filling up that gas tank where there's
motivation now to try something." Participant #3 added, "It gives them a feeling of
autonomy. It gives them a feeling of independence and I think that's what courage is
trying to do." Participant #10 talked about the encouragement process and emphasized
that although courage is something that each person innately possesses, that sometimes
individuals are not accessing or putting their courage into action. The purpose of the
counseling relationship is to help them find and use their courage. She said:

And so, probably my definition would be as simple as to give courage. But to me, that's not complete. . . . So, if I bump into some life challenges right now, I should be able to trust that I was given by birth courage to look at this, to decide what to do with it. So, that's something I will call awaken. And if you encourage me, then you are here to help me get ahold of, and having access to what I already have.

Participant #11 talked about why encouragement, or the process of helping clients with courage, is what clients need from a counseling relationship. He explained that when clients feel as though their sense of self may be jeopardized by their difficult life experiences, they require courage as an antidote to or to allay the concomitant fear. He said:

Okay, so when we see clients, all other things being equal, there's going to be some part of them that is engaged in fear responses. Increasingly we see more and more clients who have been traumatized early in life, and some even somewhat later in life, but nonetheless the later trauma being just as devastating. Again, fear is at the foundation of that, and courage is mustering up our strengths to go forward even in spite of the fear.

Participant #16 also explained that the use of courage is needed throughout the process of perfecting oneself in the tasks of life because life requires people to have a willingness to do things they have never done before without a guarantee of the outcome. As such, she explained, clients need encouragement, because every action along the way to perfecting oneself carries with it the risk of imperfection. She said:

Courage to risk imperfection and that is, again, ability and willingness to do something that you've never done before knowing that the first act will be

imperfect, will look messy, will look silly perhaps, but it is necessary in the process of perfecting oneself. The process of perfection involves imperfection inevitably and then one needs courage to do that because it takes courage to act imperfectly.

Tasks of life. Eleven participants talked about the life tasks and about helping clients to realize their courage in order to use it for socially useful choices and behaviors in their tasks of life. They used various words such as to awaken (Participant #10), uncover (Participant #16), infuse (Participant #1, #10), give (Participant #10), embolden (Participant #9), foster (Participant #14) or build (Participant #11) courage. Participant #11 explained the need for courage by saying, "The question then is to build courage for what? And largely it's to face and adequately address the tasks of life." Participant #1 also talked about the role of courage and the importance of understanding how well prepared a client is to address the tasks of life. He said:

> The three tasks of life are intimacy, friendship, and work. Each of these tasks across a lifespan can be answered, can be dealt with in a style that is higher in social interest or lower in social interest. The higher level, when they're addressed on higher levels of social interest, that oftentimes takes courage. Sometimes people are well prepared for a task, so it is easily done with high social interest. There are other things where we're less prepared, and those tasks, it takes more and more courage to address them in a high social interest manner.

Participant #12 talked about recognizing that when clients come to counseling it is because they are not handling one or more of the tasks very well. He said:

Because people don't come in unless they aren't handling all or some of the tasks

of life well and that's why they're discouraged. So, to help them to be able to

tackle the problems of life, life problems, they have to feel encouraged about

themselves that they'll have some success with it. If they don't feel they'll have

some success then they'll be discouraged and they won't try. . . . You have to have

the courage to face failure, as a possibility, otherwise you never try. And to face

the possibility, but have confidence that if it doesn't work, you'll just keep trying

until you get it.

Participant #7 explained what happens when clients become encouraged. He explained:

If somebody is encouraged and they feel connected to what they're doing, they

think that what they're doing has some meaning for them individually, but also

allows them to contribute in a way where others would perceive their involvement

as meaningful.

Counselor social interest and modeling. The participants supported the idea that

encouragement in counseling begins with an encouragement-based relationship that

includes the counselor's own socially interested interactions with clients. Eight of the

participants specifically discussed modeling or the modeling of social interest as part of

the encouragement process. Participant #15 said:

Any time I enter a relationship, "Let me show you how great of a counselor I am"

. . . it doesn't work. Any time I enter a relationship with social interest, 'Here's

something I have and I'm going to offer this to you, for your well-being, for your

learning, for our being together' then it works.

Participant #2 said, "Encouragement within the therapeutic process is modeling social interest." Participant #6 talked about her own social interest and how it contributes to her natural ability to be encouraging. She said:

> I don't think, for me, I could separate Adlerian encouragement from Adlerian social interest or, you know, the drive for superiority. I think that it all . . . you can do this encouragement stuff really well if you have social interest and if you are striving to learn about people and interact with them.

Participant #6 added:

> I guess social interest captures the definition pieces, and that being authenticity, transparency, compassion, the desire for people to be their best selves. All of those things that make up social interest, if you *are* those things, you can't help but be encouraging. If you don't have those things, no matter what you do, what technique, your encouragement's only going to go so far. . . . I think any kind of authenticity in any relationship models healthy relationships. From an Adlerian perspective, we're all about healthy relationships. Yes, I definitely think it could be modeling.

Participant #16 explained the power of the counseling relationship in real time and how that serves as an opportunity for the counselor to model socially interested encouragement. She said:

> I think the only firsthand thing, the only thing that we can do in real life, in vivo, right there is the therapeutic relationships. So, then we model it and then we encourage clients to do things and then they try and then it works. And then they

> go and they start believing that they can do it and then they go and do it
> elsewhere.

Participant #1 said:

> I think some of it is modeling. I think some of it is that when you are treated
> respectfully, you think of yourself in positive terms, and you have more resilience
> or more courage to face the tasks of life in a respectful manner, in an equal
> manner. A lot of that is modeling.

He explained the way that Adlerian encouragement is more than modeling in a general sense. "There's a broader sense than I think the behaviorists would talk about with modeling, where one experiences a greater strength, a greater capability to meet a challenge, to meet the challenge of this task that you are unprepared for." Regarding helping clients to transfer social interest from counseling to their lives outside of counseling, Participant #7 said, "Any social interest I build is going to be related to the people outside of the room in their life, and how they can engage in that process." Participant #3 said, "The real messages is that I'm trying to work with them is in terms of how they present themselves to others, how they take others into consideration, and their behaviors and so on." Participant #3 explained that modeling social interest can occur in counseling groups among group members, as well, as they engage with one another. "It's that modeling of social interest, it's showing social interest. For me, it's also kind of an expectation of social interest that I'm laying out there."

Participant #2 summarized:

> I think that's the way Adler intended it. So, if encouragement is the therapeutic
> modeling of social interest, and ultimately the goal of counseling is to increase

one's social interest, then doesn't it make sense that encouragement is a key

component?

Participant #16 explained that the practice of encouragement is used throughout the

counseling process to help clients use their courage to take risks as they act with social

interest and that they find that experience in relationship with a counselor who is

modeling courage.

    Focus on client effort and movement. When defining encouragement, the most

frequently named ways that participants said that they encourage clients to act with

courage towards socially interested choices is to point out the clients' past and present

efforts and their movements in their lives. Twelve participants defined and talked about

the importance of noticing client effort and 13 participants talked about tuning into the

movements of their clients; some of them also described ways in which they move with

their clients. Participants explained that any amount of client effort or movement offers

significant evidence and is brought to clients' attention as a way to encourage them to

notice their courage and to try more. Participant #9 said, "Encouragement is very

evidentiary. It's about providing tangible, concrete, evidence for an argument that you're

making for a person's better self. Or for them making better choices for themselves."

Participant #2 stated, "So for me, encouragement is all about effort and noticing when the

person with whom you're speaking, . . . that it's focusing on the effort they're putting

toward the task versus anything related to the outcome." She said that she attends to the

two components of noticing client effort and movement towards social interest

throughout all of counseling as a way of practicing encouragement. "So, by focusing on

the effort and saying, 'Wow, I can tell you're working hard on that'. The hope is that that

person internalizes that and says, 'You know what? I really am.' And then it motivates even more." Participant #4 explained that encouragement is about recognizing clients' efforts and contributions.

> That's really what I find it to be. It's about the tried effort, being brave and trying, being engaged. Then about contribution. How they're trying to be a part of and contribute to the system. . . . Helping people begin to recognize their effort and their contribution is really important to me.

Participant #5 said that focus should be on effort while understanding the intent behind the effort.

> Not the person as saying, "Oh, you're great. You're really amazing.", but focusing on effort and behavioral choices that they've made. . . . I might focus on effort or their movement towards something, even if it didn't work out . . . I might focus on the positive intent of their behavior, even if it got them into trouble, like maybe by avoiding a conflict. The positive intent, which would very much be like an Adlerian way of thinking about pathology or behavior, but it's goal-oriented.

Participant #4 said, "But from an encouragement standpoint, it would be more of the positive recognition of their contribution and what they're doing to try to make a better system." Similarly, Participant #3 said, "I think by being encouraging, you are, in a sense, reinforcing them and you build positive reinforcements." Participant #8 provided examples of the kinds of client efforts to be recognized and encouraged. He said:

> So, making some significant steps in a different direction, whether the movement is in trusting others when they're having difficulty with trust. It could be movement in terms of setting boundaries when they've had difficulty with setting

boundaries. It could be movement on willingness, the courage to take risks when they've been avoiding taking risks. So, I do think in some form or other, we're encouraging them to move in some behavioral form. But more than that also we're just encouraging them to embrace some of the realities of their experience.

Participant #2 said that she encourages her clients to initiate movement by taking it in steps. "'Which would be the easiest first step to take?' And kind of building on success. Adler is known for one of his quotes that you can't build on weakness, you can only build on strengths." Participant #8 said that he tries to encourage clients to continue to take the next step. "What I'm trying to do is highlight the movement that I see in the course of therapy, and motivate them to take each step towards that goal that that new appetite that leaves them." Participant #15 said using an encouragement approach to noticing clients' efforts and movement comes from an optimism within the counselor.

You don't give up because you're not attached to these big outcomes. You're attached to a tiny little bit of motion from, a tiny bit of difference from the client. I think that's a driving force for encouragement.

To sum up the purpose of encouragement for client movement, Participant #8 said, "I guess the process of counseling continues on as they basically are making efforts to move in a slightly different direction than they've been doing. And because of our supportive relationship, I can encourage them to take those steps."

Create: belonging and contribution. When defining Adlerian encouragement, all 16 participants described offering clients an encouragement-focused relationship that creates connection. Participants said that one of the primary ways that they use encouragement is to first provide clients with an opportunity to connect in order to

experience belonging and contribution within the counseling relationship, and then to encourage clients to expand those relational experiences to relationships outside of counseling. Participants used words such as belong, connect, engage, cooperate, collaborate and contribute when expressing this idea. Participant #11 explained that humans have fundamental needs to connect with others socially in both physical and emotional ways. He referenced evolutionary psychology (people need to live in cooperation with others) and attachment theory (people have a need for connection and intimacy), which he explained are in line with the tenets of Individual Psychology and Adlerian therapy. He emphasized, "It's about not just physical survival, but *emotional* survival." Participant #8 said:

> Everybody desires to feel like they belong, and that they also desire to feel like they have strengths and resources that they can give. And if they can experience that in the therapy relationship, and we can bring focus to what their experience is, and then what we would do is it's like sweetening the soup. We help them become aware of that appetite, that they want that kind of experience in relationships with others.

Participant #8 added:

> And ultimately, I guess the way to summarize it is to increase their level of social interest, which is ultimately getting them to have a greater desire to want to collaborate with others. So, I think I would look at the change process as including behaviors, emotions, even thoughts, as well as an increased desire for relationships.

Participant #7 explained what the connection with the counselor can mean for people who lack connected relationships in their lives. He said:

> And just showing that you're present with the client, that you care. Because if somebody is feeling disconnected that no one cares about them or they can't make that connection, part of that process can be as simple as showing them that they've built a connection with you as their counselor. That you're hearing them, that you care, that you're there with them in that moment.

Participant #3 elaborated, "I think the way you engage with a client . . . I think any way you imply that the person has some ability, that a person has some equality with you is part of that." Participant #6 talked about encouraging an interpersonal connection with her client that now is supported by research. She explained:

> So, encouragement, social interest, hopefully I can help connect with somebody else, somebody else's midbrain. In fact, if I do that, the research says, that's one way of helping people. . . . I'm thinking more about the brain and how we connect to each other from different parts of our brains. The Adlerian part fits really well with that.

Participants explained that the experience of feeling connected can be expanded for their clients to outside of the counseling relationship.

Participant #7 said:

> Just by pointing out that they have me and I'm in the room and I care, can help them to use the therapeutic relationship to recognize their own strengths and relational building, and work from even that level to build that up in their life outside of counseling.

Participant #8 said:

> Rarely do clients change without first of all, I think experiencing something
> different in a therapy relationship, although there are some clients I think that you
> can help get some nugget of insight. But I tend to think that the real change,
> particularly the real difficult issues of life, insight first doesn't create the change. I
> think it's the encouragement and the therapeutic relationship that helps clients
> start to experience change, and then insight helps them to transfer that into their
> outside situations.

Participant #2 said:

> So, my goal in that moment is to help this person feel belonging with me and to
> feel that they are contributing to something between us perhaps, to feel that sense
> that they can contribute to, because of their task it's going to improve their lives or
> somebody else's life or have that more community focus, depending on what the
> task is.

Participant #2 summed up this idea with, "So, if Adler's fundamental point was
everybody needs to find a place to belong and contribute, then encouragement is the way
that we can tell people, 'Hey, you belong and you're contributing'." Participant #14
clarified the overall goal of encouragement by saying that encouragement helps the client
both connect and contribute:

> So, when I talk about movement, it is kind of about that sense of "I can
> contribute. I can move." When I talk about that attitude, it is about helping them
> to have a sense of belonging and a sense of who they are.

Participant #11 provided examples of the specific kinds of socially interested connections that participants said they are trying to encourage in the lives of their clients. Summarizing Adler's ideas in his own words, he explained:

> Yeah, and like Adler said, "We're not going to create some perfect human being, but yeah, your life is going to be much better if you have something meaningful in life to do. It's going to be much better if you have friends. It's going to be much better if you love somebody and somebody loves you. If you have those things going for you, then you eschew self-absorption; you do not withdraw into isolation."

Qualities. Another major theme, *qualities,* emerged in the participants' responses to question one. When defining Adlerian encouragement, participants discussed some of its distinct qualities. The five subthemes for qualities are: (a) verbal and nonverbal interactions, (b) therapeutic qualities, (c) counselor encouragement, (d) integral, and (e) what it is not.

Verbal and nonverbal interaction. When defining the qualities of encouragement participants talked about verbal qualities and nonverbal qualities of Adlerian encouragement in counseling sessions with clients. Participants said that they try to be aware of the kinds of messages they are sending to clients that are verbal and nonverbal because they want to be perceived by their clients as being encouraging. Participant #1 said, "I think it's primarily verbal, but even I think there's some nonverbal components to encouragement." Participant #12 said, "Also, you have to be tuned into the nonverbals and all that kind of stuff to make sure that you're not being discouraging." Participants discussed being attuned to the verbal and nonverbal messages they receive from their

clients, as well, so that they can respond to them with verbal and non-verbal encouragement.

Verbal. Eleven participants talked about the verbal qualities of encouragement. Participant #2 said that when she thinks about encouragement, "the first thought that comes in to my head is words of, positive words that inspire, motivate and are based on effort." She further stated that she mindfully uses encouraging words throughout all of her dialogues with clients. Participant #3 said, "I think you can include encouraging words. I think a big part of encouragement is how we speak, how we talk, with clients." Some of the participants said that verbal encouragement can be offered in direct ways and it can be offered in subtle ways. Participant #3 gave an example of encouraging in a more direct way. He said:

> I think framing language is extremely important, so if we are going to say we are going to try something here and maybe it'll help, is not as strong as I've got some things I want you to do and I know they're going to be beneficial for you. I'm pretty directive in a lot of my work and I think it's important that the directions be encouraging.

Participant #5 gave an example of offering encouragement in a subtle way. He said:

> A subtle way of showing encouragement is even trying to convey to the client that I have interest in their interests. So, that could be showing interest in the interests of the client. It could be something like me saying, "You know, I was thinking about something we talked about and it really kind of stuck out in my mind." So, conveying to the person that I have been thinking about them to some degree. I'd

be careful with that with a client who's borderline, but with some clients, letting

them know that they actually crossed my mind during the week.

Nonverbal. Six participants talked about nonverbal qualities of encouragement.

Regarding nonverbal interactions Participant #2 has had with clients, she said:

It could be smiles, or other nonverbals. Encouragement in some instances could

be a hug, physical touch, things like that. So yeah, it can certainly be more than

just words. And to me, the smile is both I see you and that last piece, even though

I may not be saying anything. It's you're worthy of my attention that moment.

Participant #2 explained that, when it is appropriate and therapeutic, a hug can be a form

of nonverbal encouragement. She said:

And it's meant in an encouraging way of kind of as we end this time together, let

me comfort you in that moment knowing that you're not alone as you leave my

office. So again, kind of that sense of belonging, sense of worth, sense of having

that innate value.

Participant #5 said that he is aware of the kinds of nonverbal messages that he might send

a client. He explained:

So, for me, I believe those facial expressions, when you are able to convey caring

and empathy rather than judgment or some of the four horsemen of the

apocalypse. Those definitely, I think can convey encouragement through, yet a

lack of judgment or through the caring and concern that that type of facial

expression that might show, "Oh, I'm really concerned about this person." Or

maybe showing excitement when they're feeling excited about something, that I

might mirror that back with them. And I would say that that could be

encouragement, for sure.

Participants also talked about noticing and being sensitive to their clients' nonverbals.

Participant #12 explained the importance of being tuned into nonverbal communication

of clients, especially when they are working on a situation that is difficult. "Of course,

I'm keeping an eye on the nonverbals over here to see how this is coming across. Are

they breathing? Sometimes they're not breathing, they're so scared. That kind of thing,

you know."

     Therapeutic relationship. When defining Adlerian encouragement, participants

defined the counseling relationship as encouragement-focused. Fifteen participants talked

about the therapeutic qualities of the relationship and the role of encouragement.

Participant #8 said:

     I certainly value the cognitive part of it, but I certainly put a lot more emphasis on

     the relationship part of the therapy process, which I think does emphasize the

     encouragement model a lot more. Because it recognizes that even if we help

     clients see that their beliefs and their private logic maybe out of order from

     common sense, that that doesn't mean they're going to let go of them, and they

     won't until they feel the courage to do so. And that courage has to be cultivated

     through some reparative kind of relationship.

Participant #10 said, "Through our development, or how we interact with our

environment, that courage might need to be awakened, or to be, I should say,

reconstructed or co-constructed with our therapist, our counselor, our significant others or

so." Participant #6 described the way that the authenticity of the counselor encourages clients to experience their own authenticity. She said:

> But this idea of authenticity that I've seen Richard Watts do, that I've seen Jim
>
> Bitter do, that I've seen other Adlerians do, they're genuine and authentic. In that,
>
> they help encourage their clients to be themselves and to be accepted.

Participant #14 said, "When a person is really encouraged, they are connected to themself, who they are, in a way. When there's two authentic individuals, there is a connection. It's powerful." Participants explained that an encouraging relationship can increase client courage. Participant #1 explained that clients find their courage in the presence of an encouraging person who values and believes in their abilities, and offers hope and faith. "The experience of being in the presence of someone who is encouraging creates courage so one becomes encouraged. One increases their courage to approach things with more social interest." Participant #5 provided examples of encouragement-based responses for clients that they likely do not receive from others, always communicating that he recognizes their value. He said:

> Where someone talks about they're so excited about going on a trip, and I might
>
> say "Oh, I'm really excited to hear that you're getting to do something to take care
>
> of yourself and to be around people you care about. Again, showing interest in
>
> their interests is another way of encouragement.

For situations when clients might feel judged, Participant #5 said:

> An encouraging approach to that would be listening with curiosity and concern
>
> rather than somehow judging that they're inferior or they've made a bad choice. In
>
> a therapeutic relationship, I would try to convey concern and caring about that.

When they were going through that, it was something that didn't turn out so well for them. Looking at their behavior in not a judgmental way, but more in an objective way. Like, "Okay, that happened, and that's what happened in the past and now we're talking about moving forward and what they learned from that", and things like that.

Participant #12 explained why clients need an encouragement-focused relationship. He said:

But encouragement primarily comes from the relationship. You're not handling it alone, you're handling it together. Without the relationship, nothing. Otherwise, people could read a self-help book. When they read these self-help books, do they change their lives? No, and that's why they need courage, and hope, belief, and all these things that you're providing in the relationship. That's the difference.

Participant #15 said, "The shift happens momentarily. You immediately observe it, that encouragement was taken. It was presence in the relationship at this moment. The hope is that they take part of it and move forward with it." Participant #12 focuses on an encouragement-based relationship that maintains counselor/client connection because he explained that clients make changes based on their emotional insight rather than simply cognitive.

Dreikurs always used to say that you had to get to a client at the left brain. Now he didn't talk about the left brain, right brain and all that. But he understood you had to get insight at an emotional level, you couldn't just have cognitive insight.

Participant #11 also talked about the therapeutic aspects of encouragement on an emotional level.

The thing is that I've never had a client who came in and said, "I believe I have a thinking disorder." Nor have I had one that has said, "I'm suffering from mistaken notions." But what they do come in and say is, "I am angry"; "I am depressed"; "I am anxious"; "I am unhappy"; "I am sad"; or "I am grieving." I mean, emotions are the place that all of our clients start. Emotions serve the purpose of telling us how we think we're doing in life and they also are a communication system to others.

Participant #16 said:

Well, because we cannot infuse knowledge of how to do things right or how to live right is essentially useless. Nobody lives better because they know something in the mind. We live better because we know things in our heart and because we practice it.

Thus, participants agreed overall that the role of encouragement in the relationship holds particular therapeutic qualities.

Counselor encouragement. Participants defined encouragement as more than just something that they do in counseling. Some participants described it as a natural part of the counseling process and some of them stated that they have embraced encouragement to the extent that it has become part of their personal identity as counselors, and some, as people. Participants used terms such as *attitude of encouragement*, *encouraging personality*, *style*, *way of being*, *personhood*, and *who you are*, to define the encouragement that comes from the counselor. Some of the participants used more than one of these terms to describe it.

Attitude of encouragement. Eleven participants said that they have an attitude of encouragement that guides the counseling relationship and the process. Some of the participants paused and reflected about how they would describe encouragement. Participant #3 said, "I think of it as an attitude, I think?" Participant #5 said, "It's more of an attitude than a specific process" and also "a way of being." Participant #8 explained what having an encouraging attitude means to him. He said:

> It has to begin as an attitude that you have. This is how you view clients, this is how you view people. You have to view them as they all have potential. And it starts with the attitude. . . . And then of course an attitude because you have to stay focused on every client. They're simply trying to find the best way to have their goals met.

Participant #12 said "It's an attitude if you're treating a person with respect." Participant #13 said, "I think it's a skill because I think there's lot of different ways to be encouraging. . . . But I also think that it's an attitude of positivity."

Encouraging personality. Five of the participants also described having an encouraging personality. Participant #1 said:

> I would call it a style . . . I think that an Adlerian therapist has an encouraging style . . . it is a component of the therapist's personality. It's something that an individual psychology psychotherapist brings to the relationship, and that is that I'm going to be encouraging.

Participant #2 said that she probably has an innate ability to encourage others and that through education, supervision, and training, it has developed into being a part of her overall personality. Participant #4 said that it has become a part of his personality over

time as he made practicing Adlerian encouragement an intentional part of his becoming an Adlerian therapist.

Way of being. Seven participants described their experiences of encouragement as a way of being with clients that is Adlerian, and is rooted in encouragement. Participant #7 said, "So it's a foundation. It's not a technique, it's not a skill. It's just a way of being in the session with the client all along the way, through every step of the process." Participant #6 said:

It's more of a way of being than a technique. It is a technique and all that stuff, and I'm not arguing with that, but I think because we know, we're beginning to know so much more about the brain, that's probably what's happening with a bunch of the Adlerians because that's just who they are.

Participant #10 explained how encouragement became her way of being over time. She said:

It's just like riding a bicycle or learning to drive. At first you think that's a set of skills, but at the lower end, that becomes part of our being. … And that's my goal if I'm not there yet. That will be my goal, and I hope to convey that in the total of my being.

Participant #15 said, "I think that's the most important part of being an encouraging person or encouragement. It's a presence. It's a way of being." Participant #1 explained, "it's a line of movement for the counselor, that the counselor can be encouraging. It's not an either or, but there is some continuum where interactions are more or less encouraging." Similarly, Participant #15 said:

I don't see it as either you have encouragement or you lack encouragement or you have this presence or not. I think it's a degree. It can also fluctuate. There might be some conditions that it's a little easier. Some individuals it's a little easier than others.

Personhood/Who you are. Seven participants defined encouragement as being a quality of the personhood of the counselor, or who they are. Participant #2 said:

And so, if I think back to then and then look at now, it has become just part of who I am, I think. And so, I don't have to think as much about it. It's not such effortful processing everything about cognitive psychology. It's not effortful anymore.

Participant #6 said:

I've learned … some of this just can't be defined. Maybe that goes back to the authentic piece. It's like you *are* the encourager. You may not be doing it as a technique. It's who you *are*. … It begins with yourself. Adlerian therapy is about who you are. If you're not practicing encouragement, then you're kind of missing the point."

Participant #9 stated that encouragement is part of who he is in that it is a value that he possesses. He said:

It has become a value for me. And again, my identity is as an Adlerian and because I think it is so central to the Adlerian approach. … It becomes a value that you have and that you hold. You want to encourage people to be the best version of themselves or if you see someone who is down and discouraged, that naturally you want to help encourage them, to say a kind or encouraging thing.

Interviewee #11 described how encouragement is part of who he is in this way: "I think an attitude comes closer to it. It's a belief system. It's a set of convictions about life."

   Integral. When defining Adlerian encouragement and its notable qualities, all 16 of the participants stated that encouragement is integral to practicing Adlerian therapy; some used the specifiers of integral to practicing well and according to the theory. Other terms participants used to describe this theme were *essential* and *necessary*. Some participants stated their belief that encouragement is necessary not just for Adlerian therapy but should be an included component of all counseling theories. Participant #1 described encouragement as essential to successful therapy. Participant #2 said, "It is not optional. For me, it serves as the groundwork of the therapeutic alliance." Participant #7 said, "Encouragement is integrally tied into everything that I'm doing." Participant #8 said that without it a counselor cannot do much good. Participant #4 called it a necessary component. He explained:

   I guess it's fundamental to Adlerian psychology in some sense. And so, to say that you could cleave that often leave it out, you know I don't really know that you'd be a classical, true Adlerian if you did that. . . . but I think to be a true individual psychology Adlerian kind of person, you kind of have to be encouraging. I think it's fundamental to the theory.

Some participants added that encouragement should be included in all models of therapy. Participant #5 said:

   But I think most people, once they get some experience and feedback, they realize, "Oh yeah, you really have to use encouragement when you're doing any

approach, including an Adlerian model." I think people can do it, but I don't think it's really truly Adlerian therapy unless you're including that piece.

Participant #3 said that encouragement should be at the heart of all therapy. Participant #4 said, "Yeah. I think it's a key factor across therapy. It's a common factor across all the therapies and it has to be applied throughout therapy." Participant #12 said that encouragement is important for all therapists, not just Adlerians. Participant #4 said that encouragement even goes beyond therapy because it is a fundamental human want and need. He said:

> Well, you know, I think it's fundamental to being human. Often times, we get programmed away from it. . . . And so, it's easy to not be encouraging, but I really think it's a fundamental aspect of being human. Especially, being social. Enmeshed in social systems. . . . it's a way to relate, it's a way to motivate and to come together to create a greater community. It's a way for us to live together, in some sense.

> ***What it is not.*** When defining what encouragement is, many of the participants also talked about what encouragement is not. Participants explained that encouragement is not the same as general encouragement or praise, is not the opposite of discouragement, and is not an Adlerian concept that has been systematized or operationalized, thus it is something that is not easily defined. Interviewee #1 described how a more general encouragement does not have the specific quality that Adlerian encouragement has.

> It has a sense of simply cheering somebody on, or providing them with support. But there isn't, in the broader definition, there isn't a sense of, there isn't any kind

of assumption about what's being encouraged, or as I think in individual

psychology I think there is something that is, there's some assumption about

what's being encouraged . . . a more direct sense of infusing courage to meet the

tasks of life in a more equal and respectful manner in a way that adds to the

common good concept.

Not praise. Nine of the participants said that encouragement is not praise and they

explained differences between the two. Participant #2 said, "So for me, when I talk about

encouragement, I also talk about praise because to me it's very clear what the difference

is between the two. So, for me, praise is all about outcome." Participant #5 said, "So,

focusing on effort and not the person as saying, 'Oh, you're great. You're really amazing',

but focusing on effort and behavioral choices that they've made." Participant #4 said, "A

lot of people confuse encouragement and praise. Praise is about outcome, and

encouragement is about process. I think that's a hard thing sometimes for people to

distinguish," When asked why it is hard for people to distinguish, he said:

> So, I think it's very easy for us to focus on outcome, like that's good, that's
>
> positive, that's increased; and forget about the idea that change is a process, it's
>
> not simply an outcome. That people need encouragement along the way and that
>
> it's not all goal focused. That is actually process focused, change is really process
>
> focused.

Participant #9 provided an illustration of the differences between praise and

encouragement.

> The metaphor that's used a lot is . . . when someone is in the middle of running a
>
> race, you don't say to them, "Way to go. You did it." You don't praise them in the

middle. You encourage them. You say, "You can do it. You're getting better. You're almost there." So that's the big difference between encouragement and praise.

Not opposite of discouragement. Four of the participants noted that encouragement is not the opposite of discouragement or is not only used to reverse it. Participant #5 clarified that encouragement is also not the opposite of discouragement. He said:

> I would say the opposite of encouragement would be judgment. I could probably think of 100 other things that are the opposite of it, but that would be an example of one of the opposites of encouragement. I think sometimes it's easy to define things when it's difficult to systematize it by saying, well we know that it is *not* judging them. And I know that it is *not* praising them.

Participant #9 said, "The other piece is that, sometimes encouragement is not to just reverse discouragement, but to kind of keep a virtuous cycle going. Somebody is doing something well and you'd like to encourage them."

Not formally defined. Six participants said that encouragement is also not something that within Adlerian therapy has been operationalized or systematized, which creates challenges for defining it in simple terms. Participant# 8 said:

> I do think that encouragement is a very broad term that might have so many different meanings, so it's hard for me to just nail it down to say it's just one thing. To me, it is all about what does it take to give a client motivation to take one step in the desired direction that they have? And that might be a lot of different ways of going about that. And so other clinicians might use different approaches.

Participant #8 added, "I can't just say there's one way to do the encouragement, but it has to start with a real perception and attitude towards the client and toward the counseling process." Participant #5 said, "I think of it more attitudinally, which makes it harder to measure it, or systematize it." Participant #1 said, "Now when we want to operationalize that, we run into some levels of limitations." When he was designing a course on Adlerian encouragement Participant #1 said, "I didn't find a clear definition anyplace." Participant #2 said:

> And again, I think that's what makes Adlerian psychology, what's the word I'm looking for? We get to each of us make it our own. We get to integrate ourselves in to the theory, in to the process, and so what encouragement looks like and feels like to me may be very different than perhaps Terry or Richard or some of these other folks that I've gotten to watch and see and hear from.

Although these participants acknowledged difficulty in offering a comprehensive definition of encouragement, Participant #9 and others said that something significant occurs when someone is encouraged.

> I think that it is very potent and very powerful. When somebody can really feel like, you know, especially if they're feeling bad about themselves or discouraged, if they feel genuinely that the other person is encouraging them, and really does understand them, it can make all the difference in the world. It can turn them around out of a very negative emotional place.

Participant #1 said:

> Yeah. I think that much of it is unquantifiable, and it's difficult to describe. There's a certain interpersonal process that happens. I think we see it in good

parenting where the quality of the relationship infuses courage into the child, and

we can break down . . . we can say that it happens, and we can kind of speculate

about some of the processes, but I think much of the process is a fairly, is this

kind of interpersonal feeling of connectedness that then gets expanded or

broadened out.

Learning. The major theme, *learning,* emerged in the participants' responses to

question one. When defining Adlerian encouragement, participants talked about how

their learning included both general encouragement experiences and those specific to

Adlerian encouragement. Some participants made references to the ways in which their

personal upbringings and backgrounds, as well as their exposure to other counseling

concepts has influenced their way of learning, understanding and practicing Adlerian

encouragement. Others talked about not having early life experiences with

encouragement. Most of the participants said that regardless of one's background with

encouragement or discouragement, Adlerian encouragement can be learned. The three

subthemes for learning were: (a) personal background, (b) educational experiences, and

(c) can be learned.

Personal background. Eight participants talked about how their personal

background influenced their learning and understanding Adlerian encouragement. Some

of the participants said that they believe that they came to Adlerian counseling already

possessing an encouraging temperament. Participant #5 said:

Sometimes I think encouraging, literally, could be coming from, to some degree,

your psychological experiences and your biological temperament can, I think, to

some degree, have that in that. Some of the warmth that people show I think can

be temperamental as well.

Others said that their natural proclivity came from experiences in their family of origin.

Participant #4 said, "Maybe it is a set of attitudes and beliefs that you grow up, because

some people grow up and they don't recognize that. So, maybe it's a belief system that's

kind of done in families." Participant #2 said:

So, when it came to thinking about others and putting other's needs first, that was

part of my upbringing. So, I think I have that component, and the Adlerian

trainings I guess honed it in to the skills and the things that I saw now that I know

are encouragement, but it still fits. It's not like I had to take out a piece that didn't

work and put this piece in. I feel like I was already innately an encourager. And,

so, this was just another skill to add on top of that nature I already had. … to me, I

think is why it resonates so much, why Adlerian psychology resonates so much

with me because I was, again, coming out of a childhood experience of being the

thoughtful one and what happens when you're thoughtful and how that affects in a

positive way people's lives.

Participant #6 said, "The environment helped shape me. Then, I'm dropped into this

Adlerian school, and then it was, 'That's what that is? Help me do that in therapy'."

Other participants said that they did not have prior experiences with

encouragement. Participant #4 said, "I didn't come from a very encouraging background.

My family life was not that encouraging and so I had to learn the language. There is a

language for encouragement and I had to learn that language." Some respondents said

that they came from discouraging backgrounds. Participant #10 said, "I think every

person may be . . . I think every journey has to be unique and different. And mine is that I recognize my journey from being a very discouraged person to become very encouraged."

Professional learning. Eight of the participants talked about how their education and training influenced their learning and understanding Adlerian encouragement. Although all 16 of the respondents received formal teaching in Adlerian theory, many talked about learning also from reading books and Adlerian counseling journal articles, watching videos or live demonstrations, attending Adlerian conferences and workshops, receiving mentorship and supervision, practicing it with clients, and reviewing their own counseling session recordings, and then noting the ways in which these activities increased their experiences and understanding of Adlerian encouragement. Participant #2 explained her path to learning Adlerian encouragement.

> Through practice, through probably the good supervision experiences. I've had awful supervision experiences, too. And then just, again, kind of getting involved in NASAP. How the trajectory of my career brought me in touch with kind of watching different people, reading different people's books, having just general conversations with people about theoretical concepts and encouragement and things like that.

Participant #10 said, "So at first, it was very foreign to me. And now it's part of me, I guess, in terms of all the encounters I have had." Most of these participants stressed the value or experiential experiences and the role of Adlerian mentors. Participant #1 said about his mentor, "I would say that he was very encouraging and as I experienced that, I also became more and more skilled, but also more and more able to verbalize, to talk

about what was happening." Participant #6 talked about the influence that his mentor's modeling had on his learning about Adlerian encouragement. He said:

> I don't think I knew what it was. In my being mentored by Adlerians, I think what happened was they helped me. . . . Helped me shape a natural inclination to want to help and be curious. Helped me shaped that as a counseling technique, which is encouragement, through their own modeling, through teaching Adlerian concepts. I definitely think it's something to be shaped.

Participant #4 explained that he learned about encouragement from professors, and that he also continues to learn it from his interactions with his clients.

> I experienced encouragement from my major professors and even from my clients. 'This is really helpful to me.' Well, that's encouraging to hear that as a therapist. . . . I think experience, and, again, coaching myself to be encouraging, and good supervision helped with that. . . . I did a lot of self-supervision, and self-critique, and watched a lot of people. . . . Having good role models, to witness that, I think, is real important as well.

Other participants discussed ways that their training in other theories was enhanced by Adlerian theory. Participant #3 said:

> I think one of the nice things that happened to me early on was I got to go focus on behavior therapy. Operant conditioning. And began to learn the importance of positive reinforcement and how much difference that made in a kid's life or a person's life who was mentally ill, or mentally retarded, or developmentally disabled. There was an easy transition from that to encouragement. In fact, I see

them very similar. … Yes. I think by being encouraging, you are, in a sense,

reinforcing them and you build positive reinforcements.

Participant #15 said:

I have always been inclined towards humanistic values. Everybody is good by

nature. … the Adlerian theory provided that depth. Also, the guidelines, I guess. I

learned encouragement or social interest. I'm a very academically thinking

oriented person. So, of course, reading it, studying it, writing it. Also, the lived

experiences of encouragement.

Can be learned/improved. Participants noted that Adlerian encouragement is

something that can be learned, regardless of one's exposure or lack of exposure to

encouragement prior to learning about it. Overall, participants noted that there are many

methods and formats to learn about encouragement, but the methods most emphasized by

participants were experiential learning experiences, mentorship, and through learning

about oneself. Participants commented that over time they became more encouraging and

learned to offer more natural and more effective encouragement to their clients.

Participants stated that encouragement seemed to become integrated in their personhood

as a counselor, and some, into their overall personhood.

Learned. Nine participants added that Adlerian encouragement can be learned.

Participant #3 explained how someone can learn Adlerian encouragement.

I think, at first, people have to learn how to do it. There's a lot of different ways

you can do that. You can do that through your training, you do that through

monitoring what you said, like recording interviews and stuff like that, and going

back and thinking, 'Well, how else could I have handled it? What was the impact

that had on the other person?' You begin to just see how it impacts others. Teaching it helps, I think, because to teach it you see other people making discouraging remarks or not noticing things that seem to be important to the client.

Participant #5 said:

Like when I teach masters level students I see that they often are able to essentially do most theories without encouragement, because they're just trying to figure out "Okay, what are the techniques?" Once they get some experience and feedback, they realize, "Oh yeah, you really have to use encouragement."

Participant #5 added, "I think people who are learning it and maybe aren't naturally a warm person, there literally might be parts of encouragement where they literally have to practice." Participant #14 said that people can learn encouragement and become more skilled at it with experiential practice, including through encouragement-based connections that counselor have with their clients. Participant #4 said:

Let me say this. Rather than I think it could be taught, is I think it can be learned. . . . You can teach me some concepts and it's up to me to learn them. … I think it's the experience of the engagement and beginning to conceptualize those processes with learning. . . . I think you can teach about encouragement all day long, but people aren't going to learn it until they engage in that process. . . . I think that they need to experience it, too.

Participant #10 said that learning encouragement and being an encouraging person is a choice. Participant #16 said about learning encouragement:

There is nothing that people cannot learn because we all have it, we just need to learn to not to be afraid to use that and turn off the brain and turn on the heart and act on it. Yeah, absolutely. I don't think anybody's born with a fully developed capacity to do it and to use it but we're all born with an innate potentiality and then the rest is a process of learning, whether it's a formal learning or intuitive learning but it's definitely learning by practicing.

Improved. Twelve participants affirmed that their use of encouragement improved over time with practice. Participant #15 said, "My skill level definitely increased. I became more intentional. I knew what to look for." Participant #2 said, "So I think back, and I can remember telling myself, "Okay, remember to be tentative. Remember to be encouraging. Remember to focus on the effort they're putting in…. And so, if I think back to then and then look at now, it has become just part of who I am, I think. " Participant #6 said, "I think all of these Adlerian people that I'm thinking about, they are learners of humans. They are constantly trying to learn about other people." Participant #6 also said that encouragement becomes more about the personhood of the counselor. "I think as they learn more about themselves, they learn it. I'd say my graduate, my alumni who come back to me probably get it." Participant #4 added, "And so I think we, as therapists, need to experience encouragement as well as learn about it in order to be able to use it better."

Table 2

Emergent Themes and Sub-themes: Interview Question #2

Themes	Subthemes	Responses
Feel or Sense It	Interpersonal	9
	Spiritual	6
Intentionality and	Intentional	14
Awareness	Aware	10
	May not know	6
Client Change	Nonverbal	6
	Verbal	11
	Behavioral	10

Interview Question Two

The second research question was, "How do you know when you are practicing Adlerian encouragement with clients?" Most of the participants said that they know they are practicing encouragement because they are intentional about using it; however, most of them also said that over time encouragement became a natural part of their therapeutic flow and some of them said it has become integrated into their personhood. Participant #16 said:

Clearly up until I was probably about, oh, 45, 50 years old it had to be intentional, but it's been a long time since I've had any part of me that said, "Okay, now I have to do this," or, "Now I have to do that." . . . I do think that it becomes part of my therapeutic flow.

Thus, these participants explained that their intentionality is focused more on being an encouraging person than on simply looking for encouragement techniques to implement. Participant #3 said, "Yeah, I don't like to think intervention. When you start talking about

techniques and interventions, it's like something we, the superior person, doing to everybody else, you know? . . . It's more of a human to human encounter." The next most notable ways that participants said they know they are practicing encouragement is by the verbal and behavioral changes that they witness in their clients. Other ways of knowing named by participants is their personal experiences of awareness of self, of their clients' nonverbals, and awareness of a connection that they have with their clients. In addition to describing the ways in which they know that they are practicing encouragement, two of the participants added the importance of knowing when one is not being encouraging. Three themes emerged from research question two: (a) feel or sense it, (b) intentionality and awareness, and (c) client change.

Feel or sense it. The major theme, *feel it or sense it,* emerged in the participants' responses to question two. Participants said that they know that they are practicing Adlerian encouragement with clients because they can feel it or sense it when it happens. Participants described experiencing moments or times of an interpersonal connection with their clients. The two subthemes for feel it or sense it are: (a) interpersonal connection and (b) spiritual connection.

Interpersonal. Nine participants reported knowing that encouragement was happening because they experienced connectedness with their client, often described as a type of feeling. Participant #1 said:

> When I am doing clinical work, there come times when I feel very connected to my client, but also to the rest of the universe as well, and on occasions, my client will talk about some kind of sense of that connectedness as well. Those are the

kind of peak senses of encouragement. . . . I guess just to summarize; I know it because I feel connected. There's a certain feeling that attends that connectedness. Participant #6 said, "I could feel. I feel it. . . . One's transparency, one's compassion, one's authenticity, one's attunement can be felt by the other person and those are all indications." Participant #5 said:

But I would say, sometimes I know that I'm doing it when I feel a sense that I feel good, too. . . . I think sometimes when you're connecting with a person you might feel that sense of "Oh, I feel good. . . . So, it could be somewhat of an intuitive awareness of "Oh" or a conscious awareness, of like, "Oh, that felt good to be helpful to this person."

Participant #12 said, "If I feel positive, feel connected to the person. If I feel like we're getting somewhere, then I know I'm being encouraging." Participant #14 said, "I would say that I kind of share in the joy of that encouragement. It feels good, it feels good. I feel encouragement also. . . . I don't know how I could not feel encouraged if the client was encouraged." Participant #15 said:

That noticing becomes reward, I guess. Like it's a reminder, "Keep doing this. This works. It's very simple but it works." I think that the most rewarding part of having this click or this moment of encouragement and how it's taken . . . I think the most rewarding part is that deep sense of connection with another person.

Spiritual. Three participants described encouragement as bringing about a connection that is experienced as something similar to a spiritual connection. Three participants described encouragement as something that resonates with qualities such as faith, hope, love, and charity. Participant #1 described his encouragement experiences

with clients as varied; sometimes his clients are in need of encouragement in the form of a suggestion for an alternative solution to a problem while other times encouragement is experienced as a deep interpersonal connection with his client that sometimes his clients acknowledge, as well. He explained:

> So, my sense of encouragement and my sense of social interest overlaps a great deal with my spiritual life, my spiritual beliefs and experiences. . . . Encouragement in an Adlerian sense, because you are encouraging greater social interest. And to me, the foundation for social interest is that sense of being connected to one another that is spiritual. . . . Encouragement . . . at it's bottom, you are encouraging people to be more spiritual in the sense that when you're encouraging, you're encouraging people to be more connected with other people.

Participant #10 said, "I have a spiritual belief in Christianity. And so, in that realm, I also have that kind of encounter." Participant #2 said, 'So it's definitely emotional, it's definitely spiritual. It's certainly a mental exercise, too." Participants #11 and #16 related encouragement to the idea of faith, hope, and charity or love. Interviewee #11 said, "Saint Paul says there are three things that are important to life. Faith, hope, and he uses the word charity, which could also be translated, caring about others. Okay, there you go. Therapy and courage." Interview #16 said that she would not label encouragement as just spiritual because people experience encouragement in all of their being. She said, "The minute I start pulling things apart and saying, this is emotional and this is spiritual and this is cognitive, that's not Adler to me anymore. . . . And a whole is different and bigger than a sum of its parts. That's why I cannot see taking, I don't believe in pulling things

apart." She preferred to describe encouragement in a wholistic and more encompassing way by saying, "I have faith and I have hope and I have love, and that's probably it."

Intentionality and awareness. The major theme, *intentionality and awareness,* emerged in the participants' responses to question two. Participants talked about knowing that they are practicing Adlerian encouragement because they choose to be intentional with its use and/or they experience awareness that it is occurring or has occurred. Some of participants explained that their initial intentionality has, over time, become a natural encouragement flow. The three subthemes for intentionality and awareness are: (a) intentional, (b) aware, and (c) may not know.

Intentional. Fourteen of the participants described encouragement as something that they do intentionally or with intentionality and as something that is a part of who they are as encouraging counselors. Two participants said that encouragement has become for them something that they no longer have to do with intentionality because it has become so much a natural part of who they are. Participant #2 said:

> To me it's always an intentional, it's always purposeful, it's always intentional.
> And I'm sure that there are moments, because I've done it so much, and it's
> integral . . . Integral? That's the word. To the way that I work with people that I'm
> probably encouraging in other times, and just haven't said, "And there, and there,
> and there, and there," and kind of really pick them out.

Participant #4 said:

> So, yes, I had to recognize when it was happening. It was intentional … I don't
> think I have to think much about it anymore, other than it becomes a natural
> response, "Wow, that seems like it's a really important thing that you worked

really hard to do. Let's talk about that." Something along those lines. So, to say

that I consciously have to try to do it, I don't do that anymore. At least, I don't feel

like I do that…. But the evidence tells me that I'm still encouraging.

Participant #9 said, "I'm sure that in my work as a clinician it is much more intentional, but I think everyday encouragement . . . I would hope at this point in my life, I am more naturally encouraging." Participant #3 said, "I think when you start, it's more conscious, but it becomes a part of you and how you interact with people." Participant #8 said it is intentional because the end goal is to help them feel encouraged. Participant #15 explained that she believes that Adlerian encouragement is about being an encouraging person moreso than offering clients encouragement techniques. She explained that her desire to encourage clients comes from her core beliefs about people, including their innate goodness, so she is intentional about trying to have an authentic human to human encounter with them. She said:

> Questioning how I'm entering this relationship. How is this person, how are they
>
> relating to me? Maybe I'm missing the point. I'm trying to be encouraging here
>
> but that's not what they need. I guess, being mindful in that and noticing things in
>
> that relationship.

Participant #5 talked about specific ways that he is intentional about encouraging clients. He explained that he believes that he is an encouraging person in general; however, he is intentional about being therapeutically encouraging with clients in a way that is different than with friends or other people outside of counseling.

> I think sometimes, when I realize I'm intentionally being a certain way, because I
>
> might approach that person much differently than I would approach someone in

line at the supermarket, or something like that. So, I think sometimes I would

know I'm doing it when I'm making efforts to connect and to move towards the

person in a way, not that I'm fixing things for them, but when I'm trying to show

empathy or to connect through a collaborative discussion, asking, like when we

set goals together.

Participant #10 talked about being intentional with encouragement in specific ways with

her clients, particularly in building and maintaining a strong counseling relationship. She

provided an example of providing encouragement with a client by not engaging in a

power struggle. "So, intentionally, I value the relationship to go on more, and that would

be more important than who's right, who's wrong."

Aware. Ten participants said that one way they know that they are practicing

encouragement is because they are aware of what they are experiencing. Participant #10

said:

I just need to be self-aware . . . So, one is my own awareness of my potentially

discouraging attitudes, or actions. And the second layer will be to outreach with

intentionality to make sure things are perceived by my client in a safe way.

Participant #6 said that there is a level of attunement and self-awareness that is needed

for encouragement. She explained:

I think I'm grounded and present. I think that's one way that we can be authentic. I

have turned off as much as I can of the world outside me and in my brain to be

authentically present with this person, which in itself is encouragement.

Participant #12 explained that he stays in touch with how he feels because

encouragement is emotional and "if you just pay attention to how you think, you miss a

big portion of how you're going to help other people or encourage them." Participant #8

said that he knows that he is practicing encouragement when he is aware that he is

bringing an attitude of encouragement to his client. "I think I know when I have the

desire and attitude to support the client through with whatever they're struggling."

Participant #5 talked his desire to be aware of his movements towards his clients to

ensure that they are encouraging. He explained:

> And I think it's just being able to be aware of how that looks in the moment with
>
> each person in that it's always going to give them, typically, the benefit of the
>
> doubt in approaching them with social interest. That I just may tweak it or vary it
>
> based on the conceptualization of their movement.

Participant #13 said that her goal is to be aware of how her clients are progressing

through sessions, looking for what areas of growth they might need more encouragement

in. She said that she knows that she is being encouraging because she is monitoring those

things. She explained specifically:

> So, if I'm pointing out assets, if I'm highlighting progress or effort, if I'm
>
> modeling the courage to be imperfect, if I'm not doing for kids what they can do
>
> for themselves, if I'm creating teachable moments or capitalizing on teachable
>
> moments. All of those things, if I'm paying attention to them, I'm aware I'm doing
>
> the skill.

Participant #8 said that he uses his awareness of experiences of encouragement in his

clients to help them notice them as well so that they can benefit more fully from them.

> I can see the effect it's having on the client. And often, not always, but often when
>
> I'm aware of that happening, I will actually stop for a moment and say, "How does

that feel for you right now? What are you aware of?" And so, I want to kind of

help the client capture that insight or that awareness. Don't always do that, but

that's what I try to do.

Participant #15 said, "Yes. So, there's that noticing yourself. It's awareness of your own

values and beliefs. I think that encouragement emerges from those values and beliefs …

It's learning, also, it's awareness." Some Participants described it as occurring on a

spectrum of knowing or that often it just flows out of themselves naturally. Participant #5

said, "I think sometimes I'm very aware that I'm doing it. Other times, it's just like an

extension of who I am." Participant #3 said, ", When I'm not, I don't think I'm doing very

good therapy, so there's probably days I'm off, that's for sure." Participant #6 said that she

has learned to be aware of the times when she feels like she is not as encouraging as she

usually is at other times. She said:

I know when I'm not. When I'm distracted. When I'm tired. When I haven't

grounded myself before a session. Can I still be encouraging? Yes, but in terms of

the kind of encouragement that I think Adler was talking about, it's probably not

happening as well.

Other participants talked being aware of their encouragement in terms of how it might be

affected by their mood, level of distraction, and physical and emotional energy levels

before and during client sessions. Participant #15 said, "You cannot be an encouraging

person 24/7 with high intensity all the time. If you're hungry, if you're stressed, if you're

anxious about something, if you're not well-nutritioned it will be a little harder to notice

the other person." Participant #12 explained that he believes that part of being

encouraging includes body awareness in order to tune into what the counselor and the client is experiencing in session. He said:

> Yeah, because as Dan Siegel says, the same neural connection that you use to understand yourself, you're using those same connections to understand other people. So, if you're unified in those two, then you're fine. Everything's moving okay. But if you're not unified, you get that feeling in your body, it's not right. Tight in my chest, tight in my throat, stomach, you know. There are negatives going on here so there are negatives going on over there, too.

Participant #6 said that she has learned to tune into her physiology and doing so increases her awareness of being encouraging. She said:

> I think for me, I think our body physiology is a consequence of giving encouragement. It happens because we are in an encouraging place. But I think it also can direct us to be encouraging. If I'm getting frustrated with a client, I notice where I hold frustration in my body. I feed that place in my body with empathy … and my whole body is then encouraging.

Participant #10 said that she has learned to know herself better throughout her counseling career and that she has become an increasingly encouraging person, both encouraging others and being encouraged. She explained that being aware of herself is her way of knowing that she is being encouraging.

> I trust that's what I'm doing. And what I'm doing is in alignment with encouragement. So, it's self-knowledge. So, I need to *know* myself first before I *know* if I'm doing encouragement with the client. So, know myself will be my first response.

May not know. Six participants acknowledged that even though they often know that they are being encouraging, there times when they may not know if they are encouraging their clients. Three participants said that they often realize it more when they review video of their counseling sessions. Participant #5 said, "And I think sometimes I'm doing it and I don't realize I'm doing it at all, it's just on autopilot too." Participant #16 said, "I generally don't know anything that I'm practicing while I'm doing it. It's generally when I look at it on video." Participant #16 said that there are times when she might notice encouragement, but that she does not look for it because she believes that her part in the relationship is to offer encouragement and she leaves the receiving of it to her clients. She said, "We may not know. Clients come and they leave, it's a temporary arrangement. We may not witness when they're doing better. When they're doing better they might not come to see us anymore." Therefore, she said:

> I have no idea. I don't know. And I'm okay with that. I don't think it's for me to know. I think you just, you bring your whole being into the process and you like the client for what they are and you believe that they can do things and you're happy for them when they're successful and that's pretty much it.

Client change. The major theme, *client change,* emerged in the participants' responses to question two. When answering the question about how they know that they are practicing Adlerian encouragement with clients, participants talked about being able to notice that encouragement is happening when they see movement that indicates some type of client change. Participants described witnessing nonverbal, verbal, and behavioral changes in their clients. Participant #6 said, "It changes when you see and experience different things happening. Thinking, speaking, body physiology. Yeah, that would, I

think, be some pretty decent evidence of encouragement." Participant #15 described it as:

> It can be a shift in how they relate to you or how they look at themselves. There's only the shift towards positive. Maybe it's un-stuckness. Maybe it's better problem- solving. Maybe it's actually moving from one point to another or doing something. That's how I know there was encouragement and it worked. That there's a shift in attitudes and behaviors and thinking and feeling.

The three subthemes for client change are: (a) nonverbal, (b) verbal, and (c) behavioral.

Nonverbal. Six of the participants stated that they know that they are being encouraging when they witness nonverbal changes in their clients. Participant #10 said that the nonverbals signs may reveal more than the verbals. "Nonverbally, this person right in front of me, what am I listening, what I'm gaining from the nonverbals? I trust the nonverbals more than the verbal response from the client." Participant #9 explained that she watches her client nonverbals:

> And, you know, as an Adlerian counselor, clinician, you're looking for the recognition reflexes. You're looking for the broad smile that starts to come over when you kind of nail it. "Yeah, you know what? Maybe it wasn't that bad after all." So, I think that's kind of an important piece of it, as well.

Participant 6 explained, "I think of the recognition reflex. When I'm being encouraging, . . . and somebody shows me a recognition reflect, you know it's working, right?"

Participant #14 said, "I can often times witness people make a change in posture with my client if they're feeling encouraged . . . Or relaxed, just a little more relaxed." Participant

#15 said, "Usually their facial expressions are different. A more relaxed attitude that you can observe." Participant #7 said:

> So, when people are kind of just, when they're feeling, and those feelings are coming out in their nonverbals and in their words and in the way that they're processing, I know that what I've created is an environment of encouragement. …
>
> I think too it's just a willingness to be with self in a way that's uncomfortable.

Interviewee #14 said, "You know something's shifting. That's how you know it's working, when something is shifting or . . . something is shifting or someone is allowed to sit in their pain longer than what they've been able to tolerate before." Participants explained that the nonverbal evidence of encouragement that they experience with their clients may also be followed up with verbal confirmation that encouragement has occurred.

Verbal. Eleven of the participants said that in addition to experiencing nonverbal evidence of encouragement from their clients, they also know that they are practicing encouragement with their clients when clients give them verbal affirmation in the form of feedback or when they hear something more positive in their clients' verbal communication about their situation. Participant #2 said:

> The feedback that I get most often is, "That was just so me. And I'd forgotten I had that strength." Or, "I'd forgotten that I had that ability to think this way." Or, "Oh, I didn't even know this about myself'."

Participant #3 said he knows that clients have been encouraged when they have "a better idea of what's going on in their life, what's keeping them motivated, or what could motivate them. New ideas." Participant #3 added:

Yeah, I've had people just after doing that say, "Man, it's no wonder I'm screwed

up. I never thought about how all that fit together." It's kind of like, "Okay, we're

on our way. We've got some things to look at next week when you come back." . .

. The encouragement comes from they get the ah-ha experience, very often.

Participant #5 said, "For me, sometimes I know that I'm doing it or I'm aware when I'm

doing it when a client responds in a way where they even say, 'I can tell that you really

care about seeing me getting better'." Participant #7 said:

When they're communicating a sense of hope about something. When they are

communicating a willingness to either think about something differently. So, self-

reflection, engaging in self-reflection. Or if they're communicating a desire to do

something differently that's connected to their goals.

Participant #15 said:

Sometimes the thinking changes. Their thinking or their responses are a little

more flexible. . . . The feeling becomes less heavy. More manageable for them.

It's a little different. Sometimes it's very subtle. You notice it immediately, that it's

a little flexible, It's a little different.

Participant #11 said, "Sometimes just like you can see the light bulb go on or sometimes

a slight movement from, 'I can't do that to, 'Yeah, maybe I could do that.' Or, a less

absolute stance. Slightly more flexibility, yeah. Sometimes laughter." Participant #8 said:

And so how do I know it's working? Usually when the client starts embracing

more feelings in the session, they start to open up more. They start to be more

real. And in many ways, they start to gain awareness and insight into what's going

on in their life. . . . And many times, you'll see some more movement in the therapy when encouragement is working.

Participant #14 said that clients will "report a little more empowerment, and then oftentimes that will translate to then the next time I see them, they will have implemented some of these things." Participant #13 said, "There is the impact of the client, so if my clients get more, feel like they have more choices, when my clients become more optimistic and less discouraged." Participant #8 said that verbal confirmation from a client was when the client was able to talk about how his change felt good.

It was an example of encouragement in the session, highlighting his own movement that he became aware of, and even celebrating that movement that he took. It felt good, not just because it made the relationship a little better, but because he actually felt like he was giving something to the relationship.

Behavioral. Ten participants reported knowing that they were practicing encouragement when they observed or their client reported a positive behavioral change. Participant #13 said, "And quite often not just their internal, not just what they're thinking or whatever, but also what their behavior is." Participant #14 said, "It could be anything from making a change to solving a problem in a different way, changing something about their circumstance. It's about changing something about either how they do things, or trying to change their situation." Participant #3 clarified:

When I say positive, it may be that they may end up angry as they leave even because maybe we've reached something that they realize they've blaming everybody else, and it's really themselves, and now they want to blame me and

walk out; but if they walk out and do something different, that may have been an encouraging action.

Participant #7 said, "So if I don't have to challenge them, they're challenging themselves and they're taking risks in their life to achieve their goals. Then they're encouraged, and I know that I'm doing my job." Participant #9 said, "You move towards other people and outside of yourself, that you might be able to recalibrate, a little bit, your perspective on your particular depression, your particular circumstance." Participant #15 said, "The mood shifted. It was more positive or less heavy. Then action. Instead of sitting and feeling sorry for herself she took action in doing something she enjoys doing. That's the shift I'm talking about." Participant #13 explained that she notices if clients begin to take more risks, even without a guarantee of success.

Does this kid feel more able to cultivate relationships, which would be *connect*. Do they feel like they belong and they're significant and they make a contribution - *count*? Do they start to own their abilities or their capacities? That would be *capable*. Monitor those things and if those things are going up, then I think, "Oh, encouragement is having the impact that I wanna have."

Participant #11 said, "We know by what people do with it. As my mother used to say, or my grandmother anyway, the proof is in the pudding, because they have to do something to move their life forward or not." Participant #16 said "It's really uncovered in action and it's just that simple. They're getting their butt off the chair and go do something."

Table 3

Emergent Themes and Sub-themes: Interview Question #3

Themes	Subthemes	Topics	Responses
Flexibility and Creativity	Encouragement process	Dreikurs' four phases	16
		Dreikurs' modified	13
	Counseling relationship		16
	Strengths and resource finding		16
	Motivate		9
	Re-education and teaching		9
	Skills and techniques	Skill	10
		Technique	7
		Not a technique	6
Theoretical Tenets and Personal Beliefs	Support empowerment		11
	Human worth		8
	Hope		11
	Safety		6
	Discouragement		10
	Avoid discouragement		8

Interview Question Three

The third research question is: "What specifically are you doing in sessions with clients that you consider to be Adlerian encouragement?" When answering this question, the participants provided details about how they encourage their clients through their personal counseling processes. The theme of flexibility and creativity emerged from the participants' descriptions. Participants talked about encouragement as a process that is both flexible and creative. Participants also discussed aspects of their counseling process wherein they encourage their clients from their beliefs in Adlerian theoretical tenets. Two

themes emerged from research question three: (a) flexibility and creativity, and (b) encouraging theoretical tenets.

Flexibility and creativity. The major theme, *flexibility and creativity,* emerged in the participants' responses to question three. When discussing what they specifically do with clients in counseling sessions that is Adlerian encouragement, all of the participants described using encouragement throughout their counseling process in flexible and creative ways. Most of the participants talked about following a modified version of Dreikurs' (Dreikurs, 1967) four phases of Adlerian counseling and some participants described their own processes. All of the participants placed emphasis on building and maintaining an encouragement-based relationship throughout counseling. Within their processes, participants discussed the inclusion of a strengths-finding process and named the exploration of early recollections, personal stories, and/or style of life as methods of increasing courage and motivation for change. Also, participants talked about encouragement as it related to using re-education, and encouragement-focused skills and techniques. The seven subthemes for flexibility and creativity are: (a) encouragement process, (b) counseling relationship, (c) strengths-finding, (d) motivate, (e) re-educate, and (f) skills and techniques.

Encouragement process. All of the participants described the Adlerian counseling process as one that includes encouragement throughout. Participant #4 said, "I guess I start with a very pragmatic view that encouragement is about process. . . . People need encouragement along the way and that it's not all goal focused, that it is actually process focused. Change is really process focused." Participant #7 described the way that she views encouragement to be a process of practice. She said:

I think encouragement is a process of practice. And that practice could be things

that you do for yourself, and your self-awareness and your sense of connectedness

to who you are and finding a sense of meaning in life. But also, it's practice in

how you connect to others and how you contribute, and feeling like what you're

doing is actually useful. . . . It's just a foundational part of the counseling process.

Participant #8 also described encouragement as moving through the entire counseling

process. He said:

Yeah. I think it's throughout the process. Like I said, I don't often specifically talk

about just encouragement as a word, but I do talk about the fact that it takes

tremendous courage to be able to move in this direction. So yeah, I think that, I

would say the whole process is an encouragement process. . . . it doesn't happen

overnight. I look at the whole process of counseling as an encouragement process

by which basically we are coming alongside the client's journey, supporting

what's useful in their attempts to cope with the problems, and helping them to

make adjustments as needed.

Participant #2 said, "I think it's, again, can be inserted in any phase of counseling, in any

moment in a counseling process where you want to offer that motivation, or where you

want to offer that sense of belonging." Participant #3 summarized by saying:

It's kind of like that's just what the process is about. . . . Adler used to say every

time a client leaves your office, you hope he or she has gained something from the

exchange. Something is going to make them a little bit braver, a little bit bolder in

terms of pursuing their goals.

Dreikurs' four phases. When describing what specifically participants do in counseling sessions with clients that is encouragement, 13 participants said that they follow Dreikurs' four phases of counseling or a modified version of it. Regardless of the process that each of the participants use, all of the participants described the encouragement-focused relationship as not a phase, but rather as the part of the counseling process that is attended to throughout. The ways that participants described their processes included either flexibility, creativity, or both. Additionally, participant #1 explained the non-linear nature of Dreikurs' phases by saying:

> I think that Dreikurs' four phases are as good as any that I've heard, recognizing that it's not a linear one, two, three, four, done, but it's often a one, two, three, two, three, two, three, one, two, three because it's a very useful process to think about for each problem area or distress or mistaken belief, but they don't all . . . all of the kind of sources of distress don't dissolve instantly at the same time. Those four processes, I think, are very useful.

Participant #3 explained that he prefers to see the phases as processes that are occurring in a sometimes, overlapping fashion. He said:

> I look at the four phases not as phases, but as processes that we have to attend to. There is a relationship process; there is an analysis process; there is kind of feedback process or explaining the client to themselves, if you would; then there's re-education. If you watch good Adlerians at work, you'll see all four processes happening possibly in the first session.

Participant #14 said she uses encouragement in the four phases but that they are not structured on a specific timeline. She said:

And so, I do go through those stages, but can't say it takes 10 weeks to do this and 10 weeks to do that, so I just don't work that strategically or systematically, but honestly, I would say that I probably use encouragement at every stage.

Participant #8 talked about how he adjusts the four phases based on the different kinds of clients that he works with.

And again, every client is different and I do couples therapy as well as individual therapy. And sometimes I work with adolescents, so obviously it may look different depending on what kind of therapy and who I'm working with.

Participant #7 described his process as:

It's just the relationship building, helping them to gain a sense of insight, and then helping them to feel like they can be and do the things . . . They can be the person they want to be and do the things that they'd like to do in their life in a way that's going to help them to feel a sense of hope in who they are, and find a sense of meaning and purpose in what they're doing. I think those things come a little bit later, but the relationship has to come first with the counselor.

Interview #9 said, "I don't think I follow the four steps exactly. You know, because it kind of depends. But that being said, in terms of encouragement, definitely in the building of the relationship. I'm very intentional about using encouragement."

Participant #1 follows the four phases but emphasizes the co-creation of the formulation, the problem list, and the goal list throughout, as an additional way to encourage a relationship that is equal and respectful and to encourage the client to make choices so he or she will remain engaged and empowered. He explained:

> I tend to be much more active about engaging and recognizing that the process of
>
> co-creating the assessment formulation and plan is in itself therapeutic. Engaging
>
> in that process and negotiating it, and reflecting on it and coming back to it is
>
> encouragement . . . But that whole process of engaging in a dialogue about
>
> yourself, that's encouraging and therapeutic.

Participant #8 follows the four phases in a process that he refers to as an encouragement model, using "e" words to emphasize what he is doing: engaging, enlightening, envisioning, and encouraging. He engages clients throughout and explores their lifestyle without pathologizing how they have used it. Envisioning is "helping them see the benefits of change if they were to have the courage to take some risk and do something differently, and tweak the lifestyle a little bit." He added:

> And so obviously that might look a little bit more like encouragement because it
>
> is actually encouraging them to, in a sense, take a different path than the path that
>
> they've been doing all their life, which is lifestyle. So, to me, and this is what I
>
> consider probably the biggest part of encouragement is helping them to envision
>
> what change could do for them, and that it's possible that they could actually do
>
> things differently and get different outcomes in their life.

While using the four phases, Participant #2 explained that she integrates metaphors into sessions and the 10 scales found in the BASIS-A in order to identify client strengths, using encouragement throughout. "And so, the way that I use that has, I think, encouragement kind of all throughout it." Participant #11 described using a subjective and an objective orientation to get to know his clients and their lifestyles so that he can discover what aspects are in need of encouragement.

So, I'm going to start with what Dreikurs called a *subjective* orientation. I'm interested in how the person sees themselves. . . . So, you simply kind of adopt the idea that the client is teaching you about her or his life and that you just get curious about it, . . . along the way they're going to be telling me, if I'm listening carefully, about how they think about things and how they feel about things, and those things are going to essentially give me a maladaptive pattern. That is, they're going to start to show where the mistakes are in how the person approaches self, others and life.

Following the objective orientation Participant #11 said:

At the end of which I am hopeful that I can see very clearly the challenges in this person's life, the mistakes in how they approach things, but also their strengths, their assets, their resources, which are going to become foundational in helping them build courage.

Participant #15 said that "regardless of what I do and with who I do that, strength-based early recollections is what I do consistently with everybody . . . for strategies and strengths" because clients often lack an awareness that they have strengths, which leads to discouragement.

Counseling relationship. All of the participants view the Adlerian counseling relationship as an encouragement-focused relationship. Participants talked about why they use encouragement to build an encouragement relationship with their clients. Participant #9 said, "You have to have that relationship to be able to encourage them. … because encouragement happens at a relational level and that is critical." Participant #10 said that encouragement is the foundation of the relationship. "It is, yeah. It's ground zero

required before we construct the, build the co-relationship." Participant #14 said, "How important is encouragement in a therapeutic relationship? I think it's highly important. I don't think I could foster an alliance with a client without encouragement." Participant #5:

> Lambert's study shows the therapeutic alliance in a relationship accounts for 30% of the variance of change. So, for me, if we're talking about specifically using it to build the relationship, I would say it's ridiculously important. And so, for me, a way to build the relationship is through the attitude of encouragement, whether that's direct words or even subtle things that occur.

Participant #7 explained the importance of building connection in the relationship from the start:

> There has to be a connected foundation built. I don't think you can see somebody every month and that happen. I think you have to see somebody a lot at the beginning to build a useful working foundation, a therapeutic alliance that's going to be encouraging and helpful, that they can feel supported by.

Echoing the importance of investing in the relationship described by Participant #7, Participant #4 said:

> It's kind of what Rogers talked about, and some sense, that idea of total engagement and really investing in that relationship. Well, encouragement, recognizing people's potential in their contribution for growth, is an important aspect of that and helps build that relationship.

Other participants discussed specifically what they are doing when they are using encouragement to build and maintain a relationship. Participant #3 said, "I try to meet people where they're at, that's probably the first thing." Participant #8 said:

> I'm engaging with the client to really try to understand what the client has experienced and how they're experiencing things, their viewpoint, their private logic. And validating their experience of whatever they're going through. . . . So, to me that's the first part of encouragement. It is a willingness to come alongside.

Participant #5 stated:

> With specific things I'm doing. I think seeing the person in the waiting room and walking up to them and having an attitude or a posture of interest to meet this person. So, it could be in my facial expression or inflection in just the first encounter we're meeting. In terms of encouragement, I'm trying to be warm. . . . it's starting the relationship. . . . And I'm immediately attending to the other person and how they might even be feeling . . . I would say that I'm doing things to build the relationship while asking standard intake questions."

Participant #8 said:

> But the first stage is I'm showing encouragement simply by showing genuine curiosity into their story and their perspective. I think that's showing encouragement because I often found that most people in their life have not shown enough curiosity. I try to show that everything they want to communicate about, I'm genuinely interested and I want to know more. That's the beginning point.

Participant #12 said:

The first thing is to help them feel understood. And that is attentiveness, body

language, tone of voice, matching, body posture, matching tone of voice, that kind

of thing. Staying calm, that kind of thing. Which gives them a feeling of

confidence that they're with somebody that's stable.

Participant #12 also said:

You're able to pick up on how the client is feeling. You're tuning into how they're

feeling and then adjusting what you do and say based on what they're feeling."

Participant #3 said, "I think it's really listening, it's really being present with who

the person is and being there to hear whatever it is that they need to explore, too.

Participant #6 said:

The first that comes to my mind is unconditional positive regard, authenticity,

genuineness, transparency. You know, I think for me, it's also compassion. That

may not be a purest Adlerian thought, but as I've kind of made Adlerian my own,

I have found that I'm able to naturally communicate compassion from my heart,

and that fits, for me, into the theory.

Strengths and resource finding. All 16 of the participants said that noticing and

pointing out to clients' strengths-based aspects of their lives and stories is one of the

things they specifically do in counseling sessions with clients that is encouragement.

Participants used terms such as *noticing* and *acknowledging client efforts, strategies,*

strengths, successes, assets, resources and courage to capture the idea of bringing these

qualities to their clients' attention. Some participants reported specifically using

Adlerian-based assessments and inventories such as Early Recollections (Participants #2,

#3, #8, #9, #11, #12, and #16), the BASIS-A, (Participant #2), the lifestyle assessment

(Participants #14 and #16), and the client's subjective and objective interviews
(Participant #11) as tools for finding these client qualities. Many of the participants
reported strength-finding not only in the assessment phase, but throughout all of
counseling. Participant #8 said:

> We look at individuals, in particular I'm talking about clients here, and they're
> coming in with all kinds of challenges, and stressors, and difficulties, that we first
> of all see them as individuals who have strengths and resources and who have
> already found ways to try their best effort to cope with what they're going
> through.

Participant #11 explained:

> I think they have the hope that we can help them find the resources within
> themselves, to muster up the courage to move forward with life, and essentially
> when I think of Adlerian encouragement I'm thinking that I am entering into a
> relationship with someone in which at the moment their courage seems damaged.
> And I need to help them rediscover it and put it to good use.

Participant #8 said:

> For example, a person that's been feeling depressed or discouraged who doesn't
> feel like they have much to offer. And certainly, we're trying to work through
> helping them better cope with the experiences that may have led to the depression.
> But part of that is helping them see the strengths and the abilities and the
> resources, and the, I like to use the word gifts a lot, that they have that they can
> give back in relationships in society.

Participant #12 said:

> I use early memories a lot when people are stuck and I can't quite get behind it. I
> use the early memories to get what's behind it and then they can begin to see
> what's behind it. So, they have a totally different view of it and themselves. That's
> an extremely encouraging interaction. It's therapeutic.

Participant #2 said she also recognizes her client's strength at the first meeting. She says:

> It takes a lot of courage to come in and ask somebody to help you with things that
> aren't going well in your life, to let somebody in and be vulnerable in that way, to
> me, takes a lot of courage. So, clients really appreciate that, and you can kind of,
> at least I can see when I say that a sense of relief comes over their face. Or they
> smile sometimes and say, "Wow. I really do have courage. This is good for me."
> It's like the pat on the back they can do for themselves.

Participant #2 said, "So for me, the practical side is taking, really taking the strengths that
you find or that I would find in that BASIS-A and ERs and turning them in to specific
encouragement for that client." Participant #6 gave an example of how she helped a client
identify his strengths. "We want to know the details. Asking the details in a gentle voice.
Also, noting when things were going well for him, noting his courage to tell his wife.
Pointing out moments of courage." Participant #5 talked about being strategic about
helping clients see their strengths.

> Intentionally asking about strengths later on, because if I ask them about their
> strengths really early, then they may be able to say "Oh, well I don't have any."
> And then, I don't know anything about them. All I know is that they showed up to
> work on something, so I can talk about that. But if I hold off on asking that
> question, and then they said, towards the end of the interview, "Well, I don't have

any." And then I can say, "Would it be okay if I told you a few of the strengths

that I heard that you have?"

Participant #5 then explained, "And I'm not avoiding what's not going well, but I'm

helping them be aware of 'Okay, there's some strengths here that might actually help us

in the therapy process'." Participant #8 said:

> And so, as the helper, I want to acknowledge the efforts and even the successes
>
> they already have done just to get by so far, and then also validate the difficulties
>
> that they're currently facing. And through the process of the supportive
>
> counseling, to help envision the benefits of change if they were to alter their
>
> current response to those challenges.

Some participants said that they help clients identify these features by reframing

situations or stories of their clients' lives. Participant #5 explained that using reframes is

a way to present a nonjudgmental perspective of a client situation. Participant #3

described reframing as:

> It's a major reframe, in a sense, of some things. In some sense, that's also part of
>
> it, but it's like looking at your strengths rather than your weaknesses, framing
>
> things in a way that gives you power, that gives you an awareness that you are in
>
> charge of your life, and you are in charge of some of these decisions that you're
>
> making even though you don't realize that you're the one that's keeping you in
>
> place.

Participant #9 explained, "All of that comes from an Adlerian belief in equal strengths in

people's abilities rather than focusing on their weaknesses." Participant #12 explained:

It becomes very encouraging, because it's been a lifetime of never trusting anyone … it's a life pattern. "I think I do just look for the reason not to trust someone. Oh my gosh." But they don't feel blamed and stupid. Cause you're basing it on some rationale from the past. Rather than, "You don't trust anybody and you've never trusted anyone. So, of course you're going to have all these problems in your life, what an idiot!" I mean, you know . . . You're reframing the problem.

Participant #14 said:

I think through the lifestyle assessment, if there can be an understanding of how that pattern developed, but again I always like to talk about how that might work for them. I try to relabel a lot at that particular time, in a way to help decrease safeguarding devices and help them to explore new ways.

Participants said that encouragement is always looking through a strengths-based lens. Participant #2 said, "So it's more about I notice you, I see you, I see the effort, I see you trying. To me, that's encouragement." Participant #15 said, "It's more about noticing strength. "What I'm hearing is that you want to solve this problem. But I'm hearing that you tried five things that shows your perseverance." So, noticing their efforts and their strengths." Participant #6 said, "Pointing out moments of courage."

Motivate. When talking about what counselors specifically do with clients that is encouragement, nine participants talked about using encouragement to motivate. Participant #4 said that encouragement is "fundamental to being human, it's a way to relate, it's a way to motivate and to come together to create a greater community. It's a way for us to live together, in some sense." Participant #8 said:

The hardest part of counseling is not knowing what change needs to happen and how they could change, the harder part is to motivate them to change. And so, a lot of times, what we're trying to do is I think helping them envisioning the benefits of change so that they're willing to give up doing the very things that they've already learned how to do very well, which is their coping strategy.

Participant #8 added:

And so, a lot of times what I think really motivates change is what I call, I call it a corrective relational experience with the client and the counselor. And that is where the client begins to make the change first in the therapy session. And as they talk about things that they previously didn't feel like they were willing to talk about, as they embrace feelings that they previously weren't willing to embrace, as they start to move in more assertive directions, they're usually going to do that in the safety of the therapeutic relationship first. And if we can highlight that movement that has occurred and get the client to process, how was that? How did you do that?

Participant #2 said that she uses encouraging words.

Hopefully motivating. Helping the person who's hearing them to feel good about themselves, to feel like they matter, to feel like they're capable, to build up self-esteem. That sense that I can do this. When I walk away from that person, I want them to feel I can do this.

Participant #3 described encouragement as "recognizing this individual and what their strivings are, encouraging them to strive for better things in their lives, reach their goals."

Participant #5 talked about integrating motivational interviewing when encouraging clients to take a risk.

> So, for me, that motivational interviewing, very much, is theoretically and technically consistent with individual psychology. My use of motivational interviewing is very significant. So, for me, I would say that's still a form of encouragement by just asking people about their motivation and seeing what obstacles may get in the way and using that approach in the goal setting and in the maintenance of therapy is also a subtle way of encouragement, I would say.

Some participants said that they try to motivate their clients not just by pointing out their strengths and assets, but also by holding them accountable because it encourages follow-through. Participant #9 said:

> Although encouragement has a very warm feel to it, sometimes there is a level of Adlerian encouragement that is more like discipline. It's more like a rod, the shepherd's crook, so to speak. Trying to say, "Point your attention over here. Think about moving over here." Kind of like what a shepherd does with his sheep to kind of guide them in a direction. And sometimes therapeutically, that might not, and paradoxically, it might be and it might not be what a client wants to hear, all at the same time.

Participant #13 said that she holds clients accountable by continuing to encourage them to find ways to do things they are capable of doing. Participant #3 explained that sometimes motivation can come as the result of being challenged within the safety of the relationship. "Sometimes what is encouraging is a challenge. Then giving them the

strength over the next maybe few weeks of meeting that challenge…. To follow through and to make it work." Participant #3 said:

> In one sense, it's saying I'm paying attention to what you're saying; in another sense, I'm saying, you don't make sense and I understand why you're confused, you know? And at the same time, I realize after I do that I have to make sure that I'm building that relationship again…. giving them some positive validation, positive reinforcement in a sense, for sharing that with me.

Participant #6 said.

> A gentle challenge, and that's me being authentic in presenting my responses and thoughts. I think that in the context of that, you do communicate encouragement, because on one hand, you're expressing, "I really care about you. Let me help you. Let me encourage you to think about this in another way." I do that from a place of non-judgment, which can be a very new experience for some people who are not used to authentic communication in their family systems. … I don't like the word challenging, but I'm nudging. There are thoughts in my mind saying, "This person must need a little push." That is encouragement. But I'm nudging this in a compassionate, authentic, present, I'm fully there, place.

> ***Re-education and teaching.*** Nine of the participants described re-education or teaching clients as something that they specifically do in sessions with client that is encouragement. Participant #1 asserted, "I would say education is a major intervention in Adlerian counseling and therapy." He said:

> I think if we say that it is encouraging to give people options, to give people . . . one way that you can give people options is just to educate them. … Just that

experience is encouraging, but it is educational. There is this possibility. That's an

educational intervention where you're just giving somebody information and

allowing them to make choices about what they want to do with this new

information.

Sometimes education can mean helping a client to learn something new about him or

herself. Participant #9 said:

And so, encouragement is definitely a tool of education. You're educating the

client about themselves. And Adler talked about translating English back into

English for the patient. Because it could be a blind spot that they have or it might

be something that they can't see in themselves that we can illuminate.

Participant #12 said, "Because, you can use that learning to help them understand

themselves.… Cause not being able to handle life is extremely discouraging, life is

horrifying. So, if you teach people, you're really teaching people how to handle life."

Participant #8 said, "Sometimes that encouragement is about learning to accept things, to

embrace all feelings including sadness and emotions that they typically wanted to avoid.

So that's part of the process." Participant #7 uses education to help a client develop a skill

that is needed to overcome a personal or systemic barrier. Sometimes education is in the

form of teachable moments. Participant #5 said, "Even if it fell flat on its face, providing

the encouragement by saying 'Hey, you gave it your best shot. Let's try to talk about what

you learned from that'." Participant #13 said that she capitalizes on teachable moments.

Then I sometimes use the thing that happened as a teachable moment, which

would mean I might say, "Maybe we can figure out a different way to do it so it'll

do what you want." Or, "What do you think went wrong with it that next time you would try that, you would do differently?"

Skills and techniques. When describing specifically what they do in counseling sessions related to encouragement and types of counseling interventions, participants described skills and techniques. Some of the participants stressed that skills and techniques do not work without the encouraging presence of the counselor, so they must work together. Participant #15 explained:

> Also, it's a set of skills. Without the core values, or without this core presence, the skills will not work. Without skills, or without doing encouragement, your way of being encouraging is not going to be communicated. It's not going to make much change. They both have to operate simultaneously.

Participant #15 described this idea more fully:

> The way I see Adlerian encouragement is that it's basically two different processes. One, it's a way of being. It's one's presence with other people. It is your way of being. Your way of communicating. Your way of perceiving yourself and other people. Your general movements in life in relation to others . . . The second aspect of encouragement is this communication part. That's the specific things, specific skills, specific techniques you use to be a more encouraging person.

Participant #10 explained that encouragement has two layers: who the counselor is and what the counselor does. She said that clients might use their courage as a result of simply experiencing the being of the counselor who cultivates an environment that is safe and trusting for a client to take risks to explore him or herself inward or outward. At the same time, the counselor might do something specific, which she described as a

technique. Participant #10 stated, "I truly believe that we can give courage, we could, by probably the techniques, or by my own attitudes, or just with my own being we can give."

Skill. Ten participants described skill that is involved in practicing Adlerian encouragement, which includes intuitively knowing when and how to offer encouragement. Participants stated that through learning and practice counselors can become more skilled at using encouragement therapeutically over time. Participant #8 said that encouragement begins and comes from an attitude but that it can be called a skill, also, as when knowing when the specific moments of needed encouragement occur.

As far as whether it's a skill or a technique, I think there are given moments in sessions when there is a strong need for encouragement. So, in a moment like that, I think you might be using an intervention to highlight the courage it's taking at that very moment to do that. So, there are times where you specifically bring focus to the need for encouragement.

Participant #5 said, "I could see it being a skill. I think of it more attitudinally." Participant #15 said "Your verbal comments. Your nonverbals. Specific techniques. Those are the skill parts." Participant #3 provided a specific example by saying:

But there is also, there's some skill in it. You know, there is a skill in seeing strengths in weakness. Someone comes in and they've been depressed for years. There are still some things that they can do and can do adequately. They've made other changes in their lives and we have to tap into what those were and how they did it, because they've got within them that resource, they just don't know they have it. So, that's a skill part, I think.

Participant #14 explained that encouragement has a subjective nature in that each client possess a unique style regarding the kinds of encouragement he or she might better receive, providing another example of the skill aspect of encouragement. She said:

> This is where it's helpful to understand a little bit about the person's style because sometimes if we're encouraging and we encourage a certain process, we can make the error of encouraging what we think should be encouraged; but everybody finds their way in a different way, or moves towards things that are relevant to them, has their own values.

Participant #8 described using encouragement skillfully by his understanding that if he recognizes the efforts his clients have made to solve their problems, even if they have acted on mistaken beliefs in the process, he has encouraged them. He explained that clients will be able to move through the difficult aspects of change more easily when they have felt heard, validated, and have had their efforts recognized, than not. "I think even if you're going to tackle the cognitions, you still have to help validate the usefulness of those beliefs first before they're willing to replace them." Participant #3 provided an example of how he skillfully uses encouragement when he talked about knowing how to encourage clients in different ways based upon things such as their particular need, ability, attitude, personality, or life situation.

> You're working different clients in different ways. For the ones who don't value anything, you're trying to make them pay more attention to small things. For the ones that overvalue everything, you're trying to make them less valuing in some ways of everything.

Participant #12 provided an example that illustrates the need for thought and sensitivity on the part of the counselor to monitor oneself while remaining encouraging towards the client.

> And if I have a particular client that might be touching on my own challenges, sometimes that might be even more difficult where I have to a little more . . . take a step back and really think about how I'm going to do this.

Participant #5 talked about paying attention to the way the counselor and client move in relation to one another within the counseling relationship and ways that the counselor can skillfully use encouragement to better understand a client and to monitor the working alliance. Participant #5 said:

> I would say being aware of the client's movement in the encouragement process, it does really actually parallel. Because, when I'm thinking of how are they moving in life, is it a way to protect themselves or towards to get other people to do the heavy lifting in life? Then I want to be very aware of how I'm moving towards the client and how they're moving towards me, so, it's just a microcosm of, if they avoid conflict and vulnerability in their regular relationships.

Participant #5 added:

> I would be very careful about my movement based on any client's movement, realizing that I might actually enable the problem by just telling them what to do, like all the other people in their lives have, if that's sort of like a theme for them.

Participants also described the skill as being strategic, in terms of it being purposeful in the way that they are encouraging clients towards social interest. Participant #1 said, "Yes, for me, individual psychology, psychotherapy, is encouraging people to engage in

the world with more social interest. Then there's a bunch of strategies to do that."

Participant #9 said:

> And the other thing, the strategy piece of it is to know when to back off a little bit. And therapeutically, I always tell my students, "Clients will always give you another bite of the apple." If you make it an interpretation that they aren't willing to accept.

Technique. Seven of the participants stated that encouragement could be considered a technique in the context of when it is something that is used as a method to encourage clients. Participants provided examples of techniques such as acting as if, the push button technique, reframing, using a game in therapy, or others. Participant #9 differentiated between a technique and a strategy explaining that the technique is the "what" he is doing (an intervention) and the strategy is the "why" (to reach the client on the relational level). "I think of it that it probably borders as a technique and a strategy, at the same time. I call it a technique because it's in the service of something. I'm using it to get me somewhere with the client or get the client somewhere. It's strategic because encouragement happens at a relational level and that is critical." Participant #9 added, "These can become more skilled with attention and use."

Not a technique. Six participants rejected the idea of calling encouragement a technique, stating that encouragement is more than merely a technique. Participant #3 explained:

> When you start talking about techniques and interventions, it's like something we, the superior person, doing to everybody else, you know? . . . I mean I use techniques, obviously. We all do. But I think I don't see encouragement as a

technique. I would see encouragement as what's motivating us to use the

technique or something. I don't know. It's different than a technique . . . It's more

of a human to human encounter.

Participant #7 said, "I don't see it as a technique. It's just a foundational part of the

counseling process." Although Participant #5 said, "I'm more on the side of Dr. Watts

where if I had to go from picking it as a technique or an attitude, or a way of being, for

me it's more on the attitude and way of being side."; but he suggested that teaching it first

as a technique might be helpful to the learning process.

I think that when you talk about it as a technique, sometimes it keeps it on the

map as, like something for people who have no idea what they're talking about.

So, I think there's some value in keeping it there.

Participant #15 explained why she believes that encouragement cannot be called just a

technique:

I guess we can have little techniques of encouragement. But if this presence, if

this being of an encouraging person, meaning perceiving others as equal beings,

regardless of status or age or whatever, all these techniques are not going to work.

They're not going to be perceived as genuine attempts.

Participant #16 indicated that she is opposed to labeling encouragement as something that

limits the full understanding of its role in the counseling relationship and process. She

explained that she rejects the word "technique":

It's not a technique, it's not an intervention, I strongly oppose these attempts. I've

heard people saying that and I disagree with that whole heartedly. I'm not sure if

it's an attitude but it might be just my distaste of the word attitude. So, it might be

very stylistic. Encouragement is a way of doing therapy. It's a fabric of a therapy. It is the air of therapy.

Theoretical tenets and personal beliefs. The major theme, *encouraging theoretical tenets,* emerged in the participants' responses to question three. When answering the question about what specifically they do with clients that is encouragement, participants named some of the tenets of individual psychology and Adlerian therapy such as supporting empowerment, the belief in human worth, hope, and safety that guide their interactions with clients, as well as others that they stated fit with Adlerian theory and Individual Psychology. Some of the participants explained how Adlerian tenets resonate with their personal beliefs about human nature and people. The six subthemes for theoretical tenets and personal beliefs are: (a) support empowerment, (b) human worth, (c) hope, (d) safety, (e) discouragement, and (f) avoid discouragement.

Support empowerment. Eleven participants named helping to increase client empowerment as one of the things that they specifically do in counseling sessions with clients that is encouragement. Participant #3 said, "Adlerian encouragement, to me, is anything that empowers the individual to take risks, to try out new behaviors, to face the challenges that are just part of everybody's life." Participant #7 said:

> So, if they're encouraged, their actions, their involvement in the community or their involvement in relationships with others, they would feel a sense of meaning and purpose in that process. They would feel like they're contributing. And in that sense, they would also be empowered individually.

To increase empowerment, participants encourage collaboration with their clients in setting goals and making choices, however, clients are empowered to make the choices. Participant #2 stated:

> We've got to be collaborators in this process, but you are the only expert. So that's one way that I talk about it and try to help them feel empowered and that they're not going to be sitting on the sofa and I decide when they're done. It's their process.

Participant #5 said, "If I can offer more choices where the person's empowered, I would say that's a subtle version of encouragement." Participant #14 said, "The fact that she knows that she can make a choice and she's choosing to, that I think is encouragement. That's like empowering her." Participant #9 said, "The Adlerian approach is to say, "You're an active decision maker here. You're not a victim of your circumstances."

Participants said that they try to empower clients even in subtle ways. Participant #5 said:

> Because, if I have three chairs in an office. rather than saying "Well, why don't you sit over there?" And I'm telling them what to do, I might say, "Take a seat wherever you're comfortable." So, I think I'm not necessarily saying anything nice to them or doing anything other than starting to build collaboration and empowerment in that process of trying to build the relationship by creating options.

Participant #2 often uses metaphors in the process of empowerment.

> So now we know what playing cards you hold in your hand, and you get to decide how you want to play them. The cards maybe didn't change a whole lot. There may be some, because you're holding so many, that got hidden behind others,

where it's now that those get to be brought in to the forefront. Now you have even more that you get to play, and it can feel more flexible in how you play certain cards, and you can feel more confident in whatever it is that you're trying to accomplish, again, kind of across those five life tasks.

Participant #5 said regarding specifically what he is doing in sessions.

So, I might try to find the balance of using encouragement in a healthy way, by giving it to a person who barely has had it, or when a person is used to being pampered and everything is done for them, I'll be really careful not to do everything for them. . . . So, when I'm using encouragement with them, I might have to tailor the encouragement to not sort of make it fall in line with other people that may have done something that is not as adaptive with them. . . . I think encouragement might look the same across the board for not judging people, for creating collaborative opportunities and empowerment. . . . I just may tweak it or vary it based on the conceptualization of their movement.

Participants also talked about empowering clients by engaging in a respectful relationship with them. Participant #1 stated:

I do think that engaging in a respectful relationship encourages the other person to also engage in a personal relationship . . . I think some of it is that when you are treated respectfully, you think of yourself in positive terms, and you have more resilience or more courage to face the tasks of life in a respectful manner, in an equal manner. A lot of that is modeling.

Participants said that many clients feel devalued and disempowered in the systems in which they live in or work. Participants explained that part of building empowerment is to help build up one's personal agency within those systems. Participant #10 said:

> Because Adlerian psychology has this real strong connotation of empowerment, and to help the underserved and all that. I truly believe that we could be, and we could do a lot of things that will bring courage to the person. . . . but I think encouragement is still more fundamental than empowerment.

Participant #10 explained that oftentimes Adler's ideas about power are misunderstood. What he means, the will to power in his own theoretical construction, is to want more significance and belongingness." Participant #7 explained what that kind of power is.

> So, when you use the sense of power, I am careful with that word because it's not a sense of power over others. It's kind of the power to contribute in a way that helps others and helps themselves. . . . that you can do something that actually has some type of effect either on yourself or others.

Some of the participants talked about being mindful of and sensitive to perceived power imbalances. Participant #15 said, "I think it's very hard to be an encouraging person if you're in a top-down relationship, or if there are unrecognized power dynamics in the relationship. Participant #10 said:

> Because sometimes the client can be into the power differential more, and want to be pleasing, or want to have power struggle. It could go either way when the equality is not perceived. . . . So, I like to think that when I am backing off, or away from the power struggle, I am practicing encouragement.

Human worth. Eight participants talked about the importance of using encouragement to approach clients with the Adlerian tenet and belief that all humans are equal and eight participants also said that they want their clients to feel like they have innate worth and value. Participants talked about affirming their clients' sense of worth and value and wanting clients to feel that the counseling relationship is made up of equal human beings. Participant #15 said, "Also, you perceive yourself and others as equal beings. You are human equals. That's it. Regardless of the status. Regardless of age. Anything that we make-up that will bring that hierarchy in our existence." Participants indicated a desire to communicate the message to their clients that they are valued as they are and are worthy to be cared about. Participant #7 said:

> I'm affirming their process. That it's okay for them to be where they're at in their life right now. It's okay for them to be who they are in that moment. It may not be who they want to be, and that's okay. We're all a work in progress. But where they're at right now, they are still worthwhile human being that deserves to feel and think the way that they're feeling, and that that's okay.

Participants said that they communicate the client's worth and value by attuning to their clients with interest and curiosity. Interview #12 said:

> If someone is intently paying attention to what you're saying, mirroring back what you're saying, understands you, then what it is you're communicating to the non-conscious of the person? "You're worth my time. You're worth understanding. I really value you." You don't say, "I really value you". That's left brain to left brain communication. By being intently paying attention and understanding and

mirroring back your understanding, you're telling a person *emotionally,* "You're

worthwhile."

Participant #9 said, "The goal is to get them to believe in themselves. And I think that

that is such a big piece of the Adlerian approach." Participant #15 said that it begins with

the beliefs of the counselor first. She said:

It should start with the person's understanding of their own values. . . . It's

understanding that I believe in the goodness in people. I believe that people, in

their core, are good beings. Whatever is happening around it is happening because

of the condition they're in. Because of their learning. Something else. But at their

core they're good human beings.

Related to the sub-themes of worth and value participants talked about using

encouragement with clients to increase their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Participant # 1 said, "I think there is the experience of being encouraged leads to more

courage, more positive self-esteem, more resilient, and that allows for a more socially

interested line of movement." Participant #11 explained:

You start to develop a sense of self-esteem, which I always think is paradoxical,

we don't develop self-esteem by ourselves. We do it in relationship to others, and

so I learn to love myself by the fact that I experience being loved and then I

experience myself loving others.

In addition to self-esteem, participants also discussed self-efficacy. Participant #7 said:

Because I believe that people by nature are wanting to connect to other people,

feel a sense of self efficacy in themselves, connect to themselves. That

connectedness and belongingness piece is part of who we are as humans. And all I

have to do is help a person realize that that's something they can get.

Participant #4 said that encouragement "should develop a sense of self-efficacy" for his

clients and that his role is to help people

Understand that encouragement is a huge factor, I think, in building self-efficacy.

It's the coaching factor of self-efficacy in some sense. Recognizing that people are

engaged in their change process, that they're active in their change processes is a

really important builder of self-efficacy.

Participant #9 tied ideas of self-worth and value, self-esteem and self-efficacy, to one's

personal agency. "But more importantly, that there's a sense of personal agency that, you

know what, even as bad as your life might be and as bad as you're feeling right now, you

do have the ability to act and do something for someone else."

Hope. Eleven of the participants said that they use encouragement in counseling

with clients to instilling hope. Other terms related to instilling hope were *optimism*,

possibilities, and *choices*. Participant #11 said:

There's no evidence whatsoever that any of us should be optimistic, but the reality

is that we do better if we act as if optimism is a good idea. I mean, people who

wind up doing well in life have a belief that things will work out.

Participant #4 said, "Encouragement should develop hope for future change." Participant

#2 said that she will offering possibilities to her clients is encouragement. "Letting them

know that there's another way of being or a way of acting or a way of handling a

situation. So that way they're not stuck in the old patterns of behavior that don't work"

Participant #1 said, "I think oftentimes when we're discouraged, we only see a limited

way of responding to certain situations and so it's encouraging when somebody says, 'Oh, well, what about this?'" Participant #2 said, "Again, it's meant to kind of give that sense of relief, 'Okay, I can do this,' kind of a feeling. Instill hope that they can see a change." Participant #4 said, "Part of my role as a counselor, with a family, or an individual, or what have you, is going to be building that idea of faith, hope and expectancy. Encouragement is going to be a piece of that." Some participants explained that offering suggestions to clients to open up new possibilities with the understanding that they are the one to decide, can be encouraging." Participant #1 said, "And so that simple suggesting of you could have said this, or you could have done this, is a way of encouraging because it is just simply opening up that possibility." Participant #7 said, "So in that sense, the safety to be who you are in a moment is important as a reflection of feeling encouraged, but also important to help continue to build a sense of hope and encouragement for that person." Participant #5 said, "Beyond just direct words or whether that's some type of affirmation or instilling hope in some way." Participant #12 talked about encouraging his clients to find hope by his modeling it for them.

> Hope's a big deal. What you're doing as a therapist is you're giving people new hope. Otherwise, why would they come to see someone? They could do it themselves. . . . And the belief comes first through you. Yeah. If they sense that *you* believe they can do it, then there's a chance, they say, they might actually be able to do it.

Participant #15 also said that hope is something that the counselor has and believes in and encourages clients to experience. "Part of encouragement is optimism. Sometimes it's a very radical, extreme optimism. When everybody gives up, you don't." This was similar

to what Participant #4 said when he talked about the association of encouragement the common factors of faith, hope, and expectancy. He said:

> Encouragement should develop hope for future change. . . . well I'm thinking of Lambert's Four Common Factors and it's hard to talk about encouragement as being in just one of those factors, because it really integrates several of the factors, I think.

Participant #14 said that she learned about encouraging client hope from her mentor. She said, "So that is something that I try to also foster with clients, that there is hope."

Safety. Six participants talked about creating safety in the counseling relationship when they are practicing encouragement with clients. Participant #5 said that he uses his encouraging attitude and way of being with clients to create safety. Participant #6 explained that encouragement creates safety in the relationship. "Safety. I could say a whole bunch of other things, but I think, in short, one's transparency, one's compassion, one's authenticity, one's attunement can be felt by the other person and those are all indications that I may be safe here." Participant #7 said, "It's safe in the sense that I'm not going to discourage them. So, they feel safe in the sense that when they express their feelings or the thoughts that they're having, that I'm not going to discount that or tell them that they shouldn't feel or think how they're feeling, or that those thoughts or feelings, or their way of being in that moment is a problem. Who they are is not a problem." Participant #8 said:

> I think that as the client gets safer to share things in session with me, I want to highlight the courage it took to do that, and to kind of help the client recognize that if they can do that here in the safe relationship, then that means they have the

potential to do that with others, certainly if they're safe relationships with others.
But what it does is I think it's encouraging because the client realizes that the
potential is there. And so, then the question is not whether can I do it, but when
should I do it and how should I do it? And so that's where I think the therapy,
therapeutic relationship does model the benefits of change.

Participant #10 said that counselors can "cultivate this sense of environment that's safe
and trusting for you to be free to take risks, or to explore inward, or outward." She tries to
make sure that she is perceived by her clients in a safe way. Participant #12 said that
clients "need to feel safe, before they go out and do something. If they feel not safe, then
they're not going to do it."

Overall, the participants reported that one of the main things they are doing with
clients is to instill hope for new possibilities, to help increase client confidence to make
movement towards change. Encouragement is often used to motivate clients. Other
attitudinal beliefs that the respondents named associated with the ways that they
communicate worth to their clients are the beliefs that the counseling relationship is
collaborative, is respectful, and occurs between equals.

Discouragement. When talking about what they do with clients in session that is
encouragement, participants discussed discouragement in terms of how it relates to the
client's courage and the need for encouragement. Participants discussed their views of
client discouragement and what they do in response to it. Ten of the participants talked
about how they counter discouragement in the counseling process with encouragement.
Participant #11 said:

Essentially when I think of Adlerian encouragement I'm thinking that I am entering into a relationship with someone in which at the moment their courage seems damaged. And I need to help them rediscover it and put it to good use.

Participant #10 said, "I'm saying when we can give courage, that has a connotation that the person that I will try to give the courage to is already experiencing discouragement. His or her courage has been surpassed, or suppressed, or been deprived." Participant #7 said:

So sometimes they'll get so discouraged too. They're like, "I don't care what people think, nobody likes me. I don't care." But I think under that is they're just discouraged. Under that they do want that connection. They do want people to care about them and they want to care about others. All I have to do is help them to see a sense of hope related to the ability to achieve that.

Participant #9 said:

I think that the other piece of encouragement is sometimes people are discouraged . . . a lot of times, people will look at their *in*ability. I don't want to say "disability" but their inability to do something and say, "That's my excuse for not even trying, because I can't do it. I don't feel like I'm able to do it." And encouragement can be a . . . a method of helping people hold themselves accountable, or be held accountable to do something that they can do.

Participant #7 said:

So, I don't think that you just go from being discouraged to completely encouraged all of a sudden. I think encouragement is a process of practice…if you think about the life tasks, if somebody is discouraged usually it's impacting all of

those areas. So, their intimate relationships, their perceptions of self, their

engagement with work and school or whatever. So, I think that you have to attend

to how you're feeling discouraged in all of those areas, and then practice different

ways of being in those areas of life.

Participant #3 said, "I think Adlerians have a kind of a roadmap we're using in terms of

how we see the etiology of discouragement or different diagnostic problems. As well as,

the road to improvement." He added that encouragement is necessary for that road.

Participant #10 said, "Well, if we stop doing things that are discouraging, that makes up

50% of encouragement already.

Avoid discouragement. Eight participants talked about the importance of not

being discouraging to clients. Participant #3 stressed, "There's a lot of things that we

sometimes do with clients that are ultimately discouraging rather than encouraging."

Participant #12 explained "Because it's so easy to become discouraging. Not intending to

become discouraging, but becoming discouraging because you're not responding to what

you see in front of you with the client." Participants #12 and #8 talked about the

advantage of using Adlerian encouragement to avoid discouragement rather than

approaching a client from a pure cognitive approach. Referring to Cognitive Behavioral

Therapy (CBT), Participant #12 said:

> That's why people who do CBT … there's nothing wrong with CBT, some people
>
> are so CBT that they see the problem "Oh yeah, I see the problem, I know the
>
> formula for this" and they jump in with a formula. Yes okay, we know those
>
> things work, but where is this person right now? Are they ready for that? If they're
>
> not ready for it, you're about to discourage them.

Participant #8 said, "That's the difference between CBT and Adlerian, is that we don't look at the cognitive beliefs as irrational or distorted. They are purposeful, too." Participant #5 avoids discouragement with clients by maintaining a non-judgmental attitude: "But with a client being non-judgmental when things are said, even that might be inconsistent with how I see the world or my values." He explained that this can be done by focusing on the positive intent of their behavior.

> The positive intent, which would very much be like an Adlerian way of thinking about pathology or behavior, but it's goal-oriented. So, the goal was maybe to avoid harm or to feel good, so maybe the positive intent of getting high is to feel less anxious or to feel less trauma symptoms, or something like that. So, for me, encouragement might be, not necessarily saying "Oh, their maladaptive behaviors were just positive intent", but it's sort of a way of looking at pathology in a way, rather than saying, "Oh, you're really ill", it would be more looking at them as that was a behavior that made sense at the time.

Participant #6 avoids discouragement by being sensitive to clients' "family of origin stuff that they're trying to heal from." Participant #7 gave an example of using transparency to avoid discouraging a client.

> If I feel like they're trying to engage with me as a friend or they're asking to interact in that way, I talk about it. I just go straight to what's happening, and I talk about those boundaries and what our relationship is and what that looks like. Because to me that's part of their ability to build a sense of self efficacy. Because if I don't do that and I just say, "Well, I'm your counselor and we can't do those

things", and we don't actually have a discussion about the process that's happening for them, they could be discouraged in that.

Participant #13 described ways that a counselor might discourage a young client. "I think that kids find it discouraging if people return responsibility to them if they don't know how to do it. … You don't want to be discouraging by doing things for them that they can do for themselves." Participant #14 described avoiding discouragement in the way she asks questions, "So, I don't necessarily at that point ask about what they would change about themselves because that could be discouraging, but I ask, …Would they change anything about their relationship with themselves?" Other Adlerians said that they avoid discouraging their clients by not labeling them as resistant. Participant #10 said:

> The traditional psychoanalysis will say, "Well, that's client resistance", but I don't think so. When I run into client resistance, I probably immediately come back to myself, "Am I not encouraging enough? What is it that we're struggling with?" … When I hurt, myself, or see myself doing discouraging things, I know I'm not practicing encouragement.

Participant #12 explained:

> I step back and say "What's wrong here? What's happening? What's wrong with what I'm doing or with my attitude or something? Am I too ambitious? Am I'm pushing too hard which is disrespectful? Am I causing a person to feel inadequate because I pushed too hard too fast?" You're actually going to encourage people's discouragement. You're going to make it worse.

Participant #14 noted a challenge associated with discouragement: "I think the more discouraged somebody is, sometimes it's not as received." Participant #15 said, "I can try

to be encouraging. But, if it's not received, I cannot take it personally and think that there's something wrong with this person. We can also get discouraged with our own encouragement."

Closing Question

Before ending the interview, I provided the participants an opportunity to add anything else about Adlerian encouragement that they felt was relevant to the research question by asking, "Is there anything that I did not ask you about Adlerian encouragement that I should have, or is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of Adlerian encouragement?" Almost all of the participants stated that they had communicated their understanding and described their experiences of their use of Adlerian encouragement adequately and gave responses such as, "I feel like I have communicated my sense of that" (Participant #1); "Nothing. I think that's it" (Participant #5). Some of the participants said that they would get in touch with me if something new came to their minds that they believed needed to be added, however, none of them contacted me.

Some of the participants made comments or recommendations. Participant #2 commented:

I think it was probably Dreikurs that actually said children need encouragement like a plant needs water. I think that was a Dreikurs quote versus an Adler quote, but I think it's still so important. Life is hard enough, and if we don't bring encouragement in to the world, if we don't keep social interest in mind, then we lose the feel-good moments.

Participant #4 opined, "I think encouragement is hard to find. It's hard to find people that are encouraging. Yeah, I think it's hard to find, in adult life especially. It's unfortunate, but I think it's just hard to find." When asked if he would like to say more about that, he said, "No, I'll leave it at that. Encouragement is hard to find. I think we should all have Adlerian T-shirts printed up that says, 'Encouragement is hard to find'. It would remind us to be more encouraging, I think." Participant #5 recommended asking what encouragement *is not* in order to help define what it *is*.

> If you say, "It's not this and it's not that, and it's not that", then it's easy for you to say "Well, this is what it is", when you look at the other side of it. And in most cases, the opposite of it will pretty much tell you. … But I often do teach in that way where, when people, you can tell have no idea what you're talking about, I'll start saying the opposite of what the answer is. "So, is this person feeling really happy and really encouraged about life?", and they'll go, "Obviously, they're not. Obviously, they're not happy. They're more like discouraged or feeling hurt or something like that."

Participant #10 suggested, "Yes. You could have chosen to ask me, 'What's so hard about encouragement?'" Following that question, she talked about a time when it was challenging for her to be as encouraging with a client as she would normally be. She suggested that this question would be an important one to include in future research.

Divergent Cases

Maxwell (2013) said that numbers used in qualitative studies enables a researcher to assess the amount of evidence that the data bears on a particular conclusion or threat, "such as how many discrepant instances exist" and also "diversity of actions and

perspectives" (p. 129). The first divergent case did not offer a response that misaligned with those from other participants; however, her way of responding to the question varied from the others. When asked how she knows that she is practicing Adlerian encouragement, rather than describing how she does know, Participant #16 answered, "I have no idea. I don't know. And I'm okay with that." She then elaborated:

> I don't think it's for me to know. It's not like I'm at a practice, "Okay, am I encouraging or not?" I might catch myself maybe feeling it, maybe not; but it's "Maybe I'm not encouraging enough", but it doesn't really happen real often. I think you just, you bring your whole being into the process and you like the client for what they are and you believe that they can do things and you're happy for them when they're successful and that's pretty much it.

She summarized. "I don't care to measure it. I have faith and I have hope and I have love and that's probably it." A second case represented a variance when Participant #11 was asked if his use of some of the skills in counseling that he had described (i.e., *not knowing, taking a de-centered posture, empathy*) were used as encouragement, he answered, "Not necessarily. Those are just skill sets." He then explained that encouragement is ultimately used to make connection with clients, because relationship is 99.9% of therapy. His use of encouragement, overall, is focused on strengthening connection in the relationship through his faith in the client, and offering the client hope and charity. While these initial responses were unique, their explanations resonated with other participants about the qualities of encouragement that is expressed through a counselor's convictions and/or personhood.

Composite Textural Description

A textural description is a description of "what" the participants experienced with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moustakas (1994) described the composite of the textural descriptions as "an integration of all of the individual textural descriptions into a group or universal textural description" (p. 180). In this study, the composite textural description is a description of what the phenomenon of encouragement is, as used by Adlerian experts in counseling sessions with their clients. Integrating the themes from the data analysis of this study, a group description revealed that all of the participants use an encouragement-focused counseling process with their clients, which includes an encouragement-focused counseling relationship, as well. Overall, the participants' main objective with encouragement is to use it to build the counselor/client relationship and to increase clients' courage towards implementing change in their lives, which are lived in social contexts. Therefore, attention to the clients' tasks of life and their practice of socially interested choices in both the past and present are explored in detail. Counselors use listening, and other counseling micro-skills, and empathizing, in order to connect with clients and gain insight into the clients' perceptions as well as to locate strengths-related aspects of their narratives. Participants said that they look specifically for clients' strengths, assets, and resources, as well as listen to their life narratives and early recollections to find potential sources of past, or needs for current use of, courage. This encouragement-focused client-learning process, based upon relationship building, and strengths and resource finding, is done to engage and motivate clients to use their courage to implement changes. Participants indicated that in this process they often use re-education and re-framing to influence shifts in their clients' movements. The participants

described Adlerian encouragement as a type of encouragement that is differentiated from general forms of encouragement because of its therapeutic purpose and use. Encouragement is used throughout the counseling process because it is an integral and necessary feature for Adlerian practice and therapeutic success. Participants include features of Dreikurs' four phases of counseling in their counseling process, placing primary emphasis on the relationship aspect. Participants believe that regardless of one's previous experiences with encouragement, it can be learned through educational courses, trainings, and from professors; and that mentorship, live trainings, and personal experiences of being encouraged are the most effective in gaining a personal understanding and experiential knowledge of what it is to be encouraged and to encourage others.

Composite Structural Description

A structural description is a description of "how" the phenomenon was experienced by the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A composite structural description is "an integration of all of the individual structural descriptions into a group or universal structural description of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 180). In this study, the composite structural description is a description of how Adlerian experts experience the phenomenon of using encouragement in counseling sessions with clients. Overall, participants practice encouragement with their clients with intentionality and purpose first because it is fundamental to their theoretical orientation, but later because they have experienced the therapeutic benefits of encouragement in an array of circumstances with clients, which subsequently both feels positive and often deeply connecting, and also serves as a learning and reinforcement feedback loop for the

counselor. Over time, a counselor's intuition and skill with encouragement usually does increase, if one practices with intentionality and with the belief that the encouraging relationship will result in clients' experiencing increased empowerment, self-worth, hope, safety, and the ability to overcome discouragement in the face of life's challenges. Through consistent use of encouragement, participants explained that they developed a natural encouragement flow that can be experienced as a part of one's personality or even, personhood. Participants said that their encouragement comes from an encouraging attitude that some said has evolved into one's counseling way of being. Participants find their inspiration to encourage primarily from the resonance of their personal beliefs about humans and human behavior with the tenets promoted in Individual Psychology and Adlerian theory, as well as from the positive feelings and outcomes they have experienced in their personal and professional lives and those that they witness their clients experience by being encouraged. Participants observe the verbal, nonverbal, and/or behavioral changes in a client that occurs when a client uses his or her courage, which is realized in the counseling process by experiencing an encouraging presence in the person of the counselor and from being encouraged through the counselors use of words, techniques, and/or other encouragement-focused interventions. Participants are sensitive to the movements of their clients throughout the counseling process and although they are not always able to articulate it clearly, they understand that something therapeutically potent is occurring during the counselor/client encouragement experience.

The Essence

Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that, "Interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data"

(p. 195). In qualitative inquiry, the "essence" of the experience is a description that captures the "culminating aspect of a phenomenological study", including both the "what" participants experienced and the "how" they experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 77). In this study, participants described being challenged and/or intrigued with the process of reflecting upon the interview questions and of describing their lived experiences with the phenomenon of practicing Adlerian encouragement in sessions with their clients.

In this study, Adlerian encouragement is experienced as possessing qualities that range from simple to complex, and from subtle to direct; it is not easily defined although it is therapeutically potent. Encouragement may begin within the belief of an Adlerian that all humans have the innate capacity for courage, similar to an innate capacity for other intangible human qualities that can be experienced inwardly and also expressed outwardly, such as faith, hope, charity, and love. Coincidentally, when facing the difficulties of life, people have the potential to become discouraged and, thus, require encouragement, from within or without, in order to apply their courage. Thus, encouragement is considered to be the most necessary and potent substance that exists in the Adlerian counseling relationship and in the counseling process. It is the Adlerian's most needed, integral, useful and powerful tool; Adlerian therapy cannot be done well, or according to its theory, without it. Regardless of one's previous knowledge or experience, through choice, encouragement can be learned and improved. Through gaining education and training, awareness, intention, curiosity, openness, teaching, and personal giving and receiving of encouragement experiences, one's desire and ability to encourage increases. Thus, an Adlerian's confidence in and skillful use of encouragement increases over time

with the practice of giving, receiving, and observing it in counseling sessions with clients and often also in relationships in their professional and private lives. Encouragement's presence within the counseling relationship is intentional. It is expressed through both flexible and creative ways, from the first meeting of the counselor and client until the last. Encouragement can be seen in many different Adlerian counselor roles: parent, fellow-life sojourner, coach, teacher, or other supportive figure. Encouragement is seen in the relationship in the midst of meeting clients' needs in the forms of hope, faith, self-worth, respect, concern, curiosity, safety, empathy, and human value and worth. Encouragement is seen in the Adlerian's belief in the radical goodness of their clients and their belief that their clients are capable, that they count, that they have courage, and that they are able to connect and contribute. Adlerians express encouragement through their therapeutic flow or way of being by giving encouraging verbal and nonverbal messages in response to their clients' particular movements in a manner that conveys that they are actively engaged, interested, sensitive, and authentic. Encouragement is intrapersonal and interpersonal, residing within the counselor and also shared within the relationship. Thus, Adlerians experience encouragement as both a noun and a verb; it is a value, a belief system, and a personality quality that exists within the counselor, and it is also an expression of that quality. Encouragement becomes realized within the client and made manifest by the client as courage; the client's courage is both an inward feeling and an outward action. Adlerian counselors are aware of their own and their clients' potential for discouragement, and tune into themselves and their clients' emotions and physiology to monitor what they are experiencing; they adjust themselves for their clients as needed. When participants do know that encouragement is occurring or has occurred in session

they describe it as occurring on a spectrum ranging from a simple awareness to a deep, almost spiritual interpersonal connection that they share with a client.

Overall, encouragement, like faith, hope, charity, and love, is not fully definable; encouragement can be used in numerous ways and contexts and there is always more to learn about how it can be expressed. Also, like faith, hope, charity, and love, it seems to have qualities that are universal to the human experience and at the same time those which are unique to a dyad's shared experience. Adlerian experts value the therapeutic aspects of encouragement and understand that its flexibility and adaptability allow Adlerian counselors, and counselors of other theoretical approaches, as well, to share in creating encouragement experiences with their clients that serve as the fulcrum of client change. Therefore, Adlerians aim to not ever deviate from encouragement.

Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that, "The essence is the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study"; however, Moustakas (1994) clarified that essences represent only one researcher's perspective at a particular time and place. Thus, the essence provided within this study represents my perspective of the phenomenon of the lived experiences of Adlerian experts practicing encouragement in sessions with their clients, based upon my understanding of the meanings ascribed from their own words.

Summary

In this chapter I presented the results of my study. In response to the three research questions eight themes emerged: (a) purpose, (b) qualities, (c) learning, (d) feel or sense it, (e) intentionality and awareness, (f) client change, (g) flexibility and creativity, and (h) encouraging theoretical tenets. The data was organized and presented according to themes related to the three overarching research questions. Participants

responded to question one by talking about the various purposes of Adlerian

encouragement in counseling sessions with clients. Overall, answers supported the use of

encouragement to increase client courage towards social interest, to focus on client effort

and movement, and to create connection so that clients would experience belonging and

contribution. Participants also defined encouragement by some of its outstanding

qualities such as the use of verbal and nonverbal encouraging interactions; its role in the

therapeutic relationship, including ways that it is reflected in the attitude and/or being of

the counselor; and its integral position in Adlerian therapy. Finally, participants talked

about how encouragement can be learned. In answering the second research question,

participants said that they know that they are practicing Adlerian encouragement with

clients because they can feel or sense a connection with their clients when their clients

are encouraged, they use encouragement with intentionality and awareness, and they

witness client changes which are nonverbal, verbal, and/or behavioral. Finally, when

talking about what specifically they are doing with clients that is encouragement,

participants reported using flexibility and creativity with encouragement through an

encouragement-focused counseling process and relationship. They aim to help clients

recognize strengths and assets, as well as past and present use of courage in order to

motivate and re-educate clients. This is accomplished through the counseling relationship

and the use of skills and techniques which serve to support client empowerment, feelings

of self-worth, hope, safety, and overall, to overcome discouragement.

In the next chapter I will provide a summary of the study along with a review of

the theoretical framework, and a discussion of the findings. I will then discuss the

implications of the results for practice and education, and offer recommendations for

future research. I will conclude the chapter with a summary.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This chapter is a summary and a discussion of my phenomenological research study which was based on the following research question: "What are the lived experiences of Adlerian experts using encouragement in counseling sessions with their clients?" The discussion includes an examination of the findings' alignment or discrepancy with the theoretical framework used in this study, Adlerian theory, as well as with the Adlerian theory and therapy literature initially presented in Chapter II. Following this, I suggest implications of the findings for students, educators, and practitioners of Adlerian theory and therapy. I conclude this chapter with recommendations for continued research inquiry into the topic of Adlerian encouragement.

Summary of the Study

In this study, I used the transcendental phenomenological research design in order to gain rich descriptions of participants' lived experiences of using Adlerian encouragement in counseling sessions with clients. My data were collected from interviews conducted with eight male and eight female expert Adlerian clinicians ranging in age from 34-75 years old. I followed Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to analyze the data and to discover the essence of the participants' experiences. As the sole researcher of this study, I conducted all 16 interviews. To become more intimately acquainted with the data, I performed multiple reviews of the recordings and transcriptions in order to capture not only the conversational content, but also the tone and texture of the participants voices and descriptions, and to be sensitive to

the pauses and fillers that might add insight into the informational content. During this process, I embraced epoché in order to "take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). Creswell and Poth (2018) acknowledged that a researcher's interpretation will always incorporate his or her assumptions, so I heeded their suggestion that a better goal might be for a researcher to suspend one's understandings in a "reflective move that cultivates curiosity" (p. 81). Therefore, I practiced reflective curiosity about the participants' experiences as they described them to me, and again later as I reflected upon them. In addition to bracketing, I also used horizontalization of the data, member checking, and peer review to help improve credibility of the findings. Finally, I provided numerous direct participant quotes to allow the reader to discern his or her own interpretation and opinion regarding the results. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the researcher interacts with participants to co-create interpretations, but that the research is "a chain of interpretations that must be documented for others to judge the trustworthiness of the meanings arrived at in the end" (p. 258).

Overall, eight themes emerged from the data in this study: (a) purpose, (b) qualities, (c) learning, (d) feel or sense it, (e) intentionality and awareness, (f) client change, (g) flexibility and creativity, and (h) encouraging theoretical tenets.

Discussion of the Findings

Eight themes emerged in this study from the following three grand tour research questions:

(a) How do you define Adlerian encouragement?

(b) How do you know when you are practicing Adlerian "encouragement" with clients?

(c) "What *specifically* do you do in sessions with clients that you consider encouragement"; that is interventions, techniques, skills, attitudes, etc.? The three themes that emerged from question one included (a) purpose, (b) qualities, and (c) learning. The three themes that emerged from question two were (a) feel or sense it, (b) intentionality and awareness, and (c) client change. The two themes that emerged from question three were (a) flexibility and creativity, and (b) encouraging theoretical tenets. The following discussion represents an overview of the research findings and an examination of how these findings relate to the current literature and theoretical framework of Adlerian theory and therapy, and Adlerian encouragement, in particular.

The relationship of themes from question one with an Adlerian theoretical framework. Responses from interview question one, regarding a definition of encouragement, revealed themes related to the purpose of encouragement, some notable qualities of encouragement, and how learning about encouragement impacts one's understanding and use of Adlerian encouragement in counseling sessions.

Purpose. Participants explained that in order to define encouragement, one needs to understand that its primary purpose is for social interest in the client, which may be enhanced by the modeling of social interest by the counselor. Participants defined the purpose of encouragement as increasing client courage towards socially interested choices and behaviors in their life tasks. Participants overwhelmingly stated this assumption and explained that the goal of social interest and a counselor's modeling of it in counseling is appropriate for working with clients of any age. Additionally,

participants said that a second and concurrent purpose of encouragement is to focus attention on client efforts and movements towards social interest. They stated that every movement that a client makes, large or small, should be noticed and explored. Finally, participants defined a purpose of encouragement as a key aspect of their helping clients to create connections within the working relationship as well as in the clients' relationships outside of counseling. Participants explained that this is achieved through clients' experiences of belonging and contribution that occur first within the counseling relationship, and then occur in the systems in which they live and work. Having experienced a healthy connection in counseling, a model of a socially interested one in their relationship with their counselor, a client will be more likely to understand how to duplicate it outside of counseling.

Overall, when defining encouragement, participants described ways that encouragement serves the purpose of what Adlerian theory describes as client-lived gemeinschaftsgefühl. Within Adlerian theory, the purpose of encouragement stems from the overarching goal of Adlerian therapy described by Adler's concept of gemeinschaftsgefühl, for individuals "to unite themselves with other human beings, to accomplish their tasks in cooperation with others" (Adler, 1970/1930, p. 115). Adler's measurement of one's success and the development of a healthy personality are equivalent to the extent to which an individual embodies gemeinschaftsgefühl (Yang et al., 2010). Thus, participants' descriptions of the purpose of encouragement proved to support an Adlerian theoretical framework.

Qualities. In addition to talking about the purpose of encouragement, participants also defined encouragement in terms of its various qualities. For example, they discussed

diverse ways in which they encourage clients through both verbal and non-verbal means. They talked about the therapeutic quality of an encouraging presence and relationship that clients experience with an Adlerian counselor. They discussed, specifically, the qualities of an Adlerian counselor who possesses an attitude, personality, and even a way of being that is encouragement-focused and encouragement-laden. Further, participants defined the integral role that encouragement plays not only in counseling relationship interactions, but also in the counseling interventions that occur throughout therapy. Finally, participants stated the importance of not only defining what encouragement is, but also describing what it is not. They distinguished Adlerian encouragement from general encouragement and praise, and described Adlerian encouragement as unique in that it is a powerful therapeutic aspect of counseling that has not yet been formally defined. The ways in which participants described the qualities of Adlerian encouragement in this study resonate with and add to several of these that are found in the literature.

Regarding verbal and nonverbal aspects of client interactions, Adler (as cited in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956) explained:

> The glance, the gait, the vigor or weakness of the patient's approach can reveal a great deal. . . . Even the handshake may suggest a definite problem. One often sees that pampered persons like to lean against something, and that children cling to their mothers. . . . I see an advantage in not interrupting the patient's movements. . . . A patient's sidelong glance also clearly indicates his slight inclination to cooperate. . . . The expert can often tell something of the patient's social feeling at the first glance. (pp. 329-330)

Not found in the literature is the depth to which participants in this study discussed the ways in which they attend not only to clients' verbal and nonverbal communication, but they attend as much to their own. These participants explained that they may increase or cause client discouragement by their own expressions, body postures, and tones of voice which can be affected by their feeling tired, distracted, hungry, etc. Participants also described how they attune to the way that nonverbal communication between themselves and their clients is affecting the movement and quality of the relationship. Overall, participants explained that they are trying to be alert to opportunities to encourage and to also be alert to ways in which they might miss an opportunity or send a discouraging message.

Adler emphasized the quality of being an encouraging presence when he advised that therapists should not deviate from the path of encouragement, suggesting both that a counselor's encouraging presence holds therapeutic value as well as the use of encouragement throughout all of treatment (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Other Adlerian scholars have written about the therapeutic quality that Adlerian encouragement possesses and the importance of counselors attending to the maintenance of an encouraging counseling relationship at all times.

They have also pointed out that Adlerian encouragement differs from encouragement that is used as praise (Dreikurs, 1967; O'Connell, 1975). In this study, participants went beyond that discussion by explaining that there is more to understand about what encouragement is not; and one participant suggested incorporating teaching it to students as another angle from which to understand encouragement better. For example, he mentioned that when teaching Adlerian counseling he sometimes watches

counseling videos with his students in order for them to observe both client and counselor responses in order to identify times when a client is experiencing or not experiencing encouragement.

Finally, Adlerians have mentioned over the past four decades that a universal definition of Adlerian encouragement has not yet been established. Participants in this study echoed pervious Adlerian claims of a need for a consensual definition as they expressed their challenges with providing a comprehensive definition of encouragement for this study. Overall, the descriptions of the qualities of encouragement described by participants resonate with those of an Adlerian framework and are found in the writings of Adlerian scholars.

Learning. Finally, when defining Adlerian encouragement, some participants reminisced about their early life experiences: some participants experienced encouragement, some did not grow up in encouraging environments, and others grew up feeling discouraged. Regardless of their background, all of these participants learned how to become encouraging counselors, thus, they supported the idea that encouragement can be learned. Although they named some basic learning methods of Adlerian encouragement such as university courses and texts, professional trainings at conferences, Adlerian books, and conceptual articles; the methods that participants emphasized as the most effective in learning encouragement were experiential learning experiences, mentorship, and through learning about oneself. They explained that encouragement is a choice that one makes and over time counselors can become more adept at encouraging clients as they integrate an encouraging way of being into their therapeutic flow, counseling style, or even personhood. Participants described being an encouraging

counselor as something that they practice and experience more within themselves over time. Participant #14 said, "I'm always continuing to try to learn, and grow that encouragement".

The idea that all people need encouragement is a fundamental premise of Adlerian therapy found in the idea of social interest, because people at times will find themselves unprepared and lacking the courage needed to succeed at their life tasks with cooperation and contribution (Dreikurs, 1967; Mosak, 1977). Thus, it may be that, like courage, all people have the innate potential for encouragement that can be seen in situations when a person encourages oneself, as well as when a person shares encouragement with another person in the expression of community feeling. If the potential for encouragement is innate, then if would follow that, like courage, the expression of it could be learned. In the literature, however, there is a lack of information about becoming an encouraging counselor. Literature was not located on the topic of the most effective methods and formats to follow in order to learn to be an encouraging presence in counseling, or those on improving one's encouragement presence over time. While the need for encouragement and the potential to encourage others resonates with Adlerian theory, this study highlights a potential benefit to developing methods specifically for the training of students and practitioners in encouragement.

The relationship of themes from question two with an Adlerian theoretical framework. The emergent themes that came from responses to interview question two, regarding knowing when one is practicing Adlerian encouragement, included participants' descriptions of feeling or sensing experiences of encouragement, their

descriptions of being intentional with encouragement or being aware of its occurrence, and of noticing changes in their clients and/or their clients' lives.

Feel or sense it. Participants described knowing that they are encouraging their clients and/or knowing that their clients are feeling encouraged in sessions by something that participants feel or sense. They talked about a feeling of connection that occurs sometimes in sessions with their clients when their clients are encouraged, when their clients feel supported, and when their clients' courage to make a change arises. Participants described the connection as ranging from a simple noticing to a deeper feeling or sensing. Some participants described these as moments of deep human-to-human connections with their clients that feel spiritual. Participant #1 explained that it is spiritual because the counselor is encouraging clients to be connected to other people through deep human-to-human contact.

Adler described a oneness with humanity that a person can experience found in the concept of gemeinschaftsgefühl. He explained described it as a feeling that can be enlarged and broadened out to others. Adler (1927/2017) said that it might "extend beyond these boundaries and express itself towards animals, plants, lifeless objects, or finally towards the whole cosmos" (Adler, 1927/2017, p. 73). Manaster and Corsini (1982) said that religion, for Adler, was a manifestation of social interest because both stress one's responsibility to others. Cheston (2000) explained that religiously or spiritually oriented persons share Adler's ideas of encouragement and social interest. Thus, it may be that the feeling that these participants sometimes experience with their clients, who have felt connected to and encouraged by their counselor, is the oneness of a

human-to-human connection that Adler was referring to that is expressed through social interest. Participant #1 described this connection as a peak sense of encouragement.

Discussion on the topic of encouragement experiences in counseling sessions being likened to a deep human to human connection that sometimes occurs between a counselor and a client was not identified in the current Adlerian literature. The descriptions provided by participants in this study enhance the current description of encouragement found in the literature and contribute to an increased understanding of the dimensional aspects that encouragement seems to possess.

Intentionality and awareness. Participants also described knowing that they are practicing encouragement because they are either intentional in their use of it, or because they become aware of it when it is happening. Some participants explained that being encouraging has become a natural part of their therapeutic flow so they do not always identify each time it happens. Sometimes they notice it after reflecting on a counseling session, or reviewing the recordings of sessions. This idea of a counselor mindfully adhering to an encouragement-focused therapy is what Adler instructed and what other Adlerian scholars have endorsed as part of Adlerian theory proving that this aligns with Adlerian theory (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Within the literature, it was found that counselors are instructed to encourage their clients throughout therapy. In this study, however, participants talked about the importance of maintaining an encouragement-focused relationship that is intentional and purposeful in counseling as a key to therapeutic success. They offered descriptions and examples of client interactions in which they described encouragement as the key ingredient in their counseling process. Nothing in the literature was located that offered

as much direction, emphasis and depth of detail about the key role of encouragement as was offered by the participants in this study.

   Client change. Finally, participants reported knowing that they have encouraged their clients when they witness encouragement's impact in the form of changes that their clients embrace and/or implement in their lives. Participants explained that they witness nonverbal, verbal, and behavioral changes in their clients when clients have been encouraged. For example, some participants explained that a client change can begin to be seen nonverbally in a client's more relaxed body posture as he or she relinquishes strong-held beliefs and feelings in exchange for more socially interested ones. Often these nonverbal signs are followed by verbal explanations. Sometimes, however, a behavioral change occurs within a session or outside of it, and participants witness it later.

   The participants' descriptions of client change occurring due to the experiences of feeling encouraged aligns with the Adlerian theoretical premise that through the experience of encouragement a client's use of courage represents the fulcrum of change (Dreikurs, 1967). Further, the idea that client change begins with insight which progresses to a behavioral change is supported by Adlerian theory. Participant responses support what Carlson, Watts, and Maniacci (2006) said when they explained that encouragement tactics are used to bring about change tactics, which are a combination of perceptual and behavioral changes that occur within an encouraged client. Finally, in agreement with Adlerian literature (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1996), participants believe that change is more likely to occur in a relationship with a person who is encouraging.

The relationship of themes from question three with an Adlerian theoretical framework. The emergent themes that came from responses to interview question three, regarding what participants are specifically doing with clients that is Adlerian encouragement, were related to the participants' use of flexibility and creativity with encouragement, while helping clients to also experience increased empowerment, human worth, hope, and safety. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of monitoring discouragement in themselves and in their clients, specifically to avoid being discouraging or increasing their clients' discouragement.

Flexibility and creativity. When describing what they are doing with clients in sessions that is encouragement, participants responded saying that Adlerian counseling is an encouragement process and many of them described how they use encouragement in flexible and creative ways. When discussing Dreikurs' four-phases of Adlerian counseling, which offers structure to Adlerian therapy, participants clarified that the phases are not a linear process. They described ways in which they enhance or modify the process to fit their counseling style and the particular needs of their clients. Within Dreikurs' process, all of the participants stressed the relationship-building phase as primary, clarifying that it is not really a phase but rather a part of counseling that is ongoing. Participants explained that the relationship is the most important aspect of counseling and that without the use of encouragement in the relationship, they would not be able to build the type of respectful, equal, collaborative relationship that they are able to with encouragement. They described their role as that of someone who "comes alongside" clients, and who might offer the qualities of a coach, a parent, or other needed figure in the lives of their clients. The flexible and creative ways in which participants

described their use encouragement to build the relationship held similar and diverse qualities, depending upon the personality of the counselor and the unique aspects of the client and the client situation. Participants explained that an important part of what they are doing in sessions to encourage clients to use their courage is to help them to explore and identify their strengths and resources, or assets. Participants referred to this as highlighting, noticing, and strengths-finding. Participants explained that they remain active with encouragement in order to engage with, motivate, and educate/re-educate clients as needed. Participants explained that often an encouragement-focused intervention introduced by the counselor can be described as a skill or a technique; however, most participants clarified that encouragement is not in and of itself a skill or a technique, but rather that sometimes encouragement is introduced into the interpersonal activity in a skillful and/or a strategic way. Other times, particular Adlerian recognized techniques, such as the push-button or the acting as-if technique, may be used in strategic ways. In all that they are doing with clients, participants descriptions revealed that Adlerian counselors are willing and able to sensitively adapt themselves and their interactions in ways that they believe will best serve their client.

Overall, the ways that the participants described what they are doing in sessions with clients that is encouragement aligns with what is found in an Adlerian theoretical framework. As a writer and practitioner, Adler promoted a range of flexibility and creativity in the counselor role, function, and way of being with clients (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). This was described in detail and in various ways by some of the participants as they talked about their roles as an encouraging person in the lives of their clients. The ability for Adlerian counselors to use flexibility and creativity in counseling

is one of the identifying features of Adlerian therapy supported by the theory; its flexible and eclectic approach was described as a main attraction of Adlerian psychotherapy (Sperry, 2016). Regardless of their flexible and creative use of it, participants overwhelming stated that encouragement is a necessary and key component to therapeutic success and that it should be used throughout therapy. Encouragement as an essential component of therapy that should be used in all phases of counseling is also supported by the Adlerian theoretical framework and the literature (Carlson, et al.,2006; Dreikurs, 1967; Sweeney, 2009). The importance of an encouragement focused relationship described by the participants is also a hallmark of Adlerian theory and therapy (Kottman & Meany-Walen, 2016).

Although none of these finding contradicted Adlerian theory, each of them expanded on what was found in the literature base. For example, no writing was located that described various ways that Dreikurs four phases of counseling might be modified in the various ways that these participants described. Also, literature was not found that explained how and why encouragement is a key aspect in the development of a strong and trusting working alliance and counseling relationship to the extent that this study illustrates. Further, although Adlerian theory promotes empowerment and choices, most participants further elaborated on this idea as they described their use of client strengths and resource identification as key areas to focus their encouragement efforts. Finally, Adlerian literature historically refers to encouragement as a technique; yet these participants placed equal or greater emphasis on the use of encouragement as a skill that is learned and improved upon that is primarily and authentically expressed from their

personalities, beliefs, values, attitudes, etc. It was most often referred to as a way of being with clients and with humankind.

Theoretical tenets and personal beliefs. Other things that participants talked about doing in counseling sessions with clients that is encouragement are related to a resonance of their personal beliefs about humans and human nature and the theoretical tenets of Adlerian theory. Participants, in alignment with Adlerian theory, talked about the various ways that they support their clients with empowerment, with experiences of feeling personal value and worth, with hope for change and a better future, and with safety in the relationship. Specifically, participants talked about believing in the importance of supporting their clients' empowerment towards the autonomy to make choices and to use their courage to implement them. They also said they aim to treat clients in such a way that clients will feel an increase in self-worth, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, as is needed to move in more socially interested ways in their lives. Participants stressed the idea of encouraging clients to experience hope, because clients often see limited ways of responding to a situation and hope can inspire and open up possibilities. Three of the participants placed encouragement in a similar context with faith, hope, and charity/love. Their responses resemble those expressed in a recently published interview with co-founder of and Distinguished Service Professor at Adler University, Harold Mosak who said, "It would seem that there are some underlying common factors that make therapy work – when it indeed works. These ingredients are faith, love, and hope" (Mosak & Bluvshtein, 2019, p. 77). Overall, by offering their clients a relationship founded on these Adlerian tenets which are further strengthened by participants' personal beliefs in the therapeutic value and quality of the subsequent human to human contact,

participants explained that they believe that their clients will experience the safety to look within and outside of themselves more openly and honestly.

Finally, participants iterated the importance of being mindful of the role of discouragement throughout the counseling process. Participants agree that clients present to counseling feeling discouraged. Regarding discouragement, Dreikurs (1967) described the therapist's ability to provide encouragement as the key to successful therapy, and that if therapy is not successful, it is primarily due to the inability of the therapist to encourage the client; however, the descriptions of discouraging counselor verbal and non-verbal responses provided by the participants enhances discussion of discouragement found in the current literature. For example, participants in this study placed noted importance on the counselor's responsibility to avoid increasing client discouragement, providing descriptions of ways in which it might occur, such as through a counselor's distraction from or lack of attunement with one's client. Participants also discussed and stressed the importance of and the ways in which they aim to prevent and/or attend to their own discouragement.

Summary of the research findings and Adlerian theoretical framework. The practices of Adlerian encouragement in counseling sessions with clients described by participants in this study support the role of encouragement as an integral component of Adler's picture of mental health found in gemeinschaftsgefühl, wherein he conceptualized individuals as complex unified beings who are able to achieve healthy functioning when they exercise their courage to connect, cooperate with and contribute to the well-being of themselves and others in the accomplishment of their life tasks (Watts, 2013). All of the participants described the Adlerian theoretical view that humans require

the use of their courage to face and accomplish their life tasks, and that clients are discouraged individuals who require encouragement in the counseling relationship to help them put their courage into action. The need to use one's courage in life, as a universal concept, was described by participants as applicable to clients from young to old.

Although Adler stressed that Adlerian counselors should not deviate from encouragement throughout Adlerian therapy, he did not provide a working definition of encouragement or a framework for teaching or learning it. Adlerian scholars have attempted to fill in this gap with conceptual articles, book chapters, and books about encouragement, but no research to date has focused on this key concept of Adlerian theory and aspect of Adlerian therapy. Thus, data from this study not only serves as a first attempt at exploring Adlerian encouragement from an empirical approach, it also provides readers with meaningful descriptions of how expert Adlerians who have been practicing Adlerian encouragement for numerous years define the concept and describe their use of it. Thus, this study provides participants' direct quotes and statements about what encouragement is, how they know they are practicing encouragement, and what they are specifically doing that is encouragement so that readers may begin to gain a personal deeper understanding of encouragement as they capture the essence of the phenomenon in a way that goes beyond conceptualizing it merely cognitively. Overall, this study begins to fill a void in the research and serves as a foundation for further inquiry into this integral part of Adlerian theory and therapy.

Research findings with current Adlerian literature, and implications. A review of the current literature on Adlerian theory and Adlerian therapy provides a basis for comparison of the results of this study. While the eight themes that emerged in this

study are in alignment, overall, with Adlerian theory and therapy and no discrepant data emerged to contradict the literature, some of the data that emerged provided an enriched or a deeper understanding about some of the aspects of encouragement than what was found in the literature review conducted prior to this study. Below are discussions of some of the topics that came out of the research findings that support and enhance current understanding of Adlerian encouragement as described in the literature. These topics were discussed by participants in greater detail than what was represented in the original literature.

Implications from these findings are that the following topics can be used as a guide to highlight the areas of Adlerian encouragement practices that Adlerian experts in this study believe to be most significant and impactful, and which might signal areas for meaningful future investigation. Additionally, all of the following topics related to encouragement have implications for teaching, learning, and professional practice. Some of these results might also extend to implications for further study of encouragement in parenting, and in socially interested belonging and contribution in healthy relationships, in general.

Education and professional practice. An examination of the eight themes that arose from this study might be used to enrich information that is used to teach, learn, and practice Adlerian encouragement. More specifically, by examining each of the eight themes from this study, one might grasp a richer description and understanding of the phenomenon of practicing encouragement. For example, when teaching encouragement, students and practitioners might be presented with a greater structure to understanding the purpose, qualities, and learning of encouragement. As instructors help learners become

practitioners, these groups might benefit from understanding the physiological, mental, emotional, and even spiritual feelings that often accompany experiences of encouragement that occur in counseling sessions with clients. They might learn to notice some of the more nuanced aspects of using encouragement in counseling to stimulate client change and movement through practicing intentionality, awareness, and attunement to clients. Finally, teachers, learners and practitioners may benefit from learning about experts' experiences described in this study. For example, participants talked about the flexibility and creativity that encouragement provides and the many ways in which they use encouragement to support clients with strengths, resources, motivation, education, skills, empowerment, human worth, hope, safety, and more. Overall, data from this study has strong implications for counselor education and practice.

Learning Adlerian encouragement. Participants plainly stated the importance of learning Adlerian encouragement through multiple means including formal education, training, observation, mentorship, experiential learning, and reflective practice. Some participants said that teaching encouragement also enhanced their understanding of it. Observational and experiential learning, primarily from teachers and mentors, were the most noted methods of learning encouragement for participants. This information has implications for teachers and learners of Adlerian encouragement as it highlights the importance of participating in observational and experiential learning exercises, as well as to seeking out interpersonal learning and establishing relationships with teachers and mentors.

Experts in this study punctuated the role of teachers, mentors, and experiential learning in their process of becoming an encouraging counselor; therefore, it would be

prudent to explore the significance of these experiences in the process of learning encouragement and how to be an encouraging counselor. Specific education of encouragement might create opportunities for learners to participate in vivo encouragement learning experiences and relationships with instructors, classmates, and/or mentors. For example, Participant #4 shared his personal insight in the following way:

> You can teach me some concepts and it's up to me to learn them. Teaching is really just giving me the terminology to interpret human experience. To me, that's all teaching does. That's what theory does. It gives us terminology, some common definitions, like we're talking about encouragement. We build these common definitions. But really, I'm very much like Dewey. I think it's the experience of the engagement and beginning to conceptualize those processes with learning and the teaching is where the learning takes place. I think you can teach about encouragement all day long, but people aren't going to learn it until they engage in that process.

He added, "And so I think we, as therapists, need to experience encouragement, as well as learn about it, in order to be able to use it better."

   Understanding discouragement. Adlerian experts in this study stated that an important part of being an encouraging counselor is to avoid practices that are likely to be experienced as discouraging. In the literature, discouragement is described as something that clients feel related to their unpreparedness to face challenges in their tasks of life (Dreikurs, 1967; Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Discouragement has been discussed in terms of the kinds of behaviors that discouraged persons choose, including the avoidance of taking risks which can result in lost opportunities to grow (Carlson et al., 2006). It has

been suggested that there are a multitude of ways that clients show discouragement (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Participants in this study, however, expounded on the topic of discouragement beyond what was found in the literature.

Discouragement, in the literature, is described primarily in terms of what a client is experiencing. Participants in this study elaborated on the client's experience, stating that included within the role of being an encouraging counselor, is the responsibility to avoid further discouraging the client. Participants explained that in order for counselors to avoid discouraging their clients, they must first discover, understand, and show sensitivity to their client's current discouragement. Further, they must also avoid increasing their clients' current discouragement or creating new discouragement. These participants explained that in addition to monitoring their clients' discouragement, they also believe that it is important to monitor and take responsibility to address their own. They talked about the ways that they aim to attune to and check in with themselves regarding their thoughts, emotions, and physiology before entering a counseling session, to discover if they are experiencing their own discouragement or to notice if they are experiencing anything that might prevent them from being encouraging. Sometimes they might need to make an adjustment which could include an emotional one, to better bracket something from their personal life, a physical one, such as to eat a snack, or others. The participants said that during sessions they continue to practice awareness and sensitivity to both their clients' discouragement and their own. Overall, participants explained that to be encouraging and to avoid being discouraging require both a level of self-awareness and an attunement to the client. This information holds significant implications for future research to better understand the role of discouragement in the

encouragement process. Future research may be directed at understanding how to more fully understand and address both counselor and client forms of discouragement. Information gleaned from future research may hold implications for the way that Adlerian encouragement is both taught and practiced. Students and practitioners may learn better ways to attune to clients to identify the specific areas and/or types of discouragement that clients are experiencing. They may also be trained to practice self-awareness regarding their own discouragement and way of being that potentially could be discouraging. Thus, participants' discussions in this study about discouragement may prove valuable to motivate and direct future research about discouragement's role in the encouragement process.

Movement. Adler (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956) stated that, "The law of movement in the mental life of a person is the decisive factor for his individuality" (p. 195). Concurring with Adler, participants in this study referred to movement as something clients do as an expression of their choices, whether or not they are consciously aware of them. Adler stated that one should pay attention to a client's movement because "everyone will introduce himself according to his law of movement" (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 330). Adler explained that a client's movement can tell more about the client than the client's words. He said that it is beneficial "for a while not to pay any attention to the words of the patient but instead to read his deeper intention from his bearing and his movements within a situation" because he explained that the counselor will see a client's personality "in action and revealed, not by what he says or thinks about himself, but by his acts interpreted in their contexts" (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 330). Overall, participants' discussions

about client movement agreed with Adler's of the importance of counselors to examine their clients' movements.

In this study, however, participants expanded the discussion of movement to also include the ways that a client and a counselor move in response to each other within the interpersonal relationship. Some participants spoke in detail about how encouragement plays a pivotal role in the occurrence of movements or shifts in movements made by clients, and also ways that encouragement is used by participants to help support those shifts in their clients. The initial literature review did not reveal writings by Adlerian scholars that placed the amount of emphasis on attending to these different kinds of movements within the counseling relationship to the degree that participants in this study did. Specifically, participants described their encouragement movements as responses to their clients' movements that are designed to move clients towards greater social interest. Examples provided by participants about responses to a client's movement included avoiding praising a client with narcissistic tendencies, not acquiescing to the demands of a client with a borderline presentation, not expecting a client to do something that they are not able to do, or expecting a client to do what he or she is capable of. Overall, participants explained that a counselor's encouragement movements in response to a clients' movements might take on a variety of forms, all done with the goal of helping clients to move closer to experiencing their needed social interest. Based on this finding, future research into encouragement-based interpersonal movements and counselors' conceptualizations of them might be an area for future study that would be beneficial to teachers, learners, and practitioners of Adlerian encouragement because it could increase their understanding of some of the finer points of encouragement as used in counseling.

Verbal and non-verbal encouragement. In addition to movement, most participants discussed both verbal and non-verbal aspects of encouragement. They talked about how they attune to verbal and nonverbal cues of clients in order to better understand their clients, to better understand their clients' sources of discouragement, and to monitor their clients' specific kinds of needs for encouragement. Participants also talked about how they use their verbal and nonverbal communication to encourage clients. Participants added that it is equally important to be aware of discouragement that might occur in the counselor's or the client's verbal and nonverbal communication. They explained that part of being an encouraging counselor is to not be a discouraging one, thus they recognize their own potential for feeling discouraged or for discouraging their clients further.

The role of verbal and nonverbal communication in Adlerian therapy was discussed by Adler, who said that nonverbal communication of a client can reveal more than their words (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). However, the literature did not expound on the verbal and nonverbal aspects of being encouraging and being discouraging to the extent that participants discussed it in this study. Therefore, a closer examination into these therapeutic dynamics would have implications for the teaching, learning, and practicing of Adlerian encouragement.

Encouragement flexibility and creativity. The flexibility and creativity of the Adlerian counselor has been discussed in the literature, however, in this study participants expanded a general understanding of it through providing not only examples and descriptions of unique ways in which they encourage clients, but also by explaining their rationale for their choice of encouragement. The details presented in this study,

about different encouragement scenarios, might provide teachers, students, and practitioners with a more intimate look into the counseling strategies and practices of Adlerian counselors using encouragement in flexible and creative. Moreover, many of the answers that participants gave offered valuable textural and structural descriptions to the understanding of Adlerian encouragement that illustrates that there is a skill level associated with an expert encourager. Because there might be an unlimited number of counseling scenarios for flexibility and creativity with encouragement, implications for this topic related to teaching, learning, and professional practice include the importance of observational and experiential learning opportunities, as well as of future research.

  Encouragement intentionality and awareness. Adler was clear and has been quoted numerous times to say that, "In every step of treatment, we must not deviate from the path of encouragement (quoted in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 342). This is a clear admonition for Adlerian counselors, however, guidance was not provided in the theory or in the literature about the ways this should or might be done. In the absence of theoretical instruction, this study represents the first in filling the gap to discover how expert Adlerian clinicians are counseling clients without deviating from the path of encouragement. Participants talked about knowing that they are practicing Adlerian encouragement because they are intentional about it and that knowing is also attended by experiences of awareness. This has implications for teaching, learning, and practicing Adlerian encouragement because following many years of practice, experts reported remaining committed to being intentional with and aware of using encouragement in session with clients and intentional in their commitment to be an encouraging presence.

Related to this is that fact that participants reported an improvement over time in their ability to encourage effectively based upon continued practice.

      Being with and a way of being. In this study, many of the participants discussed the deeper personal qualities of Adlerian encouragement as a phenomenon that occurs both within an individual and within an interpersonal connection with others. These deeper qualities were described as occurring through the personhood, personality, style, or way of being of the counselor, as well as within the counseling relationship wherein an encouraged client may experience it, as well. Most of the participants defined encouragement as an extension of their personal beliefs and convictions about humans and human nature that becomes expressed through their being. The most frequently used terms were "encouraging attitude" or "way of being", although some described it as more of an expression and reflection of their counseling or individual personhood. Some participants said that encouragement is a way of being that informs the way of doing. Participants described Adlerian counselors as relationship-oriented in a style that may go beyond a humanistic presence to include an active engagement, which is likely due to their strong affinity towards social interest. When they described their engagement with clients as something that extends beyond a way of being, it suggested that they were describing a way of being *with*, because participants stressed the cooperative and collaborative aspects of all relationships.

      Encouragement being described as counselor's way of being, has appeared in more recent Adlerian literature (Carlson et al., 2006; Watts, 2013; Watts & Pietrzak, 2000). This idea of encouragement being not merely something that a counselor does, but also a reflection of how and who the counselor is with clients has recently been suggested

by a small number of Adlerian scholars and experts in journal articles and texts, but has not been researched or examined closely. Participants in this study supported this assertion. They described a commitment to practicing encouragement as one that stems ultimately from one's convictions and beliefs about people and life, and one's beliefs in the tenets of Adlerian theory. Encouragement, then, manifests through an attitude, a way of being, or the counselor's style or personhood. Data from this study not only helps to provide empirical support of prior assertions, but it also serves to provoke future research inquiry into how encouragement is occurring not just on behalf of the client, but also as a powerful therapeutic phenomenon and felt experience within the counselor and within the counseling relationship.

Recommendations and Other Implications

I recommend that research be conducted on any one of the topics discussed above in order to continue the process of exploring Adlerian encouragement. As a multi-faceted phenomenon, Adlerian encouragement has many aspects, all of which seem to contribute to the picture, overall, of therapeutic success. Learning more about the various uses of encouragement in counseling would serve beneficial to teachers, learners, and practitioners. In addition to the above, I also recommend new research inquiry into the following topics of Adlerian encouragement, which are recommendations for new future research that arose from participant responses.

Development of an operationalized description and definition of encouragement. Many of the participants acknowledged the challenge in providing a comprehensive definition of encouragement, noting that one has not been formally established. In the absence of a clear definition, participants described encouragement in

ways that included describing its purpose, how it is used, its theoretical underpinnings, its value in counseling and the relationship, and others. Considering a primary role that encouragement plays in Adlerian therapy, implications for this finding would suggest that effort should be made towards the establishment of a comprehensive and universally accepted operationalized description or definition of Adlerian encouragement.

Define encouragement. Although phenomena such as encouragement and courage are difficult, if not impossible, to capture and confine within a concise definition, it might be useful to begin discussions among Adlerian experts to collectively capture the essence of encouragement in a form that provides a structure for explaining its defining features, purposes, therapeutic uses, etc. It would likely be useful to educators and students to have Adlerian encouragement conceptualized and then organized into a teaching/learning format. The establishment of an operational definition that allows for a counselor's unique personality and style might inspire the confidence of Adlerian therapists, as well as those of other theoretical orientations, to include therapeutic encouragement more often and more effectively into therapy.

Universal encouragement terminology. Another recommendation related to defining Adlerian encouragement is for Adlerians to establish terminology to capture the essence of how a counselor encourages courage in a client. Participants used a wide variety of terms to describe what the counselor is aiming for when he or she is encouraging a client: to awaken, uncover, infuse, give, embolden, foster, and build courage. Problematic with these terms is the fact that many of the participants explained that courage is something that clients innately possess and have their own ability towards, as opposed to something that they lack and depend on the counselor to provide. Thus, the

counselor does not give a client courage because the client already has it and can only use his or her own. Also, the counselor cannot take credit for either providing courage to a client or for the client's use of it because that would disempower the client. Needed is a term that signals the start of a client experiencing courage in a new way that does not indicate dependency on a counselor but rather illustrates the counselor's supportive role. For example, the term "realize courage" can mean both that a client becomes aware that he or she possess the needed courage, and that a client is realizing his or her potential for courage through acting on it. In this case one term captures both essences of the experience; what the client has discovered and also what the client is using. Participants plainly articulated that the action of courage rests solely on the client who has experienced a counselor whose personality, personhood, style, and/or way of being is encouraging. Thus, an implication of this study spotlights the need for terminology that captures the essence of the experience and also distinguishes the different roles of the dyad. The essence is of an interpersonal interaction between counselor and client wherein the counselor is being encouraging and the client has both an internal and an external action of courage.

Professional panel discussions. A final recommendation associated with defining encouragement would be to organize panel discussions, at conferences where Adlerians are gathered, about the role, processes, and other aspects of encouragement in Adlerian therapy. Discussions might center around establishing a universal theoretical concept of Adlerian encouragement as it occurs within the counselor, the client, and the interpersonal interaction of the relationship. Information shared among scholars and experts of Adlerian therapy and theory in a professional forum setting might stimulate

useful dialogue in order to explore a more comprehensive concept through sharing both their lived experiences and professional knowledge.

Development of a quantitative instrument. Several of the participants asked about an encouragement instrument. Another recommendation based on these research findings is to create an encouragement instrument for counselors to assess their encouraging versus discouraging attitudes and communication, as well as an encouragement instrument for clients that might uncover areas and causes of encouragement and discouragement. These instruments might also assist counselors and clients by increasing their awareness of both weaknesses and strengths in the encouragement process.

Feel or sense encouragement. Participants described a feeling that indicates to them that encouragement is occurring. This can occur on a level of noticing that it is occurring to a feeling that was described as a kind of deep interpersonal connection that participants said they experience with their clients. Discussion on this topic was not identified in the current Adlerian literature. This finding contributes valuable information to the understanding of this aspect of the experience of being encouraging and feeling encouraged. This information has implications for teachers, learners, and practitioners who can benefit from understanding the importance of being open, attuned, and curious about the intrapersonal and interpersonal experience of encouragement in sessions with clients and to embrace what appears to include a physiological aspect of the experience. One participant explained that the experience of encouragement may be occurring in the midbrain.

I also think that so many Adlerians, when they're expressing encouragement, it's

coming from their midbrain. It's more of a way of being than a technique. It is a

technique and all that stuff, and I'm not arguing with that, but I think because we

know, we're beginning to know so much more about the brain, that's probably

what's happening with a bunch of the Adlerians because that's just who they are.

This idea may align with recent brain research on attachment and on mirror neurons. For

example, outcome from these studies have indicated that mirror neurons are activated in

the brain during interpersonal connection in acts of empathy and other social behaviors

(Coutinho, Silva, & Decety, 2014). Therefore, an area for future inquiry might be to gain

a greater understanding of the brain's activity and the interpersonal biology that may be

occurring in the experience of encouragement. This data could serve to increase the

empirical support for the use of encouragement in not just Adlerian counseling, but other

approaches, as well. It may also shed light on aspects of improving the ways in which

therapeutic encouragement is practiced.

Participants also discussed the role of mirror neurons and findings from research

on interpersonal neurobiology pointing to human to human neural connections.

Participants also discussed their use of encouragement in the relationship building and

maintenance processes to create increased trust and safety. Further, participants pointed

out the need for interventions to support the increased number of clients who have

presented to counseling reporting trauma in recent years. Therefore, another

recommendation would be to explore ways in which encouragement helps to create and

build trust and safety in relationships, and how that information might assist in trauma

treatment.

Encouragement and cognitive complexity. Participant #4 talked about the concept of cognitive complexity and its relationship with encouragement. He stated that counselors need to be able to use encouragement in simple and in increasingly cognitively complex ways so that they are able to adapt to the cognitive levels and cognitive complexity of various kinds of clients. He explained that as Adlerian counselors mature, with practice and training, they can and should develop an understanding of how to use encouragement more fully and more skillfully. He said, "I do think training in the complexity of encouragement is important." When asked how he increased his cognitive complexity for encouragement he answered:

> Well, I think experience, and, again, coaching myself to be encouraging, and good supervision helped with that. . . . I did a lot of self-supervision, and self-critique, and watched a lot of people. . . . Having good role models, to witness that, I think is real important as well. . . . I just think it's so important to expose yourself as a counselor, to expose yourself to all of the different demonstrations and techniques.

Although other participants did not discuss the idea of cognitive complexity specifically, their descriptions of their learning curves with Adlerian encouragement illustrated what Participant #4 suggested; when they reflected on their educational and professional training, they had become more adept, over time, at the nuanced therapeutic uses of encouragement with their clients, allowing them deeper conceptualizations of its use with clients and more effective outcomes. Based upon this common learning trajectory, recommendations for future research could include an exploration into how to help learners of Adlerian encouragement use it in increasingly cognitively complex ways.

This might also help learners to understand the importance of remaining open and curious to ongoing educational experiences with encouragement and could prove beneficial to their long-term learning of how to use encouragement with greater cognitive complexity. Implications of research into the cognitively complex uses of encouragement may extend to the area of counselor supervision. Supervisors may improve their understanding of uses of encouragement with supervisees at various developmental levels in more appropriate cognitively complex ways, and, consequently, their supervisees might improve their encouragement skills with clients.

Encouragement and other counseling approaches. Several of the participants talked about the way that encouragement is an additive element of Adlerian therapy that is not specifically discussed in other counseling approaches. For example, behavior therapies, like Adlerian therapy, support the use of modeling, but Participant #1 clarified that modeling with encouragement offers more to clients in terms of their "gaining a greater strength and capability to meet a challenge than simply modeling, alone." Participant #3 said that without encouragement there would simply be some form of behavior modification. Regarding cognitive therapies, Participant #8 pointed out that Adlerians, too, pay attention to clients' cognitions by helping them to see how they are influenced by their private logic and mistaken goals; however, encouragement plays a differentiating role in these two therapies because Adlerians do not see one's cognitive beliefs as merely irrational or distorted, but rather as serving a purpose. Clients are encouraged to examine and validate the purposes that their cognitive beliefs serve so that clients are not pathologized or further discouraged. Participant #12 said that similar to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Adlerians understand the way that challenging

thoughts can be effective, however, Adlerians are sensitive to the particular situation of the client and his or her readiness for change. He said, "If they're not ready for it, you're about to discourage them." Participants also described humanistic counseling qualities, and said that Adlerians tend to those aspects of the relationship while also offering encouragement in order to help clients see what they can do and help them believe that they can do it. Participant #9 added that Adlerians may hold clients accountable, in a sense, by not letting them off the hook; in this way encouragement is used to help a client follow through with change. Based on these and other similar comments suggested by participants, a recommendation for further research would include an examination of encouragement as an additive component to other counseling approaches.

Encouragement and common factors of counseling. In addition to participants pointing out the additive benefits of using encouragement in therapy, Participant #4 suggested that Adlerians should explore the association of encouragement with the common factors of psychotherapy because he believes that encouragement integrates several of the common factors. He said, "It's hard to think of … well I'm thinking of Lambert's Four Common Factors and it's hard to talk about encouragement as being in just one of those factors, because it really integrates several of the factors, I think." Specifically, he explained that encouragement is used in the client common factors through increasing the client's self-efficacy. He said that encouragement also plays a role in increasing a client's faith, hope, and expectancy, addressing a second common factor. He stated that encouragement is a large part of building a therapeutic alliance and relationship, which addresses a third common factor.

Support for attention to the common factors in psychotherapy were provided by Wampold and Imel (2015) in the following way:

Factors such as the working alliance, empathy, expectations, psychoeducation of the disorder, and other so-called "common factors" are robustly related to outcome. Moreover, and importantly, those therapists who can form an alliance with a range of patients, have a sophisticated set of facilitative interpersonal skills, worry about their effectiveness, and make deliberate efforts to improve are the therapists who achieve better outcomes. (p. 2)

Carlson, Watts, and Maniacci (2006) previously outlined the connection of Adlerian therapy with the common factors and summarized:

The common ground between Adlerian psychotherapy and the common factors outcome research is indeed remarkable. The Adlerian model of psychotherapy, in agreement with that research, emphasizes the foundational importance of the counseling relationship and model and technique flexibility for attending to the extra-therapeutic and client factors (e.g., clients' strengths and abilities) and for building hope and expectancy of successful experiences in psychotherapy. (p. 40)

Further, they noted the use of encouragement within their description of the common factors. In an interview with Harold Mosak, he stated, "It would seem that there are some underlying common factors that make therapy work – when it indeed works. These ingredients are faith, love, and hope" (Mosak & Bluvshtein, 2019, p. 77).

Overall, by offering their clients a relationship founded on Adlerian tenets which are further strengthened by participants' personal beliefs in the therapeutic value and quality of the subsequent human to human contact, participants explained that they

believe that their clients will experience the safety to look within and outside of themselves more openly and honestly. Because Participant #4 suggested that encouragement might exist within the counseling common factors or qualify as a common factor on its own, and because participant responses supported the significance of encouragement in each of the aspects of counseling as described above by Wampold and Imel (2015), and outlined by Carlson, Watts, and Maniacci (2006), I recommend that future research examine of the role of encouragement within those two contexts. Specific inquiry could include discovering if encouragement possesses universal qualities that are appropriate and beneficial to clients across all therapies.

Encouragement and moral principles. After multiple reflections of the participants' transcripts of the phenomenon of encouragement and as the "essence" of encouragement began to unfold within my personal understanding, I noticed an implicit quality of encouragement that also seemed to fit within the paradigm of the five moral principles that are used as the cornerstone of the professional counseling ethical guidelines. As participants talked about the tenets of Adlerian therapy that are exercised through the counseling process using encouragement, it seemed that participants were describing autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, and fidelity. In concert with the moral principle of autonomy, the participants talked heavily about the importance of encouraging client empowerment and helping clients to make choices that benefit themselves in relation to others in the family, work, and social systems that they live in. Participants alluded to nonmaleficence when they said that besides helping clients act with courage, one of things they attend to the most is client discouragement, in the context of not causing harm. Participants spoke about the responsibility they feel to

monitor their own thoughts, feelings, moods, and physiology in order to not be discouraging to clients. Participants talked about how they attune to clients' unique personalities and styles and aim to avoid increasing their clients' particular discouragement. Regarding beneficence, participants identified the unique quality of encouragement as one that goes beyond other counseling approaches in that the counselor maintains strong beliefs in the capabilities and courage of their clients, and their clients come to understand that they do not give up on clients when others do. Regarding the principle of justice, participants talked about meeting clients not only where they are in life and in their life tasks but also within their position in society or the groups that they live and work in. Participants talked about helping clients understand how their choices affect those around them. And finally, regarding fidelity, participants talked about the primacy of the counseling relationship and their goal in creating a trusting relationship made up of equals so that the client will feel respected, accepted, and safe. Based on this finding, another recommendation would be to conduct a study around the ways that encouragement is found in the five moral principles that guides the ethical code of professional counseling. Implications would result in greater empirical support for the use of encouragement in counseling.

Socially interested aspects of encouragement in group therapy. Participant #3 talked about his work with groups. When asked if encouragement is the same in a group as it is with an individual, he answered:

> I think so. I think it's the same process. It's recognizing this individual and what
> their strivings are, encouraging them to strive for better things in their lives and

reach their goals. Yeah, it's the same thing, it's just magnified by the voices of others.

In keeping with the goal of client social interest in Adlerian therapy, Participant #3 elucidated the ways that group therapy represents a microcosm of social interest in the lives of group members. Therefore, recommendation for future research includes a study which would explore the similarities or differences in clients' socially interested movements in individual counseling versus group counseling. This examination might reveal ways in which counselors might more effectively tailor the use of encouragement within these counseling formats, as well as to help develop a group counseling model that makes use of the group format in order to create and maximize socially interested therapeutic outcomes.

Replicate this study. A final recommendation is to replicate this study with another group of Adlerian experts to see if any new and significant data emerges. If so, Participant #10 suggested asking the question, "What's so hard about encouragement?" in order to address the potential for counselors to struggle with encouraging particular clients. This type of ongoing research would serve to further validate or challenge the results of this study and continue the process of empirical inquiry on the topic of Adlerian encouragement.

Conclusion

At the start of this study, a literature review of Adlerian encouragement revealed a lack of formal research on this topic. Although there are numerous writings, including journal articles, conceptual papers, and book chapters about Adlerian encouragement, not one study which focused solely on the topic of encouragement was located. This research

study fills an identified gap in Adlerian research as an introductory examination of Adlerian encouragement in the lived experiences of expert Adlerian counselors using it in sessions with clients.

Through descriptions of their lived experiences of encouragement with clients, all of the participants contributed meaningful data to this study. Participants provided rich descriptions and examples regarding the definition, practice, and personal experiences of encouragement with clients. Participants described what encouragement is and also what it is not; and they stressed the importance of understanding the role of discouragement in counseling. Participants' verbatim quotes and responses to probing questions enhanced the breadth and depth of prior documented descriptions of Adlerians' understanding and uses of encouragement found in the literature. The findings of this study have implications for teaching, learning, and practice because teachers, learners, and practitioners of Adlerian counseling might glean information from this study that increases their understanding of the uses of encouragement and/or that stimulate their curiosity to discover more. Not only do the findings from this study support and enhance current Adlerian literature, they may also serve as a guide for future researchers because the themes that arose and the topics that the participants chose to discuss about Adlerian encouragement represent those which Adlerian expert clinicians in this study deemed most noteworthy. Overall, the findings of this study offer many opportunities for further research into the topic of Adlerian encouragement.

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VITA

Lisa M. Hand

EDUCATION

Date (year)	Degree	Major/Field of Study	Institution
Present	Doctoral Student	Counselor Education and Supervision	Sam Houston State University CACREP Accredited Program
2012	M.A.	Counselor Education	University of Houston - Victoria CACREP Accredited Program
1989	B.A.	Business Minor: Finance	University of Houston

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION/LICENSURE

Date	Organization	Title of Certification/License
2016	Association for Play Therapy	Registered Play Therapist
2016	EMDR International Association	Level I EMDR Certificate
2015	Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors	Licensed Professional Counselor
2015	National Board for Certified Counselors	National Certified Counselor

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Date	Position	Institution/Location
2015-Present	Licensed Professional Counselor	Private Practice Counselor
2017	Graduate Assistant	Sam Houston State University
2015	Licensed Professional Counselor-Intern	Private Practice Counselor

CLINICAL SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE

| 2017 | Supervised master counseling practicum student | Sam Houston State University |

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Date	Position	Institution/Location
1995-2015	Teacher	Providence Christian Academy
1985-1990	Commercial Real Estate Finance Packager	Post Oak Partners Los Angeles, CA

HONORS AND AWARDS

Date	Description of Award
2017	*Graduate Student Research Award* Sam Houston State University
2012	*Outstanding Graduate Student Award* University of Houston-Victoria, School of Counselor Education

PUBLICATIONS AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES

Journal Articles
Refereed Journal Articles
Watts, R. E., & Hand, L. (2016). Imaginary teams and reflecting as if: An integrative intervention. In P. Prina, C. Shelley, K. John & A. Miller (Eds.). *Adlerian Year Book 2017* (pp. 94-106). London, England: Adlerian Society UK and Institute for Individual Psychology.

Presentations
National-Level
Watts, R. E., Marks, D., & Hand, L. (2017). *Reflecting as if: An encouragement focused brief counseling process.* Presented at the 2017 American Counseling Association National Conference, San Francisco, CA.

State-Level
Carper, S. & Hand, L. (2018). *How to use cognitive complexity to improve your supervision.* Presented at the Texas Association of Counselors and Educators 2018 Mid-winter Conference, Austin, TX

Hand, L., Leggett, E. S., Boswell, J., & Watts (2017). *Using RAI with Kids: Techniques for Reflection Before Acting 'As if'.* Presented at the Texas Counseling Association 2017 Professional Growth Conference, Galveston, TX

Leggett, E. S., Boswell, J., & Hand, L. (2017). *Play Therapy Supervision.* Presented at the Texas Counseling Association 2017 Professional Growth Conference, Galveston, TX

Watts, R., Hand, L., Chandrika, & Kumaran (2017). *Something Old, Something New: Understanding and Applying Adlerian Techniques.* Presented at the Texas Counseling Association 2017 Professional Growth Conference, Gaveston, TX

Hand, L., & Leggett, E. S. (2016). *Mindfulness with parents.* Presented at the Texas Counseling Association 2016 Professional Growth Conference, Dallas, TX.

Membership in Professional Organizations

National

Date	Name of Organization
2016-Present	American Counseling Association (ACA)
2014-Present	Association for Play Therapy (APT)
2011-Present	Chi Sigma Iota (CSI)

State

Date	Name of Organization
2011-Present	Texas Counseling Association (TCA)

Local

Date	Name of Organization
2011-2015	Chi Sigma Iota – Mu Kappa Nu
2016-Present	Chi Sigma Iota – Beta Kappa Tau
2016-Present	Student Organization for Christian Counselors

Offices in Professional Organizations

Date	Position	Name of Organization
2011-2013	President	Chi Sigma Iota--Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society International, Mu Kappa Nu Chapter, University of Houston-Victoria.

Professional Community Service
2016-Present Pro Bono Counseling

Area of Expertise
Child and Adolescent Counseling