THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING DEVELOPING A

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

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by

Rena Gayle Strope

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Ann Strope. You made me promise to finish, and I finally did.

ABSTRACT

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Throughout a counseling graduate program, a student's theoretical orientation is a topic of high priority. As counselor educators, we know why this development of theoretical orientation is important, we have not explored counseling students' perspective on this process. A phenomenological approach was used to conduct an exploratory study concerning the development of a theoretical orientation of counseling students in a Southeastern university in Texas. Twenty-three students were surveyed, and six themes were identified concerning their development of a theoretical orientation: (a) program encouragement, (b) conflict during theoretical orientation development, (c) supervision and theoretical orientation, (d) defining moment, (e) ethics and theoretical orientation and, (f) outside work in development of theoretical orientation.

KEY WORDS: Theoretical orientation, Counselor development, Phenomenological qualitative research

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Anytime someone gives appreciation for my accomplishments, I have and will always give it back to God and my parents. God has given me the strength and grace to keep striving towards the goals I hope to achieve. My mother and father have given me the rest. My mom has taught me empathy that led to the field of counseling. My father

taught me to love and help others that again led to the field of counseling. They have both worked tirelessly to give me an education, to make sure I appreciated that education, and to understand the privilege that comes with an education. This culmination of love towards others and education inspired a passion in me that strives to become an educator in counseling.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

One of the most difficult decisions counselors-in-training face when they reach practicum is identifying a theoretical orientation that they can competently use. Theoretical orientation is emphasized from the beginning of counseling programs so that students realize the importance of practicing within a framework and having reasoning behind their techniques and methods (CACREP, 2009 Standards).

Professional identity development of counselors is partially derived from their choice of theoretical orientation and how they describe it (Jackson, 2010). Acquiring a theory that fits with one's personal and professional development is a difficult quest, and this theoretical orientation grows and changes as counselors develop (Murdock, Banta, Viene, & Brown, 1998) over the course of their academic training and professional career.

Background of the Study

Poznanski and McLennan (1995) defined theoretical orientation as a conceptual framework used by counselors to understand clients' needs. Theoretical orientation should help counselors understand the root of psychopathology and how as helpers, we can assist in alleviating the problems that result from their maladaptation (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012). Theoretical orientation also helps counselors in many ways. Understanding and using a theoretical orientation assists counselors in being able to explore relationships often overlooked, finding understanding from a specific perspective, and helping counselors assist clients in the effective change of their behavior, cognitions, emotional functioning, and interpersonal relationships. Theory

gives counselors guidelines and enables counselors to evaluate effectiveness (Boy & Pine, 1983).

Graduate counseling students often have difficulty choosing which theoretical orientation to use in their practice of counseling (Pruitt, 2014; Watts, 1993). Halbur and Halbur (2015) discussed how counselors may find that simply choosing one theoretical orientation may not be the right fit. They discussed how counselors go through training programs, evaluate their own personality and philosophy of life, use clinical experience, and explore evidence-based theories to search for a match of a theoretical orientation that melds with their counseling practice. Intentional counseling states that counselors must make an intentional cognitive shift and think in new ways; however, "understanding and integrating a personal theory of counseling is often a foreign process, especially to the neophyte helper" (Halbur & Halbur, 2015, p. 11).

The Intentional Theory Selection Model (Halbur & Halbur, 2015) is an example of selecting theory beginning with examining one's life philosophy, then school of thought, followed by making the choice of a theory to follow. Once a theory is chosen, goals can be developed, and then techniques can be used in relation to the theory and specific goals that counselors can develop for each client (Halbur & Halbur, 2015). This selection shows a smooth transition and is very similar to guides offered by other researchers such as Watts's (1993) *Developing a Personal Theory of Counseling: A Brief Guide for Students*. It seems that useful guides and explanations have been provided by experts in the field, but what is unknown is whether counseling students have used these guides to assist in developing their theoretical orientation.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of phenomenological studies in the literature addressing counselors-in-training theoretical orientation development. When reviewing the literature, theoretical development has been studied in quantitative ways (Martin & Carkhuff, 1968; Murdock, Banta, Viene, & Brown, 1998; Vasco & Dryden, 1994; Young, 1993), as well as in ways that looked at the influences and processes of theoretical orientation development (Bitar, Bean, & Bermudez, 2007; Southern & Devlin, 2010). There also has been qualitative research completed with counselors examining whether their theoretical orientation changes over time based on experience and work setting (Brandt, 1997). A dissertation similar to my study examined the theoretical orientation development of clinical and counseling psychology students (Mason, 2012). I was, however, unable to find any qualitative or quantitative research examining the experiences of counseling students and their theoretical orientation development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of counselors-in-training regarding their theoretical orientation development. With this study, I intended to give voice to counselors-in-training who were going through the process of understanding their personal theoretical orientation. My research was to benefit both counselor educators and supervisors who are training beginning counselors. By learning what counselors-in-training are experiencing during their development of theoretical orientation, counselor educators and supervisors can better assess how they are aiding or not in this process and adjust if needed. I gathered knowledge of what counseling students experience when choosing and using theoretical orientation with real

clients. Deciding what theoretical orientation to counsel within is a confusing endeavor, and one for which counselor educators and supervisors can provide guidance.

The results from this study can be used by counselor educators and supervisors because they are critical in the professional development of new counselors. Having a guiding theory is cited as critical in graduate training, therefore finding links and connections between specific theories and personal attributes could increase counselor educator and supervisors' abilities to assist counselors-in-training in their quest to find the appropriate theoretical fit (Halbur & Halbur, 2015).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study comes from the implications of how the themes found help counselor educators and supervisors better prepare counselors-in-training. This study focused on theoretical orientation development, so it is important to see how students conceptualize clients through the lens of their theoretical orientation. Case conceptualization is one of the professional skills that counselors must develop to better understand their clients and assist them with overall goals (Aladağ, 2013). To conceptualize clients, counselors need an idea, a framework, of how change occurs in human nature to understand how one will assist in positive changes (Corsini, & Wedding, 2014). With a better understanding of the experiences of counselors-in-training as they develop their theoretical orientation, counselor educators and supervisors may be able to (a) remove obstacles to the growth of the supervisee as he or she develops a theoretical orientation, (b) support the normal development process of acquiring a theoretical orientation, and (c) use knowledge to guide and strengthen what works in the development of a theoretical orientation. Phenomenological studies are critical in

research because while quantitative data helps us to find correlations and investigate the effectiveness of treatment interventions, qualitative phenomenological studies open the door to the stories of individuals experiencing a specific phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013). By taking this difficult practice of developing a theoretical orientation and investigating what individuals felt, learned, and overcame, we may be able to make the process easier for future counselors-in training.

Definition of Terms

CACREP

CACREP is the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs. CACREP accredits master's and doctoral degree programs in counseling and its specialties that are offered by colleges and universities in the United States and throughout the world (CACREP, 2009).

Counselors-in-Training

For the purpose of this study, counselors-in-training is defined as students who are in a master's level counseling program and are training towards licensure as a professional counselor. Students may be in CACREP or non-CACREP accredited counseling program. Counselors have a separate identity than helpers of other professions (Reiner, Dobmeier, & Hernandez, 2013). Also, I want to specify counselors-in-training in this study as students and not LPC Interns who have completed their graduate training.

Internship

Internship is defined as the semester during which counseling students complete clinical work in the field as part of their graduate training. CACREP (2009) defined

internship as a post-practicum clinical experience during which students refine and enhance their counseling knowledge and skills.

Licensed Professional Counselor

The Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors (2015) defined a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) as a person holding a regular license as a professional counselor who has the authority to practice counseling independently.

Professional Identity

For the purposes of this study, professional identity is defined as the integration of professional training with personal attributes in the context of a professional community (Nugent & Jones, 2009). Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) discussed that there will be self-labeling as a profession, an integration of skills and attitudes as a professional, as well as a perception of context in a professional community.

Supervised Practicum

CACREP (2009) explained that practicum provides for the application of theory and the development of counseling skills under supervision. Students must complete 100 hours during a supervised practicum.

Theoretical Orientation

This term refers to a gathering together and organizing of knowledge about a particular object or phenomenon, including human thinking, emotions, and behavior. When we apply this definition from Sommers-Flanagan and Sommer-Flanagan (2012) to counseling, theoretical orientation is a body of knowledge concerning how humans change. The main psychotherapies that are empirically supported include client-centered therapy, behavioral therapy, cognitive therapy, existential therapy, and Adlerian therapy.

Theoretical Framework

The two theoretical frameworks used in this study were Bandura's social cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1989) and the professional identity development theory (Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010). Both of these works are used to explain the process counseling students go through during the development both a professional identity and theoretical orientation.

Social Cognitive Learning

Bandura began writing about his theory by explaining that one's self-concept is a composite view of oneself that is derived from experiences and evaluations. Those experiences and evaluations are developed and learned from significant others in one's life. He then goes on to define self-efficacy as people's judgments of their capabilities (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura (1989) used his social cognitive learning theory to discuss self-efficacy in relation to cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. According to Bandura, those who have high sense of self-efficacy will visualize success scenarios and imagine executing activities skillfully, and alternatively, those with low self-efficacy are more inclined to visualize failure scenarios and judge themselves as inefficacious. This is the cognitive process in relation to social cognitive learning theory. Bandura pointed out that motivational processes are similarly bidirectional. One's self-efficacy directly influences how much effort one will exert in an endeavor and relate to how long they will attempt tasks in face of difficulties. Bandura also discussed self-efficacy in relation to our emotions by addressing the affect our beliefs in our own capabilities have on our stress and depression levels. Focusing on scenarios where we fail, and are overcome by

the tasks we wish to achieve, is a pessimistic stance that can lead low motivation and distress. On the other side, others are not bothered by the negative scenarios because they believe they can exercise control over potential threats, and therefore are not troubled (Bandura, 1989). Selection process is the last item explained by Bandura (1989). He stated that to a certain extent, people influence their life course by their selection and construction of environments. Bandura discussed career development as an example, stating that the more competent we believe ourselves to be, the wider career range we believe is available to us and the better we prepare ourselves educationally. By considering these four processes, cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection, and their relation to self-efficacy, one can better understand how people have a tendency for low or high development. When developing my study, I conceptualized students' development of theoretical orientation in the framework of self-efficacy and cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes.

Professional Identity Development

The next theory in my study's framework is professional identity development theory (Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010).   This theory has been used to describe the transformational tasks that are required for professional identity development by examining the lived experiences of counselors-in-training. In this framework, finding a personal definition of counseling, internalizing responsibility for professional growth, and developing a systemic identity are key in developing their personal identity. Personal attributes and professional training integrate together to become the "self as professional" (Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010, p. 22). It takes both personal attributes and training

to create the professional, so both of these characteristics were of concern to my study and incorporated into the literature review.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of counselors-in-training regarding their theoretical orientation development? This research question was phenomenologically based (Maxwell, 2013) and helped to extend research previously completed on psychology students while the current study focused with counseling students.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was the fact that the surveys were all collected via paper surveys. This meant I was unable to collect nonverbal communication as additional data for the study.

Delimitations

One delimitation to my study was that it was be provided only to one Southeastern university in Texas which limits its transferability to similarly situated locations. I also did not include students in the pre-practicum stage of counseling where they first choose a theoretical orientation, because the students at this time are only practicing counseling on other students and not real clients. My participants included students at the internship stage of their counselor education program.

Another delimitation was a time constraint, as I only used the information from one semester (the internship stage of the counseling program) and did not observe the progression of choosing and developing a guiding theory. It is a common occurrence for one's guiding theory to change as students gain awareness of themselves and their

profession. While students are changing their theoretical orientation, it may be difficult to find correlations between their theory preference and their professional identity.

Assumptions

I assumed that the participants answered honestly. I also assumed that the phenomenological approach using a survey design is the best method for gathering the information for learning about the experiences of counselors-in-training developing their theoretical orientation.

The last assumption was that the participants' self-report information about their chosen theoretical orientation includes a foundational understanding of their theory. Students who were chosen as participants were required to have a prerequisite of psychotherapy theories coursework before entering the practicum class.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five main chapters. Chapter I includes the purpose and significance of this study. This chapter provides a description of why I chose to research this topic and what possible benefits it may have to the academic and practicing community.

Chapter II contains pertinent literature in relation to key elements of the study. The review of the literature begins by explaining counselors' professional development and training and relates these to theoretical development. I identified articles that supported using theoretical orientation to ensure that it was a topic that has consequence to be researched. Both quantitative and qualitative bodies of research are analyzed and compared to the present study to ensure its uniqueness. Lastly, I found authors who

describe how theoretical orientation development occurs in order to have a foundation in which to base the questions I asked of participants.

Chapter III is descriptive of the design and methodology used in the study including data collection and data analysis. This chapter gives rationale for why I chose certain analysis for evaluating the data collected. Chapter III outlines my phenomenological approach which was chosen to gain insight into counselors-in training experiences in development of theoretical orientation. A survey design was chosen to obtain experiences from counseling students from a larger pool of participants in a wider geographic region.

Chapter IV contains the results of the study. The results of this study are qualitative and therefore was reported in grouped categories. Each category includes quotes directly from the study to provide the reader with adequate understanding of each theme.

Chapter V is the discussion piece of my dissertation. In this chapter, I discussed how the results are congruent as well as discrepant with results of previous studies. I also discussed new findings that have not been found in previous studies. I concluded this dissertation with how future researchers may use this study to continue finding valuable information for counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

In the present review, I analyzed materials published between 1968 and 2014. For this review, I chose two themes that were identified as counselor development and theoretical development. I used the Interactive Literature Review Process (IRLP) involving eight steps created by Combs, Bustamante, and Onwuegbuzie (2010) to create my literature review. Stages one through three involved exploring my own belief systems, initiating the literature review process, and selecting a topic. Stages four through six of the IRLP included exploring the literature, formulating a focus, and analyzing/interpreting/integrating literature (Combs, Bustamante, and Onwuegbuzie, 2010).

I began by creating a circular design literature map (Creswell 2012, p. 97). The literature map helped me to identify key terms involved in my study. By evaluating the articles I found, I was able to group each of the terms in a circular design and decide which themes were the main themes of the literature review and which were the subthemes. On my circular design literature map, I created two circles to break my literature review into two main themes, one theme in each circle. The first circle, professional development, with smaller circles that would contain the subtheme with articles supporting that subtheme. The other half of the page followed the same design with subthemes concerning theoretical orientation. Using the IRLP method, I first developed the subthemes. By grouping articles together three subthemes emerged: professional development and theory; development and fit of theory; and personality and theory development. These subthemes were then grouped together in one main theme

called theoretical development. Two subthemes became apparent when evaluating the remaining articles found in my initial literature search: training and counselor identity. These subthemes were grouped together under professional development. After choosing these themes, I did an additional search of the literature categorizing each reference into a subtheme. Then, I chose to close my literature search, stage seven in the ILRP. I proceeded to stage eight, writing the review of literature.

The final stage was evaluating the process and product. This will be a continuing process for me because I hope to research counselor development within these topics throughout my career. I discovered that there is a gap in the literature concerning the process and confidence of choosing one's theoretical development. This gap would be an interest for further research in order to better equip counselor educators who are preparing future counselors.

My Belief Systems

Based on my training and experience as a counselor, I found having a theoretical orientation to be extremely important in helping train and develop beginning counselors. In my own practice, I conceptualize my clients from an existential view point. This allows me to explore the different relationships my client has with his or herself, others, their environment, and possibly his or her spirituality. When considering these relationships, I work with my client in identifying any difficulties in the client's world and how these difficulties might be processed and changed. This is my specific process, and it is unique to each client and specific to our therapeutic relationship. New counselors will need to find their specific belief in how humans change based on a

theoretical orientation of counseling to conceptualize, and then create a treatment plan for change. In this literature review, I included articles to support this contention.

Initiating the Literature Review Process

The following databases were used in my search for literature pertaining to the topic of theoretical orientation of counselors-in-training and professional development: Academic Search Complete; Dissertations and Thesis – Full Text; Professional Development Collection; PsycARTICLES; Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection; PsycINFO; ProQuest; and EBSCOhost-all databases. The search words counselor-in-training, theoretical orientation, professional development, and graduate student, were used along with variations of the terms (e.g., theory, beginning counselors) along with changing the order of words placed in each field. The reference section of the articles I found was then reviewed in order to search for additional articles. As a result, the search led to 25 articles and dissertations on the topic of professional development and theoretical orientation. Using the remaining pages of chapter two, I went into detail concerning the themes and subthemes chosen above. I begin by describing the articles and excerpts from books and dissertations that I use to build the foundations for professional development and theoretical development as it has been researched in the present literature.

Professional Development

To strengthen our profession, we have to work together to improve the perception of counseling to the public and to advocate for professional issues (American Counseling Association, 2009). Counseling involves research, mental health, and ethical practices, which all involve the continued persistence of growing our profession.

Counselor development for new professionals is an exciting process because it involves both personal and professional growth. Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) found that the path to integrating the personal and professional identities was energized by counselors-in-training commitment to their chosen profession. Those researchers used focus groups to learn about the professional development of four different groups: (1) students accepted into counseling programs but had not begun classwork, (2) trainees who had completed 80% of their coursework, but had not started practicum, (3) trainees who had completed practicum but had not begun internship, (4) and lastly students who had completed internship but had not graduated. Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) found that students in the last two phases of their educational career, ones who have counseled clients during practicum and internship, experienced professional identity development.

The authors explained how the actual process of counseling is essential to professional identity development, specifically related to counselors-in-training integration of expert knowledge, personal values, professional values, and membership to the professional community (Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss, 2010). Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) also discussed the importance of the integration of the professional self and the personal self: "This integration includes a strong consistency between ideology—one's values and theoretical stance—and methods and techniques used by the individual" (p. 507). Another important dimension of counselor development that goes along with their professional development involves the overall training of counselors.

Training

Counselor education is aimed at training new counselors to become professional counselors with essential knowledge, skills, and a professional identity (Aladağ, Yaka, Koç, 2014). Training is a critical piece to counseling. For example, counselor interns know how to treat or refer clients by being trained by their supervisors (Henriksen, Nelson, & Watts, 2010). Aladağ (2013) stated that "counseling can be seen as the vehicle of development, change and life enhancement in individual's life" (p. 72). Counselors assist in the development of their clients, but they must first develop necessary skills and competencies that will assist their clients in making changes. Professional skills include different types of abilities such as relationship building, using helping/counseling basic skills, client case conceptualization, diagnosis of client symptoms, strategies for helping clients reach goals, and the use of counseling interventions (Aladağ, 2013). Clinical supervision is central to the clinical training and development of new counselors and indispensable to establishing core counselor competencies (Kozina, Grabovari, De Stefano, & Drapeau, 2010). This means that mentoring the professional development of future counselors and teaching the skills necessary for effective and competent practice is an integral part of supervisors' and counselor educators' responsibilities. Ronnestad and Skovholt (1993) explained that modeling and feedback are two methods that are used to help students develop the professional skills they need to provide counseling. Modeling occurs when a supervisor demonstrates a counseling skill or technique. Supervisors can provide two types of feedback: corrective feedback meant to give instruction on how to improve a technique or counseling process, or confirmatory feedback which provides support and confirmations of what a counselee has done. The authors of this study

described how anxiety impacts the development of counselors, and that supervisors need to be aware of this anxiety to provide support or offer assistance when needed (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993).

Counselor Identity

When representatives of the American Counseling Association (ACA) (ACA, 2009) discussed principles that unified and strengthened the profession, they stated that "sharing a common professional identity is critical for counselors" (p. 1). Counselors have a separate identity from psychologists, psychiatrists, wellness coaches, marriage and family therapists, and social workers. Mellin, Hunt, and Nichols (2011) discussed how the professional identity of counselors was distinguished from psychology and social work. Those authors found that professional counselors ground their identity in their developmental, prevention, and wellness focus.

Reiner, Dobmeier, and Hernandez (2013) discussed the difficulty that counselors have in achieving recognition, specifically as counselors in the mental health community. Part of what distinguishes counselors from psychologists and psychiatrists is the wellness approach versus the medical model. What distinguishes counselors from social workers and wellness coaches is the focus on establishing and maintaining a theoretical orientation to conceptualize and use as a framework when working with clients (Reiner et al., 2013). Jackson (2010) examined how the process of articulating a theoretical orientation impacted the identity statuses of graduate students from the beginning to the end of a semester. In his review of the literature, Jackson suggested that counseling students' articulation of a personal theoretical orientation was an essential component of their professional identity development. Jackson explained that his view on the findings

were that "personal alignment with a professional theoretical orientation is more a developmental process than a curricular outcome" (p. 127). His reasoning behind this view was because as a result of his study he found no significant differences between articulating one's theoretical orientation and the development of a professional identity whereas other research has shown significant differences. The difference between his study and the previous research was that Jackson's (2010) study was conducted with students prior to their engaging in clinical work, and the past research was with students who have had clinical work. Jackson (2010) concluded that articulating one's theory may be helpful for developing one's professional identity when occurring in conjunction with clinical experience.

In conclusion, an important piece of the professional identity of counselors is that counselors–in-training chose a theoretical orientation of counseling. By undergoing training in counseling basics and supervision, counselors were able to understand human development and how change occurs so that we can be ethical practitioners for growth in our clients (Halbur & Halbur, 2015). This leads us to the next question in this literature review: how does theoretical development occur?

Theoretical Development

One important realization is that understanding theoretical choice is something that develops as a counselor develops (Murdock, Banta, Viene, & Brown, 1998). Counseling students have found that their theoretical choice does not always match their personal style, and it must be altered or further developed to be a good match for the student (Mason, 2012).

Martin and Carkhuff (1968) explained that they used an experimental design to explore the course of training to become a counselor. They found that the most important change in counseling was the personality change of the trainees. These researchers assessed graduate trainees in their summer counseling practicum by looking at pre- and post-measures through self-assessments, ratings by clients, and interviews with "significant others." Martin and Carkhuff found that when training to become a counselor, the graduate students in their study experienced significant improvement in interpersonal functional and constructive personality change. Dissonance will most likely arise when life experiences contribute to modifications in personality and/or in the understanding the therapist has of the therapeutic process which is not accompanied by changes in theoretical orientation (Vasco & Dryden, 1994). Young (1993) conducted a survey to identify trends in counseling by polling members of two ACA divisions. He discussed how theories are important because they give a sense of meaning and direction to counselors. Theories are used as a guiding system to organize incoming data from the client and for developing a treatment plan. This survey was mailed to 200 members (138 responded) of the American Association for Counseling and Development (now ACA) as a single-page questionnaire made up of 11 questions including demographic questions, counseling theory questions, and questions about techniques. Young (1993) concluded that despite favoring an eclectic viewpoint (largest groups were: 32% identified as eclectic, 22% as person centered, and 10% as family centered), the respondents seemed to feel strongly about maintaining a coherent theoretical position.

Murdock, Banta, Viene, and Brown (1998) pointed out that one important realization was understanding that theoretical choice is something that develops as a

counselor develops over time. This brought Murdock et al. to question why there is not more research conducted about the theoretical orientation of seasoned counselors. Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2012) discussed how a good theory should explain what causes psychopathology and offers specific strategies for how to alleviate these problems. "In psychology, theories are used to generate hypotheses about human thinking, emotions and behavior…these personal theories guide our observations and evaluations of others" (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012, p. 9).

Professional Development and Theory

Rogers (1979) stressed the need for counselors to have congruence between a counselor's practice techniques and his or her theoretical beliefs. Fear and Woolfe (1999) argued that "in order to function effectively, therapists need to operate within a theoretical orientation which encompasses the same underlying metatheoretical assumptions as their personal philosophy" (p. 253). Fear and Woolfe (1999) pointed out that a necessary condition for counselor development is congruence between philosophy and theoretical orientation.

Spruill and Benshoff (2000) discussed the importance of beginning to use and develop one's theoretical orientation early in one's counselor development. Students begin to develop their own personal theory of counseling along with skills to understand and evaluate different counseling approaches.

Development and Fit of Theory

Counselors-in-training can be assisted in choosing a theoretical orientation and understanding their epistemological beliefs which underlie their emerging preferences for and reactions to particular styles of counseling by taking questionnaires. For example,

Corey (2008) wrote a student manual to go along with one of his textbooks to assist students in identifying their theoretical orientation. Corey wrote a chapter for each of what he considered the main theoretical orientations of counseling. At the beginning of each chapter in the student manual, there was a self-inventory. Each question was rated from one to five, one being I strongly disagree with this statement to five being I strongly agree with this statement. The statements would have direct correlations with the theory's core concepts, so the higher one's score on the inventory, presumably the more one agrees with that theoretical orientation of counseling. Measuring and conceptualizing theoretical orientation has been a topic of interest, and Poznanski and McLennan (1995) did a review that evaluated fifteen instruments covering the years 1955 to 1994 that were proposed as measures of counselors' theoretical orientations by providing summary information regarding psychometric properties and potential usage of each measure, with emphasis relating to validity and reliability. The researchers used 15 different assessments of counseling theoretical orientations as their measures in the analysis. They found that one third of the measures explored lacked evidence of reliability, and when reviewing all fifteen measures, there was limited evidence of validity (Poznanski & McLennan, 1995). They explained that many of these instruments are multi-item measures which have a general lack of validity and reliability. Poznanski and McLennan only remarked that only two instruments out of the fifteen they analyzed demonstrated utility, and neither was likely to be comprehensive. If scales and assessments are not considered comprehensive in regards to students finding their theoretical orientation, counselor educators must also support counselors-in-training during their development.

Guiffrida (2005) conducted a critical review of counselor education literature that focused on student acquisition of theoretical orientation. Guiffrida discussed two current models of teaching theories: modernism and constructivism. He noted the importance of self-reflection when finding a correct fit and learning about theories, and because of this he outlined an alternative pedagogical framework called the "Emergence Model" to assist in the process of developing a theoretical orientation. Guiffrida explained that instead of using the modernist approaches of learning theories thorough readings, lecture, or small-group discussions, counselor educators should use constructivism and transformative learning to have students observe and reflect upon their own, real-world practice to better understand theory. This Emergence Model suggested that students be encouraged to formulate interventions with clients based on their instincts and preexisting knowledge (Guffrida, 2005).

Congruence is extremely important for supervisors and counselor educators, recognizing the importance for counselors-in-training to be aware of their personal presupposition and foundations in order to find a good fit with their theoretical orientation. During graduate training, counselors shift from the role of a sympathetic friend, to a professional who works on practicing counseling skills within a specific chosen theoretical orientation. This uncertainty leads to novice counselors grasping for concrete ideas and rigidity in roles. While techniques provide this security, conceptualization from a specific framework is more difficult to grasp.

Who We Are and Theory Development

Researchers have been interested in and investigated different areas that contribute to the development of a personal theoretical orientation by counselors-in-

training (Burwell-Pender, 2009; Freeman, 2003; Watts, 1993). Studies have been conducted evaluating the relationship between personality traits and a theoretical orientation (Clark, 1989; Ciobea & Nedelcea, 2012; Ogunfowora & Drapeau, 2008), as well as how perceived life influence correlates with theoretical orientation (Rosin & Knudson, 1986).

Clark (1989) completed one of the first exploratory studies for his dissertation over the relationship between personality type, theoretical orientation, and counseling style in therapists. His study used fifty-one mental health therapists who were licensed to practice in Arkansas. Clark used two inventories to examine personality, the Gregorc Style Delineator and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a Theoretical Orientation Questionnaire to learn about participant's theory, and the Modified Usual Therapeutic Practices Scale to assess for counseling style. He did not find strong relationships between his three variables when he conducted his study, but he did learn that the majority of his participants perceived their personality to be related to both their effectiveness with and preferences for working therapeutically with certain types of clients (Clark, 1989).

However, other research articles have been written more recently examining theoretical orientation and personality have found significant results. Ciobea and Nedelcea (2012) investigated therapists belonging to different theoretical orientations and looked for differences between personality and values. These researchers used the California Psychological Inventory, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the General Emotional Intelligence Scale, and the Rokeach Value Survey with 387 psychotherapists. Four different schools of theoretical orientation were identified as humanistic-

experiential psychotherapy and used for this analysis: Ericksonian psychotherapy, psychodrama, and cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy. After completing their analysis, the authors reported significant differences in personality between participants claiming different theoretical orientations. They also used comparative analysis to find statistically significant differences between three theoretical orientations in regards to values: humanistic-experiential psychotherapy valuing equality, exciting life, self-respect, and social recognition; Ericksonian psychotherapy valuing mature love and salvation; and cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy valuing a world of peace (Ciobea & Nedelcea, 2012). Ogunfowora and Drapeau (2008) also explored the relationship between personality and theoretical orientation preferences in 493 psychotherapy practitioners and students. They used the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised and the HELACO Personality Inventory. The researchers used hierarchical multiple regressions and found that personality predicted preference for the humanistic/existential, cognitive/behavioral, psychodynamic, and feminist theoretical orientation (Ogunfowora & Drapeau, 2008).

Perceived life experiences have been another area researched in regards to theoretical orientation. Rosin and Knudson completed a study investigating whether perceived life experiences were influential in the development of theoretical orientation using a mix of 40 psychologists who were either clinical psychology graduate students or experienced therapists. The participants identified as either behavioral psychologists or psychodynamic psychologists. The researchers found that participants in the psychodynamic group reported significantly more mental illness in members of their families of origin, provided significantly more personal reasons, rather than professional, for seeking therapy, reported significantly more conflict within their families of origin,

and also reported seeking personal therapy more often than the behavioral group (Rosin & Knudson, 1986).

Miller (2006) was interested in examining the similarities found in counselors-in-training by using the Holland personality type codes: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. He asked students who were in a graduate counselor program to complete the Counseling Orientation Scale and the Self-Directed Search. He found that counselors showed an overwhelming dominance of the "S" type found in the first position using Holland's types. The "S" type stands for social and is commonly found in the helping fields such as counseling, nursing, and social work (Miller, 2006). Arthur (2001) concluded in an exploratory research study that the presence of personality and epistemological differences between psychodynamic and cognitive/behavioral/behavioral psychotherapists. Bitar, Bean, and Bermudez (2007) stated that because congruence between personal values and theoretical orientation is central to the theory selection process, a thorough exploration of personal values, their influence on the process, as well as the values inherent in the theories is an important aspect of the process of theoretical orientation development. Murdock, Banta, Viene, and Brown (1998) found that philosophical variables, interpersonal control, and theoretical match with supervisors all predict theoretical orientation.

Personal values have also been discussed as an important piece of exploration when selecting a theoretical orientation of counseling (Brandt, 1997; Morris, 1984; Watts, 1993). One quantitative study, however, failed to show support for a directional relationship between interpersonal values and participants' chosen theory (Morris, 1984). Morris explained that it appeared that his results lacked variability in the students who

participated in the study; preference for one counseling orientation over another, because the majority of students chose client-centered approach. This leads to the implication that further research needs to be conducted inquiring about personal values and the development of theoretical orientation.

Halbur and Halbur (2015) discussed the idea that where we are in life influences the choice of theoretical orientation. An important fact that they profess is that "one's life philosophy is an ever-changing, ever-emerging construct" (Halbur & Halbur, 2015, p. 17). This idea of where we are in life and what we have experienced as compared to our selection of theory has not been qualitatively discussed for counselors-in-training in the literature that I have found. While research has been conducted on the influences and processes of theoretical orienta tion development (Bitar, Bean, & Bermudez, 2007; Southern & Devlin, 2010), what is missing is perspective of the perceptions of what is helpful in the development of theoretical orientation.

In sum, professional development and theoretical orientation are integrally related, and part of becoming an ethical counselor is developing one's theoretical orientation. There are many factors working when choosing one's theoretical orientation. This, in conjunction with the fact that the researchers (Corey, 2008; Halbur & Halbur, 2015) support that theoretical orientation can and sometimes should change, it can be a difficult and scary choice for counselors-in-training to make. The authors cited in this literature review also spoke to the fact that assessments of theoretical orientation are not as accurate as counselor educators would like them to be (Poznanski & McLennan, 1995; Poznanski & McLennan, 2007).

Support for Choosing Theory

Research has been conducted by authors who asked the question: "Is it the end of theoretical orientations?" (Smith 1999). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the ACA Code of Ethics (American Counseling Association, 2014) both support the development of a theoretical orientation by counselors-in-training. Researchers also support the development of a theoretical orientation by future counselors (Corey 2008; Corsini & Wedding 2014).

Pruitt (2014) described his process of his development as a counselor from confused graduate student into a licensed practitioner. Pruitt discussed his realization that although different theoretical orientations and techniques showed similar outcomes, this did not mean he should ignore the practice of using a specific theoretical orientation while counseling. Even though there are many empirically supported treatments available to counselors it does not proceed that all of them should be eclectically used to understand human behavior. Boy and Pine (1983) detailed six reasons why choosing a theory is important to counseling. The first is that theory aids in finding unity and relatedness within the diversity of existence from a specific perspective. The second is that theoretical orientation can compel counselors to examine relationships they would otherwise overlook. Third, theory gives counselors guidelines which are operationalized by which to work and enables them to evaluate their development. Boy and Pine (1983) explained that their forth purpose stated theory assists in focusing on relevant information. The fifth purpose for a theoretical orientation is that it helps counselors assist clients in the effective change of their behavior, cognitions, emotional functioning, and interpersonal relationships. The sixth reason is basic but key, and it is that theory

helps counselors evaluate both old and new approaches to the process of counseling. All six of these ideas are purposeful and are reinforced by the following researchers.

Qualitative Studies of Theoretical Development

Qualitative research is a process of building a complex, holistic picture of a social or human problem or culture through the process of analyzing words and reporting detailed views from individuals and groups (Creswell, 2012). This section in my study focused on qualitative studies the authors used to investigate the development of a professional counseling theoretical orientation.

Brandt (1997) used qualitative interviews in his study to examine whether theoretical orientation changes over time based on experience and work setting. The author of this study employed semi-structured interviews on ten counselors with a minimum of a master's degree from a CACREP accredited institution. He wanted to find the descriptions and perceptions of why and how theoretical orientations change. He asked participants what their theoretical orientation was, how it was chosen, and how it has changed or has not changed over time. Brandt transcribed each interview, and then he returned these transcriptions to the participants to review for any corrections. He also took notes during the interview process and journaled after to assist in the process of finding recurring patterns or themes. Brandt coded and analyzed the data, and then refined the data into categories. Factors reported by participants which influenced changes in theoretical orientation were fit between theoretical assumptions and personal beliefs. Other factors influencing change were pressures such as managed care and limited number of sessions allowed by the institution or agency where the counselor worked (Brandt, 1997).

Another study that is very similar to the one I completed was a phenomenological dissertation that used grounded theory methods to examine 15 counseling and clinical psychology doctoral students' experiences when developing their theoretical orientation (Mason, 2012). Mason interviewed each participant for 45-65 minutes, and then he transcribed each interview verbatim. He sent the transcriptions to participants to review for accuracy, and several participants responded with small edits and elaborations. Preliminary findings in the form of a table of results, a five-page condensed outline, and the complete chapter of results with quotations were also sent to participants to comment or provide reactions. Mason used four analytic strategies in his grounded theory design to examine his data: asking questions, memo-writing, coding, and constant comparisons. Mason also used two other investigators to assist in coding and analyzing the data.

Mason (2012) discovered qualitative themes in which he stated that development of theory was ongoing, fluid, and dynamic. Trainees reported that they sought a psychotherapy theory that reflected their personality characteristics, beliefs, values, and interests. Personal factors found by researchers included socio-cultural identities, families of origin, and therapy experiences, while specific professional factors included supervision experience, coursework, and program structure. Additionally, exposure to a variety of theories, trial and error application of theory in clinical practice, experience as a client in personal therapy, involvement with professional organizations and attending scientific and professional conferences also contributed to the development of a theoretical orientation. Mason also explored what trainees identified as hindering their theoretical orientation development. Themes identified in this area of concern were negative supervisory experiences, limited guidance or coaching, insufficient time and

attention, and problems with coursework. My study further increases perceptions of development of theory by asking the perceptions of master's counseling students versus doctoral psychology students.

Models of Theory Selection

Southern and Devlin (2010) provided an outline of how counselors chose their theoretical orientation. They stated that the process begins in undergraduate coursework and during interactions with professors. Theoretical orientation is then further shaped by exposure to the various theories, modeling of theory selection and application, and enhancement of clinical conceptualization provided by graduate clinical and academic training. Using client feedback in regards to what is helpful was found to be useful in the development of a counselor's theory, as well as consultation, workshop participation, and continuing education (Southern & Devlin, 2010). Bitar, Bean, and Bermudez (2007) also found that client feedback as an effective approach when working on developing one's theoretical development. These authors learned that hearing similarities from clients within their feedback over a period of time helps therapists to identify and confirm patterns that become part of their orientation.

Corsini and Wedding (2014) described becoming a skilled clinician as building a repertoire of techniques and broad strategies that fit a consistent theoretical paradigm, being able to hone various skills and recognize when to use them. Technical eclecticism is a term defined as selecting the best treatment techniques or procedures for the person and the problem (Corsini & Wedding, 2014).

Watts (1993) described a guide that he generated for assisting students. This guide includes four stages with six steps. The four stages consist of exploration, examination, integration, and personalization.

Exploration contained the first two steps. Exploring personal values and convictions about human being and life in general is the first step. Step two involves learning about the major theories of counseling and psychotherapy, exploring them, and choosing one that resembles most closely your personal values and beliefs from step one.

Beginning the examination phase, stage two, you will examine the counseling theory chosen in step two by extensively researching primary source material to understand if you agree with this theory or not. If one decides they do not agree with the foundation, and this theory does not truly align with your values and beliefs, you will begin step one again. Step two is important to step three, so that you can truly understand how to apply your theory in practice with your clients, and you will not feel misaligned because of lack of knowledge versus lack of alignment with your own personal values. Step four is to examine the degree in which you are comfortable using this theory, and how helpful you feel that this theory is helping you assist your clients. Once you have understood the theory thoroughly, if you find that the theory does not parallel your values when you apply it during counseling, you will want to revisit step one. Phase three is integration.

Stage three is integration and encompasses step five where substantial intellectual and experiential knowledge of the counseling theory you have chosen is acquired, and you begin integrating aspects of other theories into your chosen theory. This can only begin with a thorough understanding of your chosen theoretical orientation. You can

integrate techniques from other theories, or constructs from other theories that are philosophically consistent with your original theory. The last step is in phase four, personalization.

Personalization involves making your own unique personal theory which is a natural process when you go through the above steps in a cyclical nature. Your theory will evolve as you continue to research your own values, your chosen theory, and the techniques and aspects that you integrate into your theory of counseling. Watts encourages counselors and counselors-in-training to strive to be consistent theoretically and philosophically (Watts, 1993).

Halbur and Halbur (2015) wrote a textbook that students can use when developing one's theoretical orientation. Very similar to Watts's (1993) guide, they discussed exploring oneself as well as reading original works to learn more about your chosen theory. A theory sorter example is shown on pages 31-36 of the textbook to show how you can use tools to help during the theory selection process. Corey (2008) also developed a theory sorter to assist counseling students with this important choice.

The above explanations give excellent guidance in how counselors can demystify the process of selecting and applying a counseling theory. When compared to the themes pulled from the qualitative studies in this literature review, there are similar findings such as participants reporting choosing a theory that reflects their values and gaining knowledge of their chosen theory, both of which are mentioned in Watts's guide (Brandt, 1997; Halbur & Halbur, 2015; Morris, 1984; Watts, 1993).

Summary

This literature review was composed to identify areas of development in counselors and specifically, their development of a theoretical orientation of counseling. What has not been explored directly is a qualitative study looking at theoretical orientation at different stages of development. This study was conducted to gain useful information for counselor educators and supervisors who are assisting graduate students in their paths to become counselors by learning what their experience was in developing their theoretical orientation. As discussed earlier in this chapter, theoretical orientation is highly important in a counselor's development. By asking what counselors-in-trainings experiences are in the development of theoretical orientation, we can gain insight into this process and therefore be able to provide better guidance. I will be using Watts's (1993) guide for developing a personal theory of counseling, as well as Halbur and Halbur's (2015) Chapter Three "Top 10 Ways to Find Your Theoretical Orientation" (pp. 27-44) to create a survey to better understand what students are experiencing during different phases of their growth in finding their theoretical orientation of counseling.

Counselors and counselor educators are both encouraged to explore and develop deeper understandings of their theoretical orientation. Fear and Woolfe (1999) stated that "counsellors who adhere to a theoretical orientation which does not share the metatheoretical assumptions of their personal philosophy will find themselves at a cognitive dissonance" (p. 260). As humans and professionals, we develop, and it is important to be sure that our theoretical orientation aligns with our overall growth for our professional and personal selves.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe experiences of counselors-in-training regarding their theoretical orientation development. I used a phenomenological approach so that I could describe the common meaning of the participants' experiences. Horn (1998) described phenomenology as not problem-driven in the sense of cause and effect, nor interested in deriving theory, but as "elaborating the individual meanings that are embedded in everyday existence" (p. 606). Using this definition, I used a phenomenological approach because it best suited the purpose of my study.

Research Design

Maxwell (2013) discussed the notion that there are strengths and logic in using either a qualitative or quantitative research design. Researchers use one design versus another to answer different types of questions. Maxwell explained that qualitative research uses a process theory where one sees the world in terms of people, situations, events, and the processes that connect these. Qualitative researchers work to help in the understanding the meaning of the events, situations, experiences, and actions that participants are involved in which aligned with the purpose of my study.

Erford (2008) also provided a description of different types of quantitative and qualitative designs. Quantitative researchers rely on mathematical calculations to characterize the data, while qualitative methods rely on words. Because I wanted to be able to use the words of my participants to relay their experience, again, I found a qualitative design to be more appropriate. There are many approaches within the

qualitative realm from which I had to choose. Erford (2008) explained two qualitative approaches that I considered using: ethnography and case study. Ethnography was an option because it describes the cultural characteristics of a group in its natural setting. Ethnographers try to understand the experiences of a group to interpret behavior and study meaning. While ethnography looks to "describe, analyze, and interpret" (p.108), my purpose would not be to interpret the meaning of the participants' experiences. Case studies are also a qualitative research approach. This approach uses multiple data collection techniques on one or more cases to explore a bounded system (e.g. an activity, event, process, or individuals) (Erford, 2008). My research purpose was designed to look at a specific process, but the intention was to understand how a larger group of individuals experienced this process versus only a few individuals. In the end, I decided that a phenomenological design would best fit the purposes for my research.

Creswell (2013) stated that phenomenological studies can be used to describe the common meaning of people's lived experiences of a concept or culture. He discussed this concept as an approach to suspend all judgments about what is real. Creswell explained to approach individuals' experiences with curiosity and a sense of not knowing before the concept or culture is founded on a more certain bias. Researchers using the phenomenological qualitative approach wish to explore a group of individuals who have all experienced the same phenomenon. My study was best suited to a phenomenological approach because I wanted to examine how individuals, counselors-in-training experienced a specific phenomenon, their development of a theoretical orientation.

Creswell (2012) also described different types of qualitative and quantitative research designs to conduct a study. One in particular that fit the purpose of this study

was survey design. Survey designs are procedures in which one administers a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people to learn about a larger population. He discussed how surveys can help explore individual opinions and identify important beliefs and attitudes.

Specifically, I used a cross-sectional survey design which collects data at one point in time to examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices (Creswell, 2012). This was helpful in gathering data about the perceptions of counselors-in-training over their development of a theoretical orientation, specifically during the internship phase. Internship courses in counseling programs occur just before graduation and entrance into the professional field. The survey was paper-based. Using surveys assisted in gathering data quickly from a Southeastern Texas university. I began by requesting permission from the program chair to allow the study to be completed at the university. I then asked each professor teaching in a supervised practicum or internship class if I could visit each class once to provide the paper-based survey that would take approximately 30 minutes. I used this time to explain the purpose of my study, confidentiality, and that the study was voluntary. I allowed the rest of the time for the students to read over the consent form, sign, and fill out the survey.

Halbur and Halbur (2015) described understanding one's own life philosophy and a specific school of thought before developing their personal theory of counseling. Once the counselor begins practicing, they need to be able to formulate goals and use techniques to meet those goals within their theory of counseling. This model is a process that all counseling students must learn and experience. A phenomenological study

therefore fit my purpose because I explored the experiences of counseling students while developing a theoretical orientation.

In sum, my research design was appropriate for the purpose of investigating the lived experiences of counselors-in-training regarding their theoretical orientation development. As stated above, phenomenology is used to explore the lived experiences of a group of individuals. Using a survey design can assist with understanding attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices of individuals on a large scale. Both practices, phenomenology and survey design, matched with the purpose of my study.

The research question I answered for this study was: What are the lived experiences of counselors-in-training regarding their theoretical orientation development? I sought insight on the process and internal experiences of the counselors-in-training when trying to integrate their chosen theoretical orientation into the practice that occurs during internship. The following chapter provides the sample population, explains the research design, and describes the survey questionnaire and how it was constructed. Then, I inform readers on how I collected and then analyzed my data.

Participants

Qualitative research varies in the number of participants required for recommended practices. Creswell (2013) suggested that for a phenomenological study that 5 to 25 participants would be sufficient to achieve saturation. While it would be best to have a large number of participants to have confidence in the results from a quantitative research perspective, I used a much smaller number because in a qualitative research study you collect a sample seeking saturation and as Creswell noted that could

be achieved at a lower number. Because I used a phenomenological survey design, I sought to find 20-30 participants for this study, all participants were internship students in master's level graduate counseling programs in Southeast Texas.

In chapter four, I have provided a detailed description of those who participated in my study. I collected data from each participant that included gender, age, semester in the program, ethnicity, and theoretical orientation. Age, gender, and ethnicity provided useful information so that readers were able to understand what populations this sample represented. All participants were in their first or second internship class, but I specifically asked about the semester in the program to identify any correlations with the development of their theoretical orientations and the rate that students proceeded through the program. A short demographic questionnaire was included at the beginning of each survey to obtain these characteristics which will be shown later in this chapter.

Instrumentation

Moustakas (1994) explained that a phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions. The instrument used for this qualitative research study was a survey that I have developed. The survey questions were aimed to gather information about the experiences of counseling students' development of their theoretical orientation.

Development of Survey Questions

To create the questions used in the survey, I conducted an extensive review of related literature and developed questions following the text by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014) *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. Some survey questions were also based on my personal experiences with having

developed my theoretical orientation and having experienced an internship in a graduate

level counseling program. The survey questionnaire began with demographic

information, starting with asking each participant to provide a pseudonyms to provide

anonymity. Then, I proceeded to use questions intended to explore their perceptions of

their own development of theoretical orientation.   Questions were phrased in order for all

participants to understand in a similar manner. To ensure that all questions were

interpreted the same way, I consulted with peers in the counseling field to ensure that

questions were clearly understood and asking the same thing to each individual

(Creswell, 2012). Another important value for all questions is that each item would

motivate an answer from each participant and allow them to recall and report the

information asked (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

Survey Questions

Dillman, Smyth, and Christian, (2014) described how to create useful close-ended

and open-ended questions, which were both used for this survey. I began the survey with

close-ended questions to obtain the demographic information that would provide a

description of my sample. I used open-ended questions to ask about the phenomenon I

studied in order to receive longer, descriptive data versus one-word answers. The

questions to be used in the study are as follows:

1. Pseudonym (will be used for confidentiality):

2. Gender: (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

3. Age: (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

4. Ethnicity: (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

5. Semester in the program (example: if this is the Summer of 2016, and you began in the Spring of 2016, it would be your 2nd semester):

6. Internship I or II:

7. Please write and define your theoretical orientation: (Corey, 2008; Halbur & Halbur, 2015).

8. Did your graduate program encourage students to explore personal beliefs and values in preparation for choosing a theoretical orientation? Yes, No, Explain (Watts, 1993; Halbur & Halbur, 2015).

9. Did your graduate program encourage and/or provide assistance with understanding the specific orientation that you chose to begin practicing? Yes, No, Explain (Watts, 1993).

10. Describe the types and use of techniques used during your practice of counseling? (Halbur & Halbur, 2015).

11. Explain what role if any did supervision play in your development of theoretical orientation? (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993).

12. What role does theoretical orientation play in the development of ethical counseling practice? (Mason, 2012).

13. Describe a defining point where your theoretical orientation and practice came together?

14. Describe a time where you may have experienced incongruence between your counseling theoretical orientation and practice? (The last two questions were created by me to identify critical development instances).

The questions in the survey was analyzed with the use of peers identifying and clustering themes. This process will be further described in the data analysis section.

Positionality

I was first introduced to theories of counseling during a counseling class at the University of Texas at Austin during my bachelor's studies. I then proceeded to have theories classes and discussions in other curriculum courses during my master's and doctoral training. Through these learnings, I came to agree that counselors need to choose one, or integrate two theories in a congruent manner, to be able to ethically practice and conceptualize how humans are able to change.

Creswell (2013) described researchers using bracketing to take him or herself out of the study by discussing his or her personal experience. I journaled about my experience, reflecting on my own time as an intern in counseling practicum and also about the experience of reading and clustering. This helped me to identify my personal experiences and set them aside from the experiences of the individuals in the study. I was better able to validate the meanings behind participant responses and reduce the risk of imposing my own views onto the results. I also used the process of epoch by completing a pre and post interview of the interviewer. Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins, (2008) explained how this process is a type of debriefing that assists the researcher to evaluate his or her own thoughts on the topic the investigators are interviewing about.

My dissertation committee contributed their own bias in regards to the analysis of theoretical orientation. Dr. Richard Henriksen Jr has taught theory and related courses for more than 20 years. He believes that students should develop a single theoretical

orientation that is used to conceptualize the client and client issues. He does not believe that theory drives interventions instead he believes that the needs of the client drive the choice of interventions. Dr. Henriksen focuses on helping students develop a theoretical orientation that incorporates their basic beliefs about people. He viewed his beliefs as helping students with the process of developing a theoretical orientation.

Dr. Yvonne Garza Chaves explained that having taught theories and participated in supervision of counseling students she believes her research bias is related to the idea that students should choose one theory rather than stating they are eclectic or prescriptive. She does have more tolerance for students who are technically eclectic, if they are able to specify how the techniques are linked. In sum, she values monogamy to a theory and tolerates promiscuity in technique. It is theoretical promiscuity that aggravates her because while she knows students are able to have higher order thinking; she believes students are unable, so early in their experiences, to have a vast understanding to apply eclecticism with the integrity that it demands. As an aside, and maybe considered a bias, she has always believed theory class should be "theory and application" and be extended across two semesters. She does not feel that this bias will get in the way of your research. She is curious about honest results and how to use the information provided by students to improve her teaching and supervision.

Dr. Chi-Sing Li has taught master's internship and doctoral supervision for a number of years. He is also a LPC and LMFT supervisor in Texas since 2004. He believes that counseling students should practice conceptualization skills through different theoretical lenses before they choose one or two theoretical approaches to practice with clients during practicum under the guidance of a supervisor. Dr. Li

emphasizes on assisting students in the process of developing an effective theoretical orientation based on their personal and professional experience, beliefs and values, and the needs of clients. He also alludes to the fact that our theoretical orientation may change over time based on our life experience.

Data Collection

Following the receipt of IRB approval, participants were recruited from a Master's level counseling program in a Southeastern Texas university in person. I used criterion sampling (Creswell, 2012) to find counseling students enrolled in the internship course during their graduate programs. Criterion sampling involved selecting participants that met my predetermined criterion for inclusion in this study. I narrowed down my criteria by selecting one university in Southeast Texas where I would recruit my participants. To be in this study, the participants had to be counseling students currently enrolled in Internship I or II.

I used guidelines from Dillman, Smyth, and Christian, (2014) for web survey implementation. I contacted the program chair of a counseling program at a university in Southeast Texas. Dillman, et al. discussed personalizing contact to the highest extent possible, which I did by introducing myself, my excitement for my study, and why I felt this counseling program would be appropriate for conducting my survey. Dillman, et al. also explained the importance of keeping time in mind, for example, I did not attempt contacting chairs during large counseling conferences or periods where both professors and students would have been busy such as during final exams. I emailed the program chair at the beginning of the semester requesting permission to contact the professors who instructed the internship courses. I then was able to email the two professors who

were teaching that semester, and requested to join each class once during the semester. I explained that I would be available any day to come at the time the professor preferred and would take 15-20 minutes to explain and conduct the survey.

I explained the research purpose and ethical practices of survey research, as well as provided my contact information in case they had any questions regarding the survey. Once the informed consent page was signed, participants filled out a demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire was followed by the survey questions.

Creswell (2013) discussed how participant sample sizes range in phenomenology studies from 1 to 325, a wide range. A smaller range was mentioned in Creswell's earlier text (2012) of 5 to 25. Morse (1994) stated that at least six participants were necessary for a phenomenological study if participants had multiple contacts. Another researcher stated that after twelve interviews saturation can be reached and few new phenomena were likely to emerge after those twelve (Guest, G., Bruce, A., & Johnson, L., 2006). I recruited 23 participants who completed the study from three different internship classes. I had planned to attempt to interview six to ten of the participants after obtaining the surveys, but after reviewing my results and conferring with my dissertation chair, I found that I had met saturation.

In sum, data collection did not begin until IRB approved the study. I emailed the program chair. Then after approval, I emailed requesting to attend the internship courses to conduct my survey. I traveled to three different internship classes and explained my voluntary study. After giving consent, participants were able to answer the demographic questionnaire and survey questions.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis included clustering the data into common categories and removing overlapping and repetitive statements. The resulting clustered themes were used to develop textural descriptions and then structural descriptions to describe the meaning and essence of the phenomenon being investigated: the development of a theoretical orientation (Moustakas, 1994). I chose to use the modification of the Van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994) for the process of data analysis, and it is described in the following nine steps.

Step 1. This first step used in the analysis of phenomenological data is horizontalization, which involves treating all data as equal. To complete this process, I first transcribed each survey onto a word document, and then I identified every expression relevant to the experience of developing a theoretical identity (Creswell, 2013). This involved reading each response to pull out everything that had meaning to the study by highlighting each response in my document that was relevant using different colors that identified different expressions that later became topics.

Step 2. The second step is reduction and elimination. I reduced and eliminated verbatim statements by deciding if the expression contained a moment of the experience sufficient for understanding and being able to be abstracted and labeled as a theme. I examined all the quotes that related to the development of a theoretical orientation on my word document allowing me to identify and delete quotes that were too similar to a previous quote or did not answer the survey question. As a result of this step, I was able to delete irrelevant quotes and also reduce the number of redundant quotes leaving me with 15 pages of data instead of the 16 pages of data I began with. I was left with thick,

rich data that I was able to use for the next step. Using the remaining data, I was able to

cluster comments that had similar meanings and then develop themes that were

representative of the participants' words.

Step 3. This third step was to thematize the invariant constituents, which involved

grouping the horizons together to identify themes, which is a new label that creates a

category. I copied each quote on a word document, and then began organizing those

quotes by the most similar responses. This was where I was able to identify six themes

by organizing the quotes into six groups.

Step 4. During the fourth step, I took each theme, for example program

encouragement, and applied it to each invariant constituent that I had listed for this

theme. I did this to confirm each invariant constituent fit within one of the identified

themes.

Step 5. During this step I constructed an individualized textual description of each

theme including verbatim examples of each theme to demonstrate the theme's meaning.

Quotes were used to support the theme.

Step 6. An individual structural description of each theme involved examining the

emotional, social, and cultural connections between what participants say and the textural

description of the theme. For example, many participants' words expressed a conflict

when developing their theory, as was identified in the creation of the theme "Conflict

during Theoretical Orientation Development"; however, one participant did not

experience this conflict.

Step 7. I transferred the answers from each survey question and organized them

into my themes within an excel spreadsheet. The themes I compiled in the end were

directly related to the questions of my survey, giving it structure by looking at all the responses side by side. This allowed me to reorganize my themes by dominance. I found some to be more dominant than others.

Step 8. To create a composite structural description, researchers have to examine the emotional, social, and cultural connections of participants' experiences. I recognized how the culture of this one specific counseling program affected the experience of these participants when developing their own chosen theoretical orientation.

Step 9. Finally, a textural-structural description of the meaning of the experience (essence) was constructed. This involved integrating the structural (emotional, social, and cultural connections) with the textural (direct statements) together to understand the overarching phenomenon of the students at a specific Southeastern Texas university developing their theoretical orientation (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of data collection and analysis is the word that Creswell (2013) explained was often used in the place of validity in qualitative research. Research is a critical piece in the field of counseling, but without using the appropriate method and ethical, trustworthy procedures, the results found will not be of use. I did not use data analysis software during this research study.

I used several methods described by Maxwell (2013) to increase the trustworthiness of the study. One method suggested for qualitative researchers is to collect rich data by using direct quotes from my participants in the result section. These quotes came directly from the written responses from the open-ended survey questions. I also used quasi-statistics so that the reader may have an exact idea of how many

participants agreed with a particular theme. Quasi-statistics give a more accurate account of the data (Maxwell, 2010). I recognized and reported discrepant evidence when individuals report data that differs from the majority as well to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Maxwell, 2013).

In sum, I used the modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis to determine themes from the survey questionnaire and interviews. Bracketing oneself when doing qualitative research and using ethical practices that ensure trustworthiness of the research are key in creating a study that will be beneficial to the field of counseling. I used journaling when creating my survey, before conducting the study, and while reviewing my data to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Journaling was a very important component in this study, because in the development of my own theoretical orientation, I experienced conflict and growth. By writing about my experience in reading and organizing the data, I was better able to view the responses from an analytical perspective.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methodology and design of my research study. The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions of counselors-in-training enrolled in internship classes of their development of theoretical orientation. I reviewed different methods of research, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, and decided that a phenomenological study best suited the purpose of this study. I designed an online survey that included both open-ended and close-ended questions. The data was analyzed and the responses clustered and grouped into themes using the modification of the Van Kaam method. I discussed the trustworthiness of my

data by reviewing the purpose of quotes and quazi-statistics, and reported on saturation

and discrepant data.

CHAPTER IV

Results

In this chapter, I introduced the participants by outlining the information provided in the demographic questionnaire. Next, I provided the participants' responses to the questions of defining counseling and what was their theoretical orientation. I then began to outline my results beginning with the themes that had the highest majority to lowest majority. The themes that were determined from this study are: Program Encouragement, Outside Work in Developing a Theoretical Orientation, Supervision and Theoretical Orientation, Ethics and Theoretical Orientation, Defining Moment, and Conflict during Theoretical Orientation Development. Lastly, I provided the composite structural description and the textural-structural description of my study by explaining this sample's cultural impact and the overall essence of developing a theoretical orientation.

Participants

For this study, I was able to recruit and engage 23 counselors-in-training who volunteered to participate in my study. All participants who began my study completed the study. The participants included twenty-one women and two men, and their ages ranged from 23 to 57. Participants provided their own racial/ethnic descriptions that included African-American or Black (2). Caucasian or White (15), Hispanic (5), and one identified as "mixed. They were asked what stage of clinical training they were in by identifying their semester in the program and internship level. Participants ranged from being in their fifth semester to their ninth semester. Seventeen reported being in their first internship, while the other six stated they were in their second semester of internship.

Definition of Counseling

Twenty-two out of 23 participants provided definitions of counseling. One participant did not identify a definition of counseling. These participants defined counseling in ways that resulted in the creation of the following five themes: *helping*, *goal/change*, *relationship*, *therapeutic environment*, and *services and resources*.

Nine participants all used the idea of *helping* or guiding when defining counseling. Ammie described counseling as "helping clients identify and resolve their own problems and make appropriate decisions. Helping clients gain self-awareness and find meaning in life." Jackie also discussed counseling in the parameters of helping and making decisions. Counseling to her is "helping individuals learn and make decision about their life, helping the client to be able to navigate their own lives." Nam stated counseling was "being able to help individuals in need. Recognize their strengths in order to help them through life's challenges." Darcy explained counseling as "meeting a person where they are at in their life and helping them get where they want to go." Anna stated that counseling was "helping clients find a way to cope with life difficulties and eventually help them lead a therapeutic lifestyle. The idea is to do it in an empathetic and genuine way. Help find the inner strengths of individuals." Incarnation stated, "counseling is a process that helps guide clients, identify, and explore self in a safe, therapeutic manner."

Al and Gypsy described counseling in the frame of heling by discussing guidance and being of service. Al defined counseling as "the guidance of individuals, couples or families to gain insight or find resolutions for various life crisis or problems," while to Gypsy counseling is "being of service with a sacred trust to humans who seek." Cancurl

also used the idea of guidance by stating that "counseling is where individuals help guide others through their struggles and reach their goals.

Three participants followed Cancurl's focus on counseling involving *goals or change*. Tammy stated counseling refers to "the process that takes place between two or more individuals where the goal is self-actualization." Jess stated "counseling is a therapeutic approach that has the goal of assisting a client towards something that they identify as a goal or point of progress." Sandra explained counseling occurs "through being empathetic, genuine, and acceptance, change is facilitated with the client."

Five participants defined counseling with the idea of it being a relationship. Jane Doe used the previous theme of goal and relationship in her definition. She reported that "counseling is a working relationship in which counselors help their clients process their thoughts and feelings and work with the clients to discover their goals and serve as a guide to achieving them." Kassie stated that "counseling is a medium, a relationship, that when formed adequately can empower the client to gain self-understanding and develop skills necessary to navigate life's challenges." Eunice explained that counseling was "a professional relationship with an individual or family to enable him/her/them to be able to develop strengths to deal with their problems."

Another participant discussed the relationship by the different ways in which counseling can be provided: "a professional relationship between the counselor and a person, group, or couple that focuses on mental health wellness" stated Oprah. Counseling is a "therapeutic alliance with client and counselor geared toward extending furthering mental health continuum by utilizing the clients' skills, abilities, and resources," according to Taylor.

Two other participants described instead counseling in terms of the environment that counselors create. Sue defined counseling as "a safe place for individuals to express themselves in order to work through problems and connect in a therapeutic way to a counselor." Counseling to Misser was "providing a therapeutic environment where clients are able to share any concern without the fear of the therapist breaking confidentiality (restrictions apply). Counselor is a facilitator in the self-discovery of the client."

One participant also discussed the environment, but keys in on another piece of counseling which are tools. Mowana explained her "definition of counseling is to provide clients with information and tools to be able to independently solve their own issues. This is provided in an empathetic and nonjudgmental environment." Danny also keyed in on the subtheme of tools stating that counseling is "offering services and resources for individuals in need."

Chosen Theoretical Orientation

Twenty-two participants provided their perspectives on the development of a theoretical orientation with one participant leaving the question blank. Eighteen participants identified a single theory or explained how they integrated two theories. Four participants gave responses that described their theoretical orientation using multiple theories. One participant did not report her identified theoretical orientation.

Seven participants reported having directive theoretical orientations such as cognitive behavioral therapy, solution focused, and reality therapy/choice theory. Jane Doe "follow[s] cognitive behavioral theory." She "strongly believe[s] that our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are all connected, and that if we are able to become aware of that,

then we can gain control and change our negative cognitions, feelings, and behaviors."

Jess reported here theoretical orientation as being CBT and solution focused. Sue stated

that she believes in "CBT because of the large connection between thoughts, feeling[s],

and behaviors." Cancurl reported being "solution-focused. Focused on the point on the

present and future, not necessarily the problem. Miracle question, exception to questions,

scaling questions are some of its techniques." AA and Oprah stated that reality

therapy/choice theory was their theoretical orientation. Nam described a transition of

theoretical orientation: "I began as a strict REBT; however, I have begun to migrate more

towards Gestalt and person-centered as I completed supervision. However, now that I am

interning at a domestic violence context, I use TF-CBT."

Incarnation, Kassie, Sandra, and Gypsy reported Adlerian for their theoretical

orientation. Kassie is Adlerian, explaining that "clients struggle in various ways

throughout their lives because they have been discouraged through various experiences,

relationships, and interactions throughout their life." Sandra stated, "I am primarily

Adlerian; however, I integrate trauma and attachment theories." Gypsy stated "Adler

supplemented with cognitive behavioral."

Jackie identified as client-centered and Adlerian. "I believe self-awareness is a

huge part of counseling and that the past has a huge marking on that person in the future,

helping individuals learn and make decisions about their life." Darcy and Misser's

theoretical orientation are Person-centered. He expanded that, "I believe in providing the

client with a safe therapeutic environment, free of judgement. I believe clients have the

power to change. I will rely on conceptualization of actual and ideal self to help facilitate

client towards their goals."

Eunice and Al reported having humanistic theoretical orientations that they integrate with directive techniques. Eunice identified person centered as her theoretical orientation with eclectic techniques. Al "focus[es] on building relationships through Rogerian unconditional positive regard and reflecting content and affect. [He] also use[s] solutions-focused questions to help clients discover and meet goals."

Taylor identified as Gestalt. He explained he is "geared toward helping the client attain awareness and identifying current moods by focusing on the present mental state." Aimee succinctly reported her theoretical orientation as "existentialism".

Four participants named many theories or used the word "eclectic" when describing their theoretical orientation. Danny is "eclectic-person centered, Gestalt, cognitive behavioral, reality. The belief in choices, the capacity to choose your direction." Anna identified as existential, but being "very eclectic" using "many CT techniques". Tammy explained that her theoretical orientation is "integrational" because "all theoretical orientations have pros and cons. I am highly person centered with flavors from CBT, narrative, solution-focused, and reality approaches." Mowana stated her theoretical orientation is CBT, child centered play therapy, and Adlerian.

Themes

Participants were asked a variety of questions to assist in learning about their experience of developing a theoretical orientation. After the responses were documented, I analyzed the data, and six themes emerged: (a) *program encouragement*, (b) *outside work in development of theoretical orientation*, (c) *supervision and theoretical orientation,* (d) *ethics and theoretical orientation*, (e) *defining moment*, and (f) *conflict during theoretical orientation development*.

Program Encouragement

Two of the questions on the survey were geared towards evaluating students' experiences of their program's encouragement in regard to development of a theoretical orientation: *did your graduate program encourage students to explore personal beliefs and values in preparation for choosing a theoretical orientation?*, and *did your graduate program encourage and/or provide assistance with understanding the specific orientation that you chose to begin practicing?*

Exploring beliefs. Eighteen of the 23 (78.3%) participants reported that their graduate program encouraged the exploration of personal beliefs and values in preparation for choosing their theoretical orientation. The remaining five participants reported they did not feel support from the program when developing a theoretical orientation. Tammy believed her program assisted her explaining that "in every class I was asked to evaluate my personal beliefs and values and assess how these influence my theoretical orientation," and Anna reported "we were encouraged to find a theory that best aligned with our personal views." Nan stated that "the text and my professors stressed the importance of using my own worldview to help me identify a theory." Jane showed a similar thought when she described that "throughout this program, we have been encouraged by multiple professors to explore our personal beliefs and values and find a theory that matches us best."

Four students provided examples of how their programs assisted in the exploration process. Misser stated that his "program highly encouraged personal exploration in values and beliefs. These came in the form of papers and assignments (family genograms/interviews) along with identifying personally held beliefs," and Jess

stated that "almost all courses and professors asked us to do this in some type of way. Some included class discussion, case conceptualization, papers, and reflections." AA reported that she "was encouraged to research the theories first and then to use techniques and perspective each step of the way. During my first internship semester, I felt CBT was not an adequate fit and I was guided in choosing the more fitting reality therapy/choice theory." Sandra reported that "multiple classes have asked through assignments to explore personal beliefs and values. Theoretical orientation should extend and act as a natural lens in which you conceptualize clients and others."

In qualitative research we often look for the presence of discrepant data and the following reflects the identification of such data. Several participants did not make a clear connection between the exploration of beliefs and values and the development of a theoretical orientation. One participant believed the counseling program went too far in having students explore their beliefs and values. Eunice stated "in every class to the point of exhaustion. I am a mature student and feel tired of reflecting on my values, etc. even though I understand the importance of it." Two students felt that while they were encouraged to explore beliefs, that this exploration was not related to the focus of theoretical orientation. Oprah stated that "No, it was not direct towards the goal of choosing a theory" and Danny further clarified that "I was encouraged to explore personal beliefs and values throughout the graduate program, but not in relation to choosing a theoretical orientation. Rather beliefs and values were explored in relation to how I respond to particular statements in session." Another participant thought that instruction "lacked focus of our strengths and values."

Assistance with understanding. Participants were also asked if their program encouraged and/or provided assistance with understanding and practicing their chosen theoretical orientation. Fifteen (65%) out of 23 participants reported that their program was helpful, four (17%) reported their programs were somewhat helpful, and four (17%) reported that they did not feel as if their program assisted with understanding their chosen theoretical orientation.

Misser described how she sought help with choosing a theory and received it, "I disclosed to a professor I was having trouble identifying a chosen theory. They were more than happy to help, providing readings and theoretical information." Mowana gave specific classes as examples with helping her choose a theory stating that her "theories class as well as ethics were both very thorough when pertaining to providing assistance with understanding my specific orientation. Play therapy basics was also helpful." One student spoke in depth about her experience. AA stated that,

> I was encouraged to conceptualize cases, design treatment plans, and practice
>
> techniques guided through my theory. Also, I am asked to use the language of my
>
> chosen theory in supervision. I was pleasantly surprised that my professors were
>
> able to use the languages of the theories and guide my exploration process across
>
> the theories.

Cancurl also reported that "All classes leading up to internship focused on one or several theories in counseling and professors usually had the entire class practice in a group, exam, homework, presentations, etc. to keep it in long-term memory." Incarnation described the specific role that her professors played within the program as it related to developing a theoretical orientation when she stated that it "Depended on [for] the most

part on the professors. I found many professors stress practicing the identified orientation and that can be confusing for many trying to grasp the difference between a [using a] theoretical orientation and practicing models/techniques," she explained. Taylor also stated that his professors were important, and that there were "two professors that really challenged, encouraged, and motivated me to explore my chosen framework. The professors supplied additional resources to aid in understanding."

Three participants gave insight related to how they thought the program could improve with helping students develop a theoretical orientation. Eunice described how her theories class helped in her development, but not enough: "It was one of my first classes. A revisiting of this class would be beneficial." She also stated that she had "strong support in practicum from the professor to choose a theory, read widely, and practice from that one theory." Jess reported a similar statement regarding her perspective of her theories class:

> I wish I had taken my theories class a little later than my first semester because now that it is coming down to practice and application, I am having a hard time separating them. Professors are always helpful and provide alternative theories/strategies to work from in different situations.

Nan explained that "theories were taught early on; however, we did not get the chance to cover some. I think theories could be divided into a two-part class."

Two students described their experience of their programs as encouraging and providing assistance with the development of a theoretical orientation to a degree. Jane stated that "We took a brief theories class where we examined each of the theories, but

once we decided on a theory several semesters later there was not much guidance on how to utilize our specific theory." Kassie pointed out that,

> to a degree, [the] majority of the work is of course personal and individually based. For me, the assistance was in some referrals for books but [the] majority of the assistance was through encouragement to research the theory and that was it.

One participant described how she did not feel that the program was helpful in developing her theoretical orientation. Danny explained that "no, of course theoretical orientations were explored, but no specification of orientation was necessary, therefore no assistance."

Dame provided a simple denial of "no" when responding to the topic of program encouragement, while Al elaborated stating that "the program gave us a general overview of the main theories but does not provide specific guidance for how to practice any one in particular."

Outside Work in Development of Theoretical Orientation

When asked about additional things that participants did beyond coursework to develop their theoretical orientation, eighteen (78%) participants responded that they had, and the answers were wide and varied. Three participants refrained from answering the question, and two reported none or not applicable.

The most common answer was books and research which ten participants stated they engaged in to further develop their theoretical orientation. Eunice stated that she would,

read a theory book and continue to read articles widely to lessen personal

cognitive dissonance between the orientations. I am trying to work from and the

needs of the crisis situations. I am a constant 'learner' and this is unlikely to stop

post-graduation.

Along with research, Danny also identified practice as something he did outside of his

coursework to develop his theoretical orientation. Many specifically stated the university

library was useful in their research. Misser explained that "I found a collection of books

in the [library] and began to realign about theories until I found one that I thought would

fit."

Two participants discussed using videos to further their understanding. Mowana

explained that she "watched videos related to different theoretical perspectives, as well as

researched the meaning that came up with the theories." YouTube was also identified as

a way of learning new information by Al.

Soul-searching and exploring one's identity were identified by two participants as

a way of deepening their understanding of their theoretical orientation. Tammy stated "I

rely greatly on my cultural identity to shape how I experience others. My cultural

identity includes my belief about human development, the family unit, and how we

interact with each other."

Both AA and Incarnation recognized talking with other professionals as helpful,

while Kassie and Nan acknowledged workshops, seminars, and shadowing/mentoring

opportunities for their further development of theoretical orientation. Lastly, Anna

uniquely explained that she "viewed the world through my theoretical orientation, outside

of therapy" as a method of going beyond her coursework to assist in her development.

Supervision and Theoretical Orientation

The next most dominant theme identified in this study was *supervision*. This was defined as being "…challenged and encouraged to explore my theory." Seventeen of the 23 (73.9%) participants endorsed supervision as being a major factor in their development of a theoretical orientation. Four participants reported that supervision played little or no role in their development of a theoretical orientation, and two participants did not answer the question.

For those whom supervision was important, they made similar descriptions. For example, Taylor reported, "Supervision was the major impetus for understanding my framework/model. I was highly challenged and encouraged to explore my theory", and Anna stated that supervision played a "HUGE role! Supervision helped me deal with countertransference and it helped me understand myself as a therapist." Nan reported that "supervision (individual supervision) helped me to develop a better sense of who I was and the theoretical techniques I was using." Ammie also stated that "My internship supervisor is helping me define my theoretical preferences." Sue reported that "Supervision in internship has helped me to better understand the techniques I use and the theory they fall into." Incarnation explained that "supervision has created a clearer picture in explaining [what] orientation is. Adhering to a difficult modality based on population being served, for example, working with trauma and children, the model followed is IF-CBT, however incorporation of integrative modality is encouraged."

The ways supervision helped many participants were also described in the following ways. Tammy identified how supervision assisted her by explaining that "supervision opened my eyes to how actual techniques are integrated into the counseling session. I was able to understand which approaches work well with which clients." Mowana stated that "supervision allowed me to utilize the CBT model, and grasp a more directive approach to counseling. I was able to try many techniques that applied to CBT." AA depicted the influence of supervision on her growth in her comment:

> Supervision has aided in the integration of the book knowledge I learned into conceptualizing the client's case. I feel that each of the decisions I have needed to make was possible because I was exposed to the issue at some point in training. It has instilled confidence to know my training prepared me to competently work with clients from the beginning of internship.

However, four participants stated that supervision had little or no role in their development of a theoretical orientation. Jess reported that she "wish[ed] supervision played a bigger role. I would probably say it played little to no role in my choice of theoretical orientation." Oprah stated that "supervision in supervised counseling was unhelpful and did not help with theory choice/development." Finally, Jane stated that "Supervision played [a] very little role in my development of [a] theoretical orientation. I did however, learn a little bit in regards to how to create a treatment plan tailored to my theory."

Ethics and Theoretical Orientation

Participants were also asked if their theoretical orientation had a connection to their standard of ethics. Seventeen of the 23 participants (73.9%) provided a rationale

that depicted how their theoretical orientation was related to how they included ethics in their counseling practices. Three participants (13.0%) stated that they did not recognize how theoretical orientation and ethics were linked. Two participants (8.7%) were unsure if ethics and theoretical orientation were linked. One participant's data was removed from the theme due to not answering the question with relevance.

Ten participants discussed how having a theoretical orientation provided a structure when practicing ethical counseling. Gypsy stated that having a theoretical orientation "provides a road map and boundaries" while Darcy similarly stated that it "provides foundation to counseling." Nan also reported that having a theoretical orientation "helps counselors have a foundation of which to help clients." Tammy explained that "having a theoretical orientation is the foundation of developing ethical counseling practice." AA also stated that "it [having a theoretical orientation] gives a foundational premise to guide counseling techniques, problem-solving and evidenced-based practices." Misser explained that "it [having a theoretical orientation] provides structure to answering questions that rely on clinical judgment." Oprah stated that using a theoretical orientation in practice is "basing what you do in empirical theories solidifies counseling as a science." Sue stated that "theoretical orientation provided helpful guidelines to ensure that the techniques and interventions used are beneficial and collaborate well with one another." Cancurl also agreed that having a theoretical orientation "helps to keep us balanced and grounded when counseling," that it provides "structure." Jane Doe surmised that

> having a theoretical orientation requires counselors to be mindful of what they are
> doing in sessions and what direction they are going in with clients. Theories

provide a guide when working with clients and ensure that the counselor is being productive in session.

Three participants discussed how having a theoretical orientation provided a lens or way of conceptualizing in an ethical manner. Kassie reported that "the theory that you use is a lens in which you view the client, the therapist role, and the relationship. With the lens the ethical boundaries can become more solidified", and Mowana stated that "the role of the theoretical orientation as it relates to ethical counseling practice is that it gives the counselor a more objective lens to assist the client with what they need to do." Eunice explained that "given one a position to conceptualize the issues, when or if the context gets difficulties for both client and counselor enables one to always treat the client bearing in mind the ACA code of practice."

Four participants discussed how having theoretical orientation played a part in evaluating the substance of our counseling sessions. Sandra recognized the ethical review committee in that "it is important to substantiate how you work with a client (techniques) if you are called into question by the review board." Taylor explained that "the theory provides clarity of presenting problems and issues, providing for a more productive session. I feel my clients are receiving timely assistance, and our sessions are purposeful." Anna also recognized that ethics "plays a big role, it's important to be aware of the ethical boundaries within our theoretical orientation. Jackie stated that "some orientations the client and counselor have a very close relationship and others do not. The client and counselor relationship in terms of ethics is an important topic in the ACA code of ethics."

Three participants stated that theoretical orientation does not play a substantial role regarding ethics. Ammie stated that "I don't believe that my theoretical orientation plays a huge role," she "believe[s] counselors must consider ethical decision valuing process regardless of [theoretical] orientation." Danny explained that "theoretical orientation did not play in development of ethical counseling practice. Ethical practice is concrete regardless of orientation." Jess reported that "I don't think theory and ethics mesh very much. I know how to separate the two (at least I think I do) and I know that ethics trump all." Two participants were not able to connect ethics with theoretical orientation. Incarnation stated that "It may play a bigger role than I am aware of, but I'm not sure off-hand", while Al stated that he was "not really sure."

Defining Moment

I asked participants if there was a defining moment in the development of their theoretical orientation. Seventeen of 23 (73%) participants were able to articulate a time where their theoretical orientation and practice came together. Two reported not application or that it had not happened, and two participants did not provide an answer.

Ten participants were in agreement that a defining point in using one's theoretical orientation occurred when they were allowed to practice their skills. Ammie, Misser, and Darcy gave direct responses that supervised practicum was where this occurred, one participant explained this happened by "implementing learned skills"-Darcy. Jess stated that "theory and practice truly came together in supervision once I got to see clients one on one." Taylor explained that "practicum is where I understood the whole counseling process and was able to move beyond reflection of affect and meaning." Cancurl recognized two classes where she was able to first bring her theoretical orientation and

practice together: "supervised practicum and many times at first internship when doing strictly play therapy." Anna reported that by working with clients she recognized a modification would need to be made: "when I actually started seeing clients I realized my theoretical orientation needed to be adjusted." Jane Doe, Mowana, and AA recognized specific times when working with clients. Jane Doe stated that "during practicum I had an addictions client in which for the first time I was really able to see how I could utilize CBT with a client and how it could be effective." Mowana also reported that "a defining point was in the middle of my practicum when I finally got my CBT footing and was able to see the client through that lens as well as use the techniques and skills."

Four participants believed that an experience with a client was a defining point in developing their theoretical orientation. Tammy stated that "in session, a client expressed her gratitude for having someone who accepted her without judgment." Kassie "The first family session that I began to utilize and explain my approach to counseling. That eased the nerves of the family and solidified my viewpoints and beliefs of counseling." Eunice "During play therapy with one client in particular by always reflecting feelings for that child she suddenly had an 'aha' moment and changed her behavior. Her experiences were suddenly congruent with her beliefs about our relationship." Al reported that "Rogerian orientation has helped me build strong relationships with my clients. A defining moment is when they look at me and say 'yeah, you really get me!'" Sandra and Gypsy found the use of counseling tools helped them.

Sandra stated that "visualizing my clients in terms of being in a family and doing a genogram helped me conceptualize their starting point, supports, etc." Gypsy explained that theoretical orientation and practice are "still coming together. A defining moment

was in my sand tray therapy class." Another aspect that could be considered a tool for learning, Nan reported that her defining moment occurred in individual supervision. Four participants denied experiencing a specific defining point in their development of a theoretical orientation. Danny stated that "I have not had a defining point, but am in the process of developing an orientation." Jackie reported that "it hasn't yet. I am still feeling my way." Oprah responded that this was not applicable for her. Incarnation reported "coming from a background working in various counseling environments and trauma populations, I never held pressure over myself in regards to practicing my theoretical orientations [as] a mode of treatment, I understand it's how I made sense of things."

Conflict during Theoretical Orientation Development

Fifteen of the 23 (65.2%) participants found difficulty when trying to incorporate their theoretical orientation into their practice of working with clients. Six participants denied having experienced a conflict between developing their theoretical orientation and practice, and two participants did not provide an answer.

Seven participants experienced conflict when working with a client and being unable to conceptualize from their chosen theoretical orientation. Mowana explained that "a conflict occurred when I was forcing a person-centered approach half-way through practicum, and wasn't getting anywhere with my client because it didn't fit." Misser similarly identified himself as person-centered, but that he experienced conflict when he "encountered clients who could benefit from a more directive approach." Sandra stated that "during internship, there were a couple of instances where my conceptualization did not match my client's needs. Being too narrow does not match client needs. I had to

expand," and Ammie explained that "during internship where another theory would be better suited to my clients." Kassie reported "the challenge of the issue the client was presenting with and how I could use Adlerian therapy to address the problem that would be beneficial and effective for the client." Cognitive-behavioral therapy was identified by three participants as the theoretical orientation they had to switch to or switch from when working with a specific individual or population. While Cancurl reported that a "client did better with CBT than solution-focused, and it was a challenge to focus on that theory because I was not as comfortable using it," Sue stated that "CBT was not working with a client who was dealing with anxiety." Jane Doe also stated that "when working with young children, I sometimes find it more difficult integrating CBT into therapy, because they do not always want to go along with the plan and it is difficult to get them to focus at times."

Three participants found difficulty due to their site and program expectations. Jackie stated that "now I'm working with clients with anxiety. My orientation is very time consuming as well. My site is very CBT related of anxiety and time constraints." Incarnation reported she experienced conflict because she believed that she needed to choose a theory too soon. She explained that, "I think the pressure to pick an orientation from the program can create confusion for some in understanding the difference. I felt conflicted with no text exploring attachment theories throughout the program, and it's a huge part of my counseling view." Eunice stated that she was experiencing conflict while "interning in a crisis environment where there needs to be a strong focus on solution focus and less time to explore how their emotions and beliefs are juxtaposed

with their experiences. Many clients do not return for further counseling because they move away from the area."

Three participants found that through practicing, they experienced conflict that resulted in some type of change or growth in their theoretical orientation. Anna reported that she "first thought I was more Adlerian, but began to feel that in therapy I was more existential. Practicing changed my theoretical orientation." AA reported "I chose cognitive behavioral therapy initially, and I felt as if I was working from an incomplete framework. With more research, I adopted choice theory/reality therapy." Taylor also reported needing more understanding, but within his own chosen theoretical orientation. He stated, "There was a delay in placing 'awareness' and 'unmet needs' together in Gestalt theory. I had a half understanding at first but learned both key components."

Cultural Impact on the Development of a Theoretical Orientation

Twenty-three participants completed my survey. These individuals have a shared culture. They were all students. They were all enrolled in a CACREP accredited counseling program in Southeastern Texas. They attended at the same time, therefore, were exposed to the same faculty. The overall culture from the program and faculty appear to be supported as evidenced by a majority of 78.3% of participants reporting feeling supported by their program in their development of a theoretical orientation.

Darcy showed how supervision "helped me gain confidence in counseling skills." Gypsy also stated that her "supervisor for internship has been [unnamed professor], and she has been fantastic with this topic." Cancurl described supervision in that it "challenged me, guided me through my own personal struggles so I would not let those values and beliefs affect me when counseling clients."

Many participants described how the program gave them guidance. Tammy stated "the class on counseling theories gave a general description of most approaches, and through my own reading, training, and experiences, I gained a deeper understanding of these theoretical orientations." Kassie reported "Yes, I believe I have been encouraged to consistently evaluate my beliefs and values throughout the program and especially during supervised [practicum] when there was the initial client interaction." Mowana reported that "in my theories class, we were definitely encouraged to explore our own values, beliefs, backgrounds, and why we were who we were. Many classes have stressed this." Incarnation explained that "it was presented to me in order to understand orientation vs. technique, that orientation was parallel with my own personal beliefs, worldview." Cancurl reported that "each professor has always made comment to seek counseling at some point to help us rid ourselves of our own distorted beliefs and to grow as a person." Sandra stated that "it [the program] repeated the concept of choosing a specific theoretical orientation. Depending on the professor different emphasis was given on certain theories."

Synthesis of Development of Theoretical Orientation

As discussed in chapters one and three, the research question I answered for this study was: what are the lived experiences of counselors-in-training regarding their theoretical orientation development? I sought the essence of what it was for students when trying to develop and integrate a theoretical orientation into practice that occurs during internship.

The essence of those who participated in this study showed mixed results of those who felt supported and not supported by the program, faculty, and supervisors in their

development of a theoretical orientation. Each student's journey appeared unique within their understanding and experiences; however, I did find that there was a majority of participants who reported benefiting from their instruction when trying to develop a theoretical orientation and practicing it within an internship. Both perspectives, supported and not, are given a stage in this section as the textural-structural description.

Many participants throughout this study reported experiencing support from professors and classes when developing a theoretical orientation. Darcy stated that "professors promote personal growth," and Anna reported that "they encouraged us to use out theoretical orientation as a baseline in therapy. Yes, every class asks us to use our theoretical approach and practice it." AA stated that "supervision through internship is what helped me to clarify my theory(s) of choice and taught me practical ways to implement them through additional readings and role plays." Misser also stated that supervision "helped to me to conceptualize the client and their concerns."

Al reported that "most classes in my program encourage extensive self-reflection and exploration through class discussions and writing assignments," and Kassie stated that "supervision helped me in identifying how I conceptualize client problems and in what method I would prefer to use working with the clients." Eunice explained that it was helpful "discussing each week how to conceptualize each client. The professor I had always encouraged us to answer our own questions and reflect on client nuances from the theoretical stance." Sandra stated that "supervision has helped me considerably in testing, visiting the lens in which I conceptualize and using techniques from other theories that help clients where they are at." Jackie also explained that supervision

"brought me up close to orientations that were not my own and peeked my interest so that I will want to know more."

Sue showed ambivalence when describing her experience in developing a theoretical orientation: "They [program] said to find the theoretical orientation that fits with who you are as a person. I feel that there could be more guidance in helping us [to] choose and understand." Two other participants wished for more guidance when learning to develop their theoretical orientation. Ammie stated that "in some of my classes instructors were encouraging students to explore their beliefs and values, but that was not the case in most of the classes…I have not had the opportunity to talk about my theoretical orientation beyond declaring it when asked." Dame reported that "in practicum, they just said read this article. I would have liked more personal explanations."

The overall experiences of these twenty-three participants during their development of a theoretical orientation was that their program and faculty were helpful for the majority of students. There are many items that influenced this development.

Summary

In this chapter, I began by giving a description of my participant sample. I reported the age, sex, ethnicity, and level of internship that the participants provided. Next, I organized the participant's responses of their definition of counseling as well as their responses of what their theoretical orientation was. Then, I described the results. After analyzing the data, I was able to identify the themes of program encouragement, conflict during theoretical orientation development, supervision and theoretical orientation, defining moment, and outside work in development of theoretical orientation.

Lastly, I provided an overall cultural impact on the development of orientation as well as

the essence of what developing a theoretical orientation was like for these participants.

These results derived from participants' experiences will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

"A therapist without a theoretical approach to psychotherapy is like Alice in Wonderland asking the Cheshire cat which way she should go" (Jones-Smith, 2016, p.1). Jones-Smith explained that effective therapists establish theoretical road maps or treatment plans when working with their clients to give valid direction during the counseling process. Without this road map, counselors are improvising without credible or empirically supported practices. This phenomenological study explored the process that counselors experienced while choosing a theoretical orientation during the time period in which they are first beginning to practice therapy with clients.

I began this chapter by providing a summary of the study. Next, I discussed the findings of this study in relation to the literature, and how the results from this phenomenological study were consistent with previous studies. Finally, I provided the implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Study

While completing my own master's program in counseling, I struggled to translate my theoretical orientation into my counseling practice. This process took time and guidance in understanding how to use a theoretical orientation as a lens to understand human behavior and how to use it effectively to guide my counseling sessions. I wondered if this was a common experience for counseling students, and if counselor educators could do more to assist in this process of developing a theoretical orientation. After reviewing current literature, I found that there was a need for a study regarding counseling students' perceptions of theoretical orientation development.

I began this study with an introduction that included the background, statement of the problem, purpose, and significance of this study. I defined key terms that were pertinent and included my theoretical framework for the study. Also provided in the introduction was my research question, study limitations, study delimitations, and study assumptions.

In chapter two, I described my process for using the Interactive Literature Review Process and a circular design literature map to review quantitative and qualitative studies that allowed me to discover there was a need for my research study. I then proposed my study to my dissertation committee and was approved to conduct a phenomenological study using a survey research design. Finally, I surveyed students that were currently enrolled in Internship I and II in their counseling program. I used the Moustakas (1994) method of analyzing data to group my data into five distinct themes. These themes were reported in the results chapter: (a) *program encouragement*, (b) *supervision and theoretical orientation*, (c) *outside work in development of theoretical orientation*, (d) *ethics and theoretical orientation*, (e) *defining moment*, and (f) *conflict during theoretical orientation development.* In the following section, I begin the process of discussing my findings in relation to existing literature involving the process of developing a theoretical orientation.

Discussion of Findings

Through this study, I found many different things from the participants' perception of the process of developing a theoretical orientation. I learned how students defined counseling, and that their definitions were not always consistent with how counseling was defined in the literature. The students also provided an explanation for

their chosen theoretical orientation. In the sections below, I discussed these findings and their relationship to current literature.

Definition of Counseling

The participants in this study were provided the opportunity to define counseling as part of the collection of demographic data. Twenty-two out of 23 (96%) of the participants provided definitions of counseling that gave insight into how they view their future profession. After a review of the definitions, I was able to identify five broad definitions of counseling that included: *helping*, *goal/change*, *relationship*, *therapeutic environment*, and *services and resources*. To provide insight into the students' definitions of counseling, their overall definitions were compared to the 20/20 consensus definition of counseling. This consensus definition was created during the 2010 American Counseling Association (ACA) Conference, where delegates met and 29 of the counseling organizations present approved of the following global definition of counseling: "Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals" (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2019).   The participants of the study provided several definitions of counseling; however, none provided the consensus definition for counseling. Instead, the participants provided definitions that included some but not all parts of the consensus definition. With the leaders of the counseling profession coming together to provide one, unified definition, it is important for all counselors-in-training also to be able to know and understand the full meaning of counseling.

Chosen Theoretical Orientation

The reasons are complex when we look at the process counselors go through when choosing one theoretical orientation over another. Studies of counselors' decisions around the development of a personal theoretical orientation have been few, with some of the most enlightening ones conducted more than a decade ago (Jones-Smith, 2016). Seventy-eight percent of my study participants provided a clear indication of their acquisition of a singular or integrated theory. Four participants (17%) explained that their theoretical orientation development emerged from using multiple theories with two using the word eclectic.

> Effective theories are grounded in an understanding of human development. They provide a framework for gathering and organizing information and exploring personality. They provide steps and interventions that encourage learning and growth that allow for evaluation of progress and modification of treatment plans if needed. (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2013)

It is important to choose a specific theory in order to conceptualize each individual or system. The eighteen participants from my study who provided answers were either concise in their descriptions of their chosen theoretical orientation, such as responding with a specific theory like "existentialism", or they were able to describe how their theoretical orientation influenced their conceptualization as one participant did in describing how she integrated Adlerian and client-centered: "self-awareness is a huge part of counseling and that the past has a huge marking on that person in the future, helping individuals learn and make decisions about their life." The responses for eclecticism, and the one response that reported to integrate five different theories stating

she was "highly person centered with flavors from CBT, narrative, solution-focused, and reality approaches", did not describe how they used the multiple theories to provide one unified understanding of human nature. Halbur and Halbur (2015) explained that "there is a difference between *being eclectic* and *applying a variety of techniques*" (p. 7).

Themes

Based on the findings of this study, (a) *program encouragement*, (b) *supervision and theoretical orientation*, (c) *outside work in development of theoretical orientation*, (d) *ethics and theoretical orientation*, (e) *defining moment*, and (f) *conflict during theoretical orientation development* were all identified by the participants as significant in the development of a theoretical orientation. In the following sections, I compare these findings with current literature.

Program Encouragement

Participants described how their counseling programs assisted them with their understanding of the role of theoretical orientations and encouraged the exploration of personal beliefs and values in regard to the development of a theoretical orientation. Theory, when used to visualize the etiology of a client's current concerns, can be used by a counselor to develop a set of distinct treatment practices and further identify the problems that drive people to seek help (Corsini & Wedding, 2014). Corsini and Wedding also went on to describe how becoming a skilled clinician involved building a repertoire of techniques and broad strategies that fit a consistent and singular theoretical paradigm. When faculty encourage students to develop theoretical orientations based on a single theory, they help them become more competent professionals (Halbur & Halbur, 2015). One's theoretical orientation determines the types of questions one asks and

information one gains that would be included in their case conceptualization and treatment plan (Berman, 2019).

Jones-Smith (2016) also recognized the need to understand future counselors' beliefs, attitudes, and values prior to the end of their formal training. Counselor educators are gatekeepers in the mental health community. Faculty must ensure that counselors-in-training are competent before becoming Licensed Professional Counselor Interns.

Demir and Gazioğlu (2017) found that having a theoretical preference was largely associated with the institution, training emphasis, and counselor self-efficacy. In their research discussion, they reported that despite counselor education institutions having similar curriculums, there are significant differences between institutions regarding theoretical orientation development. Seventeen percent of participants from this study reported that their program was somewhat helpful in encouraging and/or providing assistance with the development of a theoretical orientation, and another seventeen percent reported their program was not helpful during the theoretical development process. Thirty-four percent of this participant pool stated that their program was not helpful or only somewhat helpful. Studies have shown that the institution is significant in theoretical orientation development, so our counselor education programs need to recognize this relational deficit shown by these participants' responses.

Outside Work in Development of Theoretical Orientation

"It should not be assumed that trainees find their theoretical orientation as a matter of course; they may need support for this complex process" (Wolff & Auckenthaler, 2014, p. 234). The process of developing a theoretical orientation can take

a lot of work and time outside of the theoretical concepts taught in curriculum. For example, developing a theoretical orientation can require doing a lot of outside reading so that the student can learn from the seminal writings of the original theorist and can learn from contemporaries who have further developed the theory and applied it to the needs of current populations. Seventy-four percent of the students in this study reported doing outside work when developing their theoretical orientation that included a lot of reading. The students used many used books and published research articles to further their knowledge and understanding of the many theories they studied on the road to developing a personal theoretical orientation. Halbur and Halbur (2015) stated that reading theory textbooks gives students a wealth of information about various theories. They also recommended reading as many works by the original theorists as possible to gain an additional view of the values and philosophies contained within the chosen theory.

Other participants discussed using videos, soul-searching, and exploring one's identity. Wolff and Auckenthaler (2014) discussed how questions can be used for self-exploration, and the participants in their study used their research interview as an opportunity to reflect on their chosen theoretical orientation.

Talking with other professionals was also found to be helpful by the participants in this study along with attending workshops, seminars, and shadowing/mentoring opportunities with professional counselors for their further development of a theoretical orientation. Plchová, Hytych, Řiháček, Roubal, and Vybiral (2016) found that their participants wanted to meet other professionals with different opinions. These participants looked forward to meeting a community of people with real experiences to

share to help these participants conceptualize and develop their own theoretical orientation. Exchanging ideas and exploring epistemologies is integral to the growth of new counselors. Collaboration with peers and other mental health professionals is now viewed as essential for providing services to clients (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2013).

One participant reported that she used her theoretical orientation to analyze situations currently going on in her life to better understand her chosen theory. This was a unique perspective that I did not find in the literature and could be a useful exercise for counselor educators to incorporate in their teachings. It would be helpful to use this process in additional research studies because of the uniqueness of their type of personal analysis.

Supervision and Theoretical Orientation

Clinical supervision is integral to the personal development and counselor training and development of new counselors (Kozina, Grabovari, De Stefano, & Drapeau, 2010; Landon & Schultz, 2018). Supervisors provided clear and useful feedback focused on counselor's-in-training performance activities (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2013). While seventy-four percent of participants in this study affirmed that supervision played a role in their development of a theoretical orientation of counseling, seventeen percent felt as if supervision played little to no role when helping them develop a theoretical orientation. The majority of the students from this study experienced a positive influence in their theoretical orientation because of the support of their supervisors. It would be helpful to further study the reasons behind the students not experience positive support from their supervisors related to the development of a personal theoretical orientation.

This could also lead to research focused on how supervisors support their supervisees throughout the internship and post master's experiences.

One of the factors that influenced the professional identity of counselors was their theoretical orientation. Calley and Hawley (2008) discussed that the value base of one's theoretical orientation can be tied to the larger value base of the counselor educator's professional identity. They reported that this aspect of professional identity "may serve to further crystallize the counseling profession as distinct, yet inter-related to the other helping disciplines" (Calley & Hawley, 2008). Counselor educators influence the development of professional identity in emerging counselors through teaching and supervision (Woo, Storlie, & Baltrinic, 2016), and establishing and maintaining a theoretical orientation to conceptualize with clients is part of the professional identity of being a counselor (Reiner et al., 2013).

While the majority of participants did experience the role of supervision in their development of a theoretical orientation, the other seventeen percent cannot be discounted. As counselor educators, I do not believe we want to fall short for our supervisees as in the words of Jess "I wish supervision played a bigger role." Supervision is one piece that assists future counselors with building ethical decision-making competency (Landon & Schultz, 2018). Supervision was also an important factor for the majority of the participants in this study, but for the other seventeen percent, counselor education programs need to make sure they are providing adequate supervision during practicum and internship classes in regard to theoretical orientation development. If there is a question of what is "adequate", the participants from this study show that they are able to state what they need if asked.

Ethics and Theoretical Orientation

"Clinicians are often ethically and legally bound to have a theoretical foundation" (Halbur & Halbur, 2015, p. 8). Seventy-four percent of the participants explained a rationale of how having a theoretical orientation was related to the provision of ethical counseling services. These participants were able to describe different ways in which they were able to link the importance of conceptualizing clients from a theoretical framework, not for just a learning experience, but because of their ethical obligations to provide the most effective services.

Part of practicing ethical counseling is developing a guiding theoretical orientation so that counselors can provide a research-based rationale for the choices they make (Corey 2008; Corsini & Wedding 2014). Some participants in this study recognized that using a theoretical orientation provided a structure when practicing ethical counseling. One participant explained that ethics "provides a road map and boundaries," and another stated that it "provides foundation to counseling." Others stated that using a theoretical orientation provided a lens or way of conceptualizing ethics. Seligman and Reichenberg (2013) explained that theoretical orientations provided reassurance and direction for inexperienced counselors. Theory allowed for testable hypotheses that could be investigated to determine the validity and usefulness of the approach and promote further study and improvement of the treatment process. Having a theoretical orientation also plays a part in evaluating the substance of our counseling sessions according to participants. The American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics (2014) required that the techniques, procedures, and modalities that counselors use when providing services be grounded in theory and/or have an empirical or scientific

foundation (C.7.a). Counseling students need to be aware that not only research ascertains the importance of having a theoretical orientation, but the code of ethics that guides our profession does as well.

Twenty-two percent of participants denied a direct link between ethics and theoretical orientation by either reporting that theoretical orientation does not play a substantial role regarding ethics, or simply not being able to connect ethics with a theoretical orientation, however, this is not consistent with the literature. Jones-Smith (2016) stated that there are many reasons to examine your theoretical orientation in terms of ethical issues. He stated that,

> Therapists take responsibility for their own growth, and they strive for excellence in their personal behavior. They become good at whatever theoretical models they use. Having respect for clients is not enough. There is no room in therapy for the caring but incompetent therapist. (p.12)

The shift toward evidence-based and manualized treatment continues to put counselors at greater risk of lawsuits or losing one's license on ethical grounds of failing to provide a basic standard of care because they failed to use a treatment approach that is empirically sound (Jones-Smith, 2016; Seligman & Reichenberg, 2007). Ethical codes provide guidelines as well as establish consequences for licensed professional counselors' behavior (Jones-Smith, 2016). For the five participants that were not able to connect ethics and theoretical orientation, this may pose a significant problem for them as well as future clients. Counselors who do not understand the connection between ethics and theoretical orientation may find they no longer need to conceptualize clients using theory because it is not needed to be an ethical counselor. This will cause problems for the

counselor if they are ever called before the ethics board. This may cause problems for the client who has goals for change, and their counselor does not have a clear idea of how change occurs.

Defining Moment

Seventy percent of participants were able to recount a defining time in which their theoretical orientation and counseling practice came together. Ten participants reported that a defining point in using their theoretical orientation occurred when they were allowed to practice their skills. Mason (2012) also found many similar subthemes in his study, one being clinical experience.

Some participants believed that an experience with a client was a defining point in developing their theoretical orientation. While practicing individual, family, and play therapy, participants had a moment where a client expressed gratitude, a family's nerves were eased, or a client felt understood. In this moment, these participants felt they had a better understanding of their theoretical orientation. For example, Taylor explained that her defining moment occurred during "practicum is where I understood the whole counseling process and was able to move beyond reflection of affect and meaning Hinkle, Schmerer, and Beasley (2015) studied the perspectives of counseling students in regard to counseling theory, and one factor reflected that they found solutions to problems though connections with others. While this was true for clients working though problems, it also was valid for these participants who experienced growth when making a connection with their clients.

Specific interventions have been found to be useful in the development of theoretical orientation (Hill et al., 2015). Sand tray and genograms played a part in two

participant's experience of putting their theoretical orientation into practice. Counselors have many tools at their disposal for working with clients, and these participants were able to use these items in their practice as well as the development of their chosen theoretical orientation.

Conflict during Theoretical Orientation Development

"There is always tension between Theory and Practice. These two separate realms are connected through a process of abstraction and application" (Klabnik, 2012). This is also true when trying to turn theories of psychotherapy into counseling practice. Sixty-five percent of participants found difficulty when trying to practice counseling within the parameters of their theoretical orientation, for example, one participant stated that she was "forcing a person-centered approach half-way through practicum, and wasn't getting anywhere with my client because it didn't fit".

Many participants experienced conflict when working with a client and being unable to conceptualize from their chosen theoretical orientation. The first step of conceptualization is analyzing the client's core strengths and weaknesses within the assumptions of a selected theoretical orientation. Client conceptualizations can be organized in many ways, but they should always have a basic organizational structure for the entire conceptualization and be theoretically sound (Berman, 2019). Without a basic organizational structure, once cannot explain how we develop as humans. If we cannot explain how we develop and change as humans, we cannot ethically assist our clients in growing or achieving their goals.

Program and clinical site expectations led to conflict during theoretical orientation development for some participants. One participant described this when she stated, "I

think the pressure to pick an orientation from the program can create confusion for some in understanding the difference. I felt conflicted with no text exploring attachment theories throughout the program, and it's a huge part of my counseling view." Heatherington, Messer, Angus, Strauman, Friedlander, and Kolden (2013) pointed out that different programs sometimes had allegiances to different theoretical orientations from that chosen by students. They found that more research-based, science-focused programs tended to offer the narrowest range of theoretical orientations leading to the danger of a monoculture of ideas. Other participants from my study stated that while practicing, they experienced conflict that resulted in some type of change or growth in their theoretical orientation. Mason (2012) also had participants who found themselves developing their theoretical orientation during their clinical experience.

Plchová, Hytych, Řiháček, Roubal, and Vybiral, (2016) found that some counseling students experienced a change in their chosen theoretical orientation as they progressed through their program and discovered other approaches. Similarly, in my study Danny reported, "I am always conflicted in developing [a] theoretical orientation and practice because I am still developing an orientation." Counselor's approaches are constantly evolving, tending to develop from an externally driven working style to an autonomous and personally integrated one (Rihacek and Roubal, 2017). Wolff and Auckenthaler (2014) also stated that theoretical orientation development is an ongoing process in which the counselors-in-training are actively involved.

Similar Findings

Mason (2012) completed a phenomenological dissertation with clinical psychology doctoral students to learn about their experiences during the process of

developing their theoretical orientation. Although his study was specific to psychology students, Mason found many similar themes related to the development of a theoretical orientation.

One similar theme within Mason's study and the themes found in this study was clinical practice and work. It appeared that the practice that comes when first working with clients helps with the development of a theoretical orientation. This could mean that the practicum courses during counseling programs are critical in educating counselors-in-training and helping them bridge the gap between theory and practice. Another common theme was learning strategies. Mason identified reading discussions with peers and supervisors, and involvement with professional organizations and conferences all as important factors when learning one's theory. These are all factors reported as important by the participants in this study demonstrating that outside work is a key in developing a theoretical orientation. Supervision was another common theme between our two studies. Mason also acknowledged hindering factors that the participants in this study identified: negative supervision experiences; limited direction, guiding, or mentoring; insufficient time and attention; and problems with coursework. While it was not the majority of students, there were participants in this study who wanted more from their supervisors and their program. It is important for counselor educators and supervisors to be aware of the needs of their students.

Implications

Counselors have been clear in promoting the connection between having a theoretical orientation and practice (Martin & Carkhuff, 1968; Mason, 2012; Murdock, Banta, Viene, & Brown, 1998; Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012; Vasco &

Dryden, 1994). This study gave students a chance to discuss how the role of supervisors, their program, and outside work contributed to their development of theoretical orientation. As a result of this study, there are implications for counselor education programs. First, that program encouragement is not considered universally present when trying to develop one's theoretical orientation. It could be very helpful to students to have faculty members focus on being more encouraging in the exploration and assistance in their development of theoretical orientation. Programs can assess how they are encouraging theoretical orientation development across the different courses and how their educators are relating this development to ethics. Five out of 23 (22%) of participants did not see, or were unsure of, the connection between using a theoretical orientation when counseling and ethics, even though the literature consistently illustrates the importance of the relationship between the two (Corey 2008; Corsini & Wedding 2014 Halbur & Halbur, 2015; Jones-Smith, 2016).

Another important implication is that supervision provides an important platform for the discussion and growth of theoretical development on the part of counseling students, either in that the discussion of theory in supervision was lacking and wanted, or that supervision did assist in the growth of the student's development. Supervision is an overall key to the growth and success of future counselors and helping them develop ethical practices that include the development of a theoretical orientation is a critical component of the supervision process. In this study, the participants were in the internship phase of their counseling, meaning that they had a supervisor within the program, and an external supervisor that was at their internship site. Because there were experiences where counselors-in-training felt there was a lack of assistance in regards to

theoretical orientation development from their supervisor, programs need to be sure that both the supervisor within the class and the site supervisors are properly prepared and trained to provide this guidance. Creating a criteria that potential site supervisors must meet or developing a training that they could attend could be options for programs to create in order to ensure that the counselors-in-training have supervisors who are prepared to provide them with all of the support that they will need in their development of theoretical orientation and as a counselor as a whole.

An additional implication found was that influences outside of the program were beneficial in the development of one's theoretical orientation. Exploring the literature, workshops, collaborating with professionals in our field is something that is encouraged when learning about any topic within counseling, so naturally, theoretical orientation development would also benefit from engaging in these activities. While these activities are outside the program, counselor educators and supervisors can encourage counselors-in-training to participate in them and have students' complete reflections on how their development of theoretical orientation benefitted from the outside activities.

Counselor educators know the components that are necessary to be competent counselors. However, after reviewing the experiences of the participants in this study, our programs must be vigilant in encouraging exploration, teaching, and providing proper supervision to each student that goes through counseling programs so that they will be much more proficient with their development of a theoretical orientation.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study focused on one school, future research could be directed towards a national study to see if all programs are incorporating different methods to encourage

theoretical orientation development. They could be both quantitative and qualitative studies and be focused on both the opportunities and challenges to helping students develop theoretical orientations.

Reinforcement of why theory is important to counseling even after one has surpassed the initial phases of their development in the profession is critical if we are to remain ethical and not stagnant in our growth. Additional studies exploring how counselors continue to develop their theoretical orientation and the effect this has on their counseling practice would further demonstrate this and encourage counselors to do so.

Assistance with clarification and further development of theory could be done through workshops and continuing education. A correlational research design could be completed with a group of participants who are working on further developing their theoretical orientation either in a workshop or continuing education to see if there is a correlating relationship between counselor efficacy and client outcomes with the development of theoretical orientation.

Researchers could also look at the relationship between culture and theoretical orientation development. When reviewing the literature, items such as personality or personal values have been studied in relationship to theoretical orientation, but there is a lack of research in regards to culture and theoretical orientation. It could be useful to counselor educators and supervisors to be aware if a specific dynamic of one's culture affects how they develop their theoretical orientation.

Continued research of counselors' perspectives on their own development of theoretical orientation at different stages of counselor development could give counselor educators insight of what would be helpful to incorporate into programs. More

qualitative phenomenological studies either through surveys or interviews would be useful in gaining the perspectives of counselors and counselors-in-training to know how programs, educators and supervisors might improve.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of counselors-in-training regarding their theoretical orientation development. I looked at what counseling students experienced, what was helpful, and what was not, when trying to discern their own perspective of a very difficult question: how do humans change? Halbur and Halbur (2015) explained that having a guiding theory was critical in graduate training for future counselors. Counselor educators and supervisors are responsible for the training of new counselors, and this study was a chance for students to answer how well we are accomplishing that goal.

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APPENDIX

Sam Houston State University

Consent for Student Participation in Research

The Lived Experiences of Counselors-in-Training
Developing a Theoretical Orientation

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about your theoretical orientation of counseling conducted by Rena Greger under the supervision of Dr. Richard C. Henriksen Jr.; Department of Counselor Education at Sam Houston State University. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are currently enrolled in an internship course in a counseling program, and therefore may have valuable knowledge applicable to my study. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Sam Houston State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Why is this research being done?

I am gathering information from current internship masters level internship counselors-in-training to have a better understanding of the development of a theoretical orientation for counselors-in-training.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of master's level internship counseling students regarding their theoretical orientation development. As a result of this research, I plan to gather knowledge of what influences counselors-in-training experience when choosing and using a theoretical orientation with clients.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to be in this research, we would ask you to do the following things:

> 1.) Participants will read and discuss and then be asked to sign an informed consent and explanation of the research purpose.
> 2.) Fill out a demographic questionnaire.
> 3.) Fill out a survey questionnaire concerning your theoretical orientation development.
> 4.) If you choose, provide an email to possibly participate in a member check interview.

This study consists of a one-time thirty-minute survey. Approximately 20-30 students will be surveyed. If interested, students may provide email to participate in a one-time one-hour interview.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

There will be no more than minimal risks and discomforts from participation of the study.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

There are no direct benefits to participant, but the results of this study may help counseling educators and counselors better understand the course of developing and integrating theoretical orientation into one's practice.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The only people who will know that you are a research participant is the principle investigator of this study (Rena Greger). No information about you, or provided by you during the research will be disclosed to others without your written permission, except:
- if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured and need emergency care or when the SHSU Protection of Human Subjects monitors the research or consent process); or
- if required by law.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Only the Principal Investigator, (PI) Rena Greger, has access to your consent form and interview recording. The PI will collect all consent forms and interview recordings. Only

the PI will have access to your consent forms and interview recordings. In order to retain confidentiality, all documents will be coded using the students' or professors' pseudonym; this includes the consent forms, demographic survey, survey questionnaire, and any possible emails or interviews. All documents and audio will be kept electronically on a password protected computer. For original paper copies, these will be scanned and the originals shredded. The computer will belong to the PI and will be locked in the principle PI's office when not in use.

<u>What if I am injured as a result of my participation?</u>

In the event of injury related to this research study, you should contact your physician or the University Health Center. However, you or your third party payer, if any, will be responsible for payment of this treatment. There is no compensation and/or payment for medical treatment from Sam Houston State University for any injury you have from participating in this research, except as may by required of the University by law.

<u>What are the costs for participating in this research?</u>

There is no cost for participating in this research.

<u>Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?</u>

You will not be paid or reimbursed for expenses such as parking, bus/taxi, baby-sitter, travel companion/assistant, etc., for participation in this research.

<u>Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?</u>

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

<u>Who should I contact if I have questions?</u>

The researcher conducting this study is Rena Greger. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the principle investigator at 254-721-1674 or rgg003@shsu.edu

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs – Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or e-mail ORSP at sharla_miles@shsu.edu.

Agreement to Participate

I have read (*or someone has read to me)* the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research.

Consent: I have read and understand the above information, and I willingly consent to participate in this study. I understand that if I should have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact Rena Greger at 254-721-1674 or by email at rgg003@shsu.edu. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Your name (printed):_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

You may choose not to participate or to stop your participation in this research at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Sam Houston State University.

VITA

AREAS OF INTEREST/EXPERTISE

Diagnosing/Assessment   Counselor Education
Clinical Supervision   Theoretical Orientation
Crisis Counseling   Mentorship

EDUCATION

Sam Houston State University   Huntsville, TX
Doctorate of Counselor Education   Anticipated: August 2019
    Dissertation: Development of Theoretical Orientation in Counselors-in-Training
Master of Arts in Community Counseling   August 2012

The University of Texas at Austin   Austin, TX
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Minor in Sociology   December 2010

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Sam Houston State University   Houston, TX
Counseling for Sexual Concerns   Fall 2016
Techniques of Marriage & Family Therapy   Summer 2015
- Responsible for 50% of coursework
- Created online assignments and discussion boards on Blackboard
- Utilized interactive teaching methods in all lectures that led to class discussions
- Graded discussion board reactions, presentations, and final case conceptualization/treatment plan

COUNSELING EXPERIENCE

Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD (formerly MHMRA)
Forensic Assertive Community Treatment   Houston, TX
Clinical Team Lead   11/2017 to Present
- Serve in Leadership Committee which creates and teaches leadership trainings for supervisors throughout the agency
- Supervise the NGRI (Not Guilty due to Reason of Insanity) team which consists of eight care coordinators and two Licensed Professional Counselors who provide services for individuals receiving intensive care at in The Harris Center for Mental Health & IDD
- Teach psychosocial rehabilitation classes to new hire staff coming into the agency
- Interact with agency attorney and Community Supervision Officers (previously referred to as probation/parole officers) to ensure requests and court stipulations are communicated between FACT and the court

- Coordinate with state hospitals, utilization management, and the jail for FACT intakes
- Facilitate daily team meeting with psychiatrists, care coordinators, LPCs, a nurse, and a peer specialist
- Manage monthly and annual supervision with my team and as needed for corrective purposes
- Complete Part D Medicare applications, DLAs, and complete home visits as necessary to meet F/ACT individuals' unique needs

Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD (formerly MHMRA)
Mobile Crisis Outreach Team, Eligibility Center   Houston, TX
LPHA Mentor   11/2013-10/2017
- Mentored coworkers and train on procedures, clinical techniques, treatment planning, and case conceptualizations
- Audited charts and complete ride-a-longs to ensure competency and coach skills
- Provided intensive counseling services for consumers in crisis and provide linkage to immediate and long-term resources
- Assessed adults and children for eligibility for mental health and IDD services
- Completed psychosocial assessments to evaluate for overall wellness and diagnose consumers
- Performed financial assessments

Career Services, University of Houston – Clear Lake   Houston, TX
Career Counselor   9/2012-6/2012
- Met with 2-3 personal clients per week
- Assist students with career guidance and job search strategies
- Facilitated Industrial/Organization Job Club that was nominated for Best Practice Outstanding Program
- Explain the results of the Strengths Quest, the Myers-Briggs and the Strong Interest Inventory and relate them to student's career goals
- Provide one-on-one and online feedback for students over résumés
- Run Mock Interviews to prepare students for actual situation

Good Shepherd Mission   Huntsville, TX
Volunteer Personal Counselor   1/2013-10/2013
- Provided group and individual counseling over substance abuse/dependence and trauma issues
- Administered SASSI-3 to assess substance use history

Career Services, Sam Houston State University   Huntsville, TX
Career Counseling Graduate Assistant   7/2011-7/2012
- Presented overviews Career Services as well as specifics topics including résumés, interviewing, assessments, and professionalism

- Provided career counseling and explained the results of the Myers-Briggs and the Strong Interest Inventory and relate them to student's career goals
- Supplied one-on-one and online feedback for students/alumni over résumés and interviewing

Counseling Center, Sam Houston State University   Huntsville, TX
Counseling Intern   1/2012-8/2012
- Counsel students of diverse culture and age to help them meet their therapeutic goals by using a range of techniques such as reflecting and disputing cognitive distortion
- Engage in supervision weekly with a senior staff member and a post-doctoral student
- Create treatment plans to stay on track with goals and write intake, progress, and termination notes

SUPERVISON EXPERIENCE

Supervised Practicum, University of Houston-Victoria   Woodlands, TX
Site Supervisor   Fall 2016-Summer 2017
- Worked individually with Master level student in counseling at the Mobile Crisis Outreach team
- Discussed theoretical orientation and working with clients within different theories to encourage exploration and growth
- Provided live supervision during ride-a-longs where I was able to model and observe student use counseling techniques

Supervised Practicum, Sam Houston State University   Woodlands, TX
Doctoral Student Supervisor   Spring 2014
- Worked individually with Master's level student in counseling children and adults
- Discussed theoretical orientation and how she could plan treatment within a framework
- Facilitated conversations concerning techniques and ways in which she could best work with her clients

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Communities in Schools – Heart of Texas   Waco, TX
Career Coach, Data Entry   6/2009-3/2011
- Helped at-risk youth develop skills needed to succeed in the work environment for summer program
- Communicated with supervisors about participants progress and created weekly case notes

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS & HONORS

The Harris Center Leadership Team   1/2019 to Present
Texas Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors 8/2012 to Present
Texas Counseling Association, member   8/2011 to Present

Beta Kappa Tau, Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, member   12/2011 to Present
    Secretary   5/2014-5/2015
Workshop Committee, Chair   5/2014-5/2015
Outstanding Research Award – Masters Student   5/2012
Counseling Scholarship   5/2012

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Henriksen, R. Ch. H., Polonyi, M., Bornsheuer, J. N., Greger, R., & Watts, R. E. (January 2015). Counseling students' perceptions of religious/spiritual counseling training: A qualitative study. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 93*, 59-69. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2015.00181.x

NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PRESENTATIONS

Greger, R. & Tran, C. Q. D., March 2017, presented at Texas Association for Counselor Education and Supervision.Topic: Advising and Understanding Crisis Procedures.

Tran, C. Q. D. & Greger, R. March 2017, presented at Texas Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Topic: An Advanced Supervision Session On Trauma Informed Supervision.

Li, C. S., Greger, R., Lertora, I., Lewis, S. Lin, Y. F., Liu, V. Y., Porter, K., Tran, C. Q. D. October 2015, presented a round table discussion at Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Topic: Interactive Teaching and TRAINing: Techniques for Counselor Educators and Supervisors.

Li, C. S., Greger, R., Lertora, I., Lewis, S. Lin, Y. F., Liu, V. Y., Porter, K., Tran, C. Q. D. February 2015, presented at Texas Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Topic: Interactive Teaching and TRAINing: Techniques for Counselor Educators and Supervisors.

Sulllivan, J., La Guardia, A., Greger, R. September 2013. Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling (AARC) Conference. Topic: Professional Identity Development: Assessment and Applications for Professional Growth

Henriksen, R. Ch. H., Polonyi, M., Bornsheuer, J. N., Greger, R., November 2011, presented at Texas Counseling Association. Topic: Counseling Students Perceptions of Religious/Spiritual Counseling Training.

GUEST SPEAKER/WORKSHOP FACILITATOR

Harris Center Leadership Series   April & May 2019
    Topic: Collaboration in Leadership   The Harris Center
New Hire Orientation   July 2018
    Topic: Extended Rehabilitation   The Harris Center
Community Counseling   June 2014
    Topic: Diagnosing & Assessment   Sam Houston State University
Career Exploration Workshop   March 2013 & June 2013
    Topic: Career Development and Exploration University of Houston-Clear Lake
Workshop for Intern Supervisors   July 2013
    Topic: Preparing New Counselors   Sam Houston State University