PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING A GUIDING THEORY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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At the University of North Texas, and as per the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards, masters students in counselor training are required to choose a personal theoretical approach to the counseling process. The purpose of this study was to investigate an experimental counseling theory identification procedure compared to the traditional procedure of helping students identify a personal theory of counseling. The investigation assessed the effect on 1) counselor self-report of confidence in theoretical orientation selection/identification, and 2) the degree to which a student consistently identifies, conceptualizes and utilizes a particular counseling theoretical approach. Volunteer participants (n=35) were recruited from three sections of COUN 5660 and were randomly drawn to group assignment within each class. The experimental condition focused on exploration of personal beliefs related to human nature, maladjustment and the nature of change as a basis for theory selection. The comparison group received the standard theory selection activities. The TCQ and TOPS-R were used to examine the effect of treatment and were administered at three points of time. Data was analyzed using a split plot ANOVA to examine group differences, changes across time, and the possible interaction of change with group membership. Statistical and practical significance of findings were analyzed. Results revealed no statistically significant differences between groups over time. Because findings revealed statistically significant main effect findings for time—ranging from moderate to large—post hoc analysis was conducted. One-way ANOVAs were conducted for each dependent variable to further understand results. Results indicated that both groups demonstrated a statistically significant increase over time in theory confidence, with large treatment effects for both groups. Post hoc results on the TOPS-R Humanistic/Existential scale and the Cognitive/Behavioral scale revealed mixed results regarding treatment effect.
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It is strange standing here on the other side of this mountain. I can’t believe I am looking behind me now at the range of gifts I received and challenges I have overcome on this journey. I am a better person for it and would do it again, and again, and again.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A counselor’s education can be a challenging experience filled with concerns of competence and with self-doubt (Woodside, Oberman, Cole, & Carruth, 2007). One important challenge is the identification of a theoretical approach to the counseling process (Spruill, 2000). A counselor’s theoretical orientation—also referred to as a counselor’s guiding theory—provides a framework for understanding clients within the therapeutic process (Fall, Holden & Marquis, 2004; Poznanski & McLennan, 1995a). However, a counselor’s use of particular theoretical strategies, techniques, and interventions does not necessarily mean a counselor follows the philosophical assumptions of that theory (Poznanski & McLennan, 1995a). Awareness of a personal philosophy is important in the identification of a guiding therapeutic model. It is argued that counselors-in-training already possess a personal philosophy about the nature of humans that may not be individually defined before training (Fall et al., 2004). Early authors have claimed there are as many therapeutic approaches to counseling as there are individual counselors (Barron, 1978). It is further argued that therapeutic frameworks can limit what a counselor acknowledges (Fall, et al., 2004) and yet can provide a valuable framework for illumination of important client information (Boy & Pine, 1983). A single theoretical approach is an important starting point in counselor development and training (Fall et al., 2004, Schmidt, 2001; Watts, 1993; Young, 1993).

Researchers use different terms when referring to the theoretical development process—selection, choice, identification, and development. In this review of literature, I used the specific terms used by each of the authors. However, for purposes of this
dissertation, I distinguish a difference between *selection/choice* and *identification*. *Selection* and *choice* are similar terms—they reflect a counselor’s deliberate and conscious decision of a theoretical framework. *Identification* is the assimilation and adoption of one’s selection/choice—it includes a sense of philosophical congruence and agreement.

Factors that impact counselors’ theory selection and identification have received attention in the literature. Cummings and Lucchese (1978) suggested that identifying a theory was an inadvertent process. More recently, authors have suggested that one’s beliefs, values, and personality factors, play an important role in theoretical choice, selection, development, and identification (Arthur, 2000; Beck & Weishaar, 2005; Bitar, Bean & Bermudez, 2007; Fall, Holden & Marquis, 2004; Watts, 1993). Although there are differing opinions regarding the role of personality variables and theoretical orientation selection (Arthur, 2001), researchers and theorists have posited that understanding one’s personality characteristics enhances theoretical development (Freeman, Hayes, Kuch & Taub, 2007; Miller, 2006).

Identifying personality characteristics is believed to be helpful in counselor training (Scragg, Bor & Watts, 1999). Moreover, identifying specific beliefs and values may play a role in enhancing theoretical orientation selection by acknowledging beliefs and values with respect to clinical practice and outcome (Strupp, 1980). Counseling is not ‘value free’ (Carlson & Erickson, 1999; Kelly & Strupp, 1992; Strupp, 1980), and personal philosophy is reflected in a counselor’s theoretical approach (Fear & Woolfe, 1999). Counselors, in general, share similar values (Consoli & Williams, 1999; Kelly, 1995), and those with similar theoretical approaches tend to share similar values, as
well (Mahalik, 1995). Not only have personal values been found to be a major influence in theoretical orientation selection (Norcross & Prochaska, 1983) but they may also be related to a practitioner’s satisfaction with selection (Vasco, Garcia-Marques & Dryden, 1993).

A counselor’s theoretical orientation develops and evolves over a professional lifetime (Ronnestadt & Skovholt, 2003). A counselor’s theoretical framework selection may be related to intellectual development (Brabeck & Welfel, 1985) and can be assessed by numerous and various inventories (Poznanski & McLennan, 1995a). The challenge, however, may be related to theory selection in and of itself and may be further related to an underlying lack of personal identification of philosophical beliefs and values (Strupp, 1980). Given that a counselor’s various philosophical beliefs exert an influence on client conceptualization (Hersch, 2001), identifying such beliefs seems a necessary step in guiding theory selection. Unfortunately, published training strategies aimed at advancing a counseling student’s self-reflection and theoretical fit are scarce (Giuffrida, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of focus for this present study is with respect to counseling students and theoretical orientation selection, identification, and confidence. A review of the literature revealed a dearth of research on the process of theory identification. One of the problems may be rooted in a student’s lack of personal exploration of beliefs. Therefore, this study is concerned with counseling students' beliefs related to the nature
of humans, maladjustment, and change and how these beliefs impact identification, conceptualization, utilization, and confidence of theoretical orientation selection.

Review of the Related Literature

The following review of literature will include examination of a) the importance of theoretical orientation, b) eclecticism and theoretical orientation selection, c) personality and theoretical orientation, d) personal beliefs, values, and theory selection, e) counselor development in relation to theoretical orientation, and f) implications of measuring theoretical orientation.

Relative Importance of Theoretical Orientation

The pursuit of an education in the field of counseling can be disconcerting. Woodside, Oberman, Cole and Carruth (2007) explored the pre-practicum experiences of eight counseling students through phenomenological interviews and subsequently furthered the current understanding of novice counselors’ experiences. The authors illuminated trainees’ experiences as filled with self-doubt and insecurities. They uncovered underlying themes of a) students’ education as a journey starting before training, b) ambivalence and self-doubt in deciding to become a counselor, c) doubts of abilities as counselors, d) attitudes related to the nature of counseling, such as techniques and training, e) the learning process in general, f) awareness of and need for personal and professional boundaries, and g) themes of acknowledging the differentiation between self and others in light of their education.

As stated earlier, counselors-in-training may struggle with attitudes related to the
nature of counseling (Woodside et al., 2007). Accordingly, acknowledging the usefulness of a guiding theory is an important beginning element for counselors-in-training. Poznanski and McLennan (1995a) defined theoretical orientation as “a conceptual framework used by a counselor to understand client therapeutic needs” (p. 412). Gelso (1995) emphasized that an operational definition of theoretical orientation should also include how a given theory represents beliefs about personality dynamics, healthy versus unhealthy adjustment, and the causes of psychopathology. Gelso further argued that a definition of theoretical orientation should include how a therapist intervenes with respect to a given guiding theory—which the author termed theoretical operations.

Poznanski and McLennan (1995b) responded to Gelso (1995) with respect to the definition of theoretical orientation and clarified their position. They agreed that counselor theoretical orientation dictates the use of particular strategies and operations. However, they further asserted it is not techniques and interventions but the meaning of interventions that is most important to a therapist. They also argued that use of particular theoretical techniques does not equate to a counselor’s philosophical alignment with a particular theoretical orientation. Technique, they argued, is an expression of theory and not of the contextual meaning of the theory itself. Poznanski and McLennan posited, “There is apparently a weaker link between therapists’ Espoused Theory and their observed therapeutic behavior” (p. 429).

Fall, Holden, and Marquis (2004) defined counseling theory as a conceptual framework as well. Fall et al. (2004) claimed a good theoretical framework includes concepts, terms, and approaches that are philosophically consistent. The authors
claimed that each person, as a counselor, does best to interpret the complex nature of humanity uniquely and, therefore, aligns with a personal guiding theory that resonates with one’s own view of the world. Each counselor trainee—perhaps unwittingly—already possesses a personal theory of the nature of humans, change, and maladjustment, and can likely identify with an existing therapeutic model. There exist numerous individual interpretations of the complexity of human nature. Just as counseling theory provides a framework, it may potentially limit a counselor in what they see and interpret (Fall et al.). A framework also allows for a counselor to secure important information easily missed without a theoretical reference (Fall et al.; Boy & Pine, 1983).

Boy and Pine (1983) also claimed theoretical orientation provides a framework, as well as relatedness and unity of information, and it allows one to see important client details that may otherwise be overlooked. Theory provides for logical direction for a developing counselor, helps one to focus on relevant information, and provides guidelines for treatment. “For the counselor, the many hows of one’s work can be more easily managed if they are linked to a why. For the counselor, the why of one’s work is the counselor’s theory of counseling” (p. 248).

Theoretical orientation selection was illuminated by Steiner (1978). In a now dated, yet currently highly referenced survey, Steiner explored the responses of 30 psychotherapists regarding the most significant factors in selection of a theoretical orientation. Steiner discovered that selection—listed here in order of preference—was affected by one’s own therapist’s working model, graduate and professional training, instructors, and fellow colleagues’ orientations. A popular quote by Steiner, “the reasons
for one’s choice of a particular theoretical orientation are as ineffable as the explanation for the selection of one’s spouse,” (p. 371) was challenged in later research and will be reviewed in this manuscript. Even though Steiner suggested a happenstance approach to theory selection, she also stated that other variables such as personality, attitudes, emotions, and life experiences, however difficult to identify, were likely contributors to the selection process.

In another early and frequently referenced landmark paper, Cummings and Lucchese (1978) posited a therapist’s theoretical selection is inadvertent and likely accidental. The authors declared that to a large extent, selection of a theory is influenced by factors over which a therapist has no control and “that the emergence of an orientation, albeit a complex process, is one given to the whims of fate” (p. 323). Cummings and Lucchese claimed the emergence of a guiding theory is influenced by the chance and circumstance of graduate training, instructors, early clinical experience, practicality, and perceived effectiveness. However, they also acknowledged personality influences on theory selection when they said, “we seek to emphasize that accidental factors play an important, if not primary, role at times leading to selection which may be inconsistent or in conflict with one’s personality” (p. 327).

Norcross and Prochaska (1983), performed a rigorous and systematic study of clinician’s theoretical selection. They administered a survey exploring the selection, utilization, and efficacy of theoretical orientation among 479 subjects from various divisions of the American Psychological Association (APA). A three section questionnaire assessed degrees of satisfaction related to theoretical orientation satisfaction, extent of use of defined orientation, and influences with regard to
theoretical selection. Of the psychologists surveyed, 77.1% were very satisfied or quite satisfied with their theoretical selection. Accordingly, 94.1% characterized theoretical orientation as repeatedly/always or often influential on their clinical practice. Important findings of this study were the influences on clinicians’ theoretical orientation selection. Of the psychologists surveyed, and with respect to the 14 variables measured, values and personal philosophy was the second most important influence on theoretical orientation selection, followed by the influence of graduate training (Norcross & Prochaska). Whereas this study is over 25 years old, it still has important implications to the field for counseling in general and for counselors in training specifically. Because a counselor’s approach to counseling can be considered very influential on the therapeutic process, it is important to identify what the influences are. This study underscored the importance of a counselor’s exploration of personal beliefs, personal philosophy, and values.

Carlson and Erickson (1999), while acknowledging the extant research on the prevalence and magnitude of values within the field of psychotherapy, encouraged therapists—and trainees as well—to explore personal beliefs, values, and commitments and how they relate, not only to one’s personal life, but also to therapeutic practice. The authors asserted personal exploration of values is crucial and necessary and also claimed a value-neutral stance in therapy is not possible or advisable. Carlson and Erickson offered a training model to help therapists understand these values and to encourage a deeper understanding of how personal values relate to values inherent in the theory a therapist subscribes to; they explored the idea of the importance of a therapist’s values matching values of the theory one adopts.
Carlson and Erickson (1999) regaled the importance of exploring values as they relate to the client change process and how counselor values impacts clients in the therapeutic process. They further asserted that therapist accountability is enhanced by personal and theoretical integration. Carlson and Erickson viewed therapists as moral consultants—not in a positivist sense of all-knowing—but as collaborators in helping clients see moral consequences to their actions. They also stated therapists are accountable for understanding the implications of their own moral values within the therapeutic process and claimed, “When we hold certain clearly defined values that are personally significant and then do not act on those values in therapy we may experience a moral dilemma” (p. 62).

Eclecticism and Theoretical Orientation Selection

In order to investigate the process of theoretical orientation selection, it is important to understand the implications of a counseling student’s choice for eclecticism. Technical eclecticism is defined as using one organizing theoretical framework while using techniques from other schools of thought. Synthetic eclecticism is defined as integrating two or more theoretical orientations. Theoretical eclecticism is defined as using no single theoretical framework but as drawing from many (Young, 1993). Young claimed eclecticism is a growing approach in the field of counseling. The author surveyed 125 American Counseling Association members on theoretical orientation preferences and on the influences of theorists, books, and techniques used in clinical practice. At the time of the survey, Young discovered 32% identified as eclectic, 22% as person-centered, and 10% as family systems with the remainder
identifying with other theoretical approaches. Of those sampled who identified as eclectic, 53% acknowledged they worked from the foundation of one theory while using techniques from other theories—identified as technical eclecticism. The implication and important point with this 1993 survey is that even with the increased use of eclecticism over other frameworks or a single theoretical guiding framework, counselors initially adhere to one theory (Young).

It is necessary to make two further important points about eclecticism. First, it is important to define what is meant by eclecticism. Lazarus, Beutler, and Norcross (1992) differentiated between technical eclecticism, syncretism, and theoretical integration. Technical eclecticism in the field of psychotherapy has been the inadvertent blending and use of various procedures from different theoretical orientations. The authors considered this haphazard and further declared this type of “smorgasboard conception of eclecticism” (p.12) as “regrettable and misguided” (Lazarus et al., 1992, p. 12). Accordingly, Lazarus et al. defined this approach to technical eclecticism gone awry as syncretism, a misguided fusion of beliefs. They stated that this approach to blending techniques is the antithesis of effective counseling. Therefore, within counselor education and development, a counselor-in-training is wise to understand the various distinctions and definitions of eclecticism when selecting and identifying a theoretical approach to the counseling process.

The second important point of how the concept and practice of eclecticism is relevant to theoretical orientation selection and identification is highlighted by Schmidt (2001). He stated use of different techniques from divergent philosophies can be the result of avoiding deeper understanding of counseling theory: “Intentionality is often
sacrificed for expediency” (p. 97). Schmidt used the term *assimilative eclecticism* that “involves the combination of proven compatible techniques from theoretically similar theories, directed through the conceptualization of a single, grounded theory of counseling” (p. 98). He further claimed that assimilative eclecticism encourages a counselor to utilize techniques from other theories as long as those techniques are consistent with the philosophical goals and purpose of one’s guiding theory. Schmidt made the argument that a counselor must at least develop and adhere to one counseling theory to branch off. He further claimed no one theory works for every client and no one counselor works for every client. To attempt to be all is an unrealistic goal. Schmidt further acknowledged development of counseling theory as an anxiety provoking endeavor due to the depth and complexity of the various philosophies to be understood.

*Personality and Theoretical Orientation*

In understanding theoretical orientation and individual selection, it is necessary to acknowledge the relevance and importance of personality influences. One definition of personality is one’s “cognitive organization and structure, which are both biologically and socially influenced” (Beck & Weishaar, 2005, p. 246) and reflect one’s individual beliefs. Referring to studying and developing a theoretical approach to therapy, Corsini and Wedding (2005) affirmed that a counseling student “will not be either successful or happy using a method not suited to his or her own personality. The really successful therapist adopts or develops a theory and methodology congruent with his or her own personality” (p. 13). Given these assumptions, the following review of literature,
organized chronologically, will focus on factors related to the theoretical orientation
selection process.

In a formal essay introducing a large body of work, Barron (1978) explored the
impact of the personality of the psychotherapist and individual theoretical orientation
selection. Barron emphasized that psychotherapy is as much art as science. He claimed
they are as many theoretical approaches as there are individual therapists, each with
individual beliefs of human nature. Each therapist holds values, beliefs, hopes, dreams,
political views, and cultural ideas—a personal philosophy and value system—that
affects therapeutic endeavors. The therapist is inseparable from the person. Barron also
observed that what a therapist adheres to theoretically can be different than what one
actually does in a clinical setting. He stated that it is difficult to agree on how to interpret
the meaning and significance of theory given the complexity of the nature of humans.

Scandell, Wlazelek, and Scandell (1997) investigated the relationship between
personality and theoretical orientation among therapists. Forty-one participants were
assessed using the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R), a 5-factor, 240-item self-
report instrument scored on a 5-point Likert scale. The authors reported test-retest
reliability for various subscales of this instrument. The participants also completed a
seven-point scale questionnaire designed by the authors assessing theoretical
orientation, education level, and other demographic information. The authors reported
no testing of reliability or validity for this instrument. The authors reported “significant
positive correlations” (p. 416) between humanistic and gestalt orientation and the
openness domain on the NEO-PI-R. They further concluded humanistic orientation was
positively correlated with openness to fantasy domain and openness of action. The
researchers claimed cognitive orientation was highly correlated with the agreeableness domain and facets of the straightforwardness domain as well as agreeableness facets of the straightforwardness and altruism domain. Scandell et al. reported no significant gender differences on theoretical orientation ratings. However, with respect to personality variables, there was statistical significance with women scoring higher than men on extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. The authors noted that these differences on NEO domains were not consistent in the general population.

Scragg, Bor, and Watts (1999) demonstrated a relationship between a counselor’s professed “therapy orientation” (p. 264) and factors on the Millon Index of Personality Styles (MIPS) among applicants to a counseling psychology program. The 180 item MIPS was reported to hold reliability and validity; however, they did not report these data in their study. Therapy orientation was assessed on a self-report questionnaire constructed for the study that the researchers administered to 68 participants. Therapeutic approaches espoused by the applicants were categorized as either directive or non-directive in orientation. Scragg et al. (1999) performed a one-way ANOVA with directive and nondirective orientation independent variables and personality scales on the MIPS as dependent variables. Results revealed directive orientated participants had “significantly greater” (p. 266) scores on systemizing, asserting, and comforting scales, and non-directive participants had higher scores than directive participants on the Intuiting scale. The authors suggested information gleaned from this research could be used in counselor trainee selection, in that personality/theoretical orientation preference information may help identify students who possess a better fit with the program for which they are applying. Whereas this study, as well,
suggested a connection between personality style and theoretical orientation selection, an important limitation the authors did not acknowledge was use of a self-designed instrument for which they did not indicate reliability and validity.

The importance of personality in theoretical orientation selection was illuminated by Arthur (2000). In a study researching the personality and cognitive-epistemological differences among 247 psychoanalytic and cognitive-behavioral British psychotherapists, Arthur utilized a random and opportunistic sample to query responses on personality, epistemological, and attitudinal questionnaires. Using the MIPS, the Organicism-Mechanism Paradigm Inventory (OMPI), and the Psycho-Epistemological Profile (PEP), Arthur demonstrated diverse personality and epistemological characteristics among counselors whose orientations were identified as either cognitive-behavioral or psychoanalytic. Whereas cognitive-behavioral and psychoanalytic therapists were similar with respect to interpersonal social behaviors and attention to client information cues, they differed on measures related to personality and cognitive characteristics. In terms of personality and orientation, Arthur demonstrated analysis of variance effects and scale score differences: Psychoanalytic psychotherapists scored higher on Preserving ($M = 14.59, SD = 7.92$), Intuiting ($M = 24.03, SD = 7.49$), Feeling ($M = 28.56, SD = 6.87$), and Innovating ($M = 29.54, SD = 9.22$) than cognitive-behaviorists ($M = 11.74, SD = 8.34$), ($M = 19.95, SD = 8.94$), ($M = 24.38, SD = 8.34$) and ($M = 26.56, SD = 9.64$) respectively. He further claimed cognitive-behaviorists scored higher on Enhancing ($M = 25.80, SD = 7.28$), Individualizing ($M = 15.42, SD = 6.28$), Sensing ($M = 14.06, SD = 6.36$), Thinking ($M = 15.68, SD = 6.71$), Retiring ($M = 16.41, SD = 10.02$), Conforming ($M = 29.89, SD = 8.49$), and Adjustment ($M = 48.95$,
than psychoanalytic psychotherapists ($M = 23.68, SD = 7$), ($M = 13.71, SD = 6.53$), ($M = 11.08, SD = 5.63$), ($M = 10.26, SD = 5.72$), ($M = 13.73, SD = 7.34$), ($M = 25.75, SD = 8.23$), and ($M = 46.57, SD = 7.86$) respectively.

Arthur acknowledged the limitations of the study with respect to the opportunistic sample of only two orientations. However limited the generalizability of the study with respect to other theoretical orientations, the research indicated a possible relationship between practitioners’ personalities and theoretical orientations.

In another body of work, Arthur (2001) analyzed extant qualitative and quantitative research related to the topic of personality variables and reviewed the findings of the effect on theoretical orientation choice. “The conclusion for over 85 percent of them was that personality does affect, cause or decide orientation choice” (p. 47). However, Arthur further claimed the existence of a range of views regarding the relationship between personality, epistemological style, and theoretical selection. He reviewed current literature and critically analyzed 45 articles and then selected statistically significant data among 13 articles that employed different measures of personality and/or epistemological traits and theoretical orientation. A profile was developed illuminating characteristics related to psychodynamic and behavioral psychotherapists on each of the measures. For example, Arthur revealed rational emotive therapists viewed themselves more rational and psychodynamic therapists viewed themselves as more serious and complex (Walton, 1978 as cited in Arthur). Once again, Arthur’s research indicated a likely connection between personality and theory but did not clarify exactly what that relationship might be.

Some researchers were unable to link personality to theoretical orientation.
Freeman (2003) studied the relationship between theoretical orientation selection and personality characteristics in counselors-in-training. Freeman utilized the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Self-Directed Search (SDS) in his research with 132 beginning graduate counseling student participants. He performed discriminant functional analysis of variables on both instruments and was unable to demonstrate statistical significance of either or both personality instruments predicting theoretical preference.

Later, Freeman, Hayes, Kuch, and Taub (2007) contended that a counselor may enhance theoretical selection by understanding elements of one’s personality traits. In an attempt to examine the relationship between personality variables and theoretical orientation, Freeman et al. (2007) studied 132—the same number of students—in three different graduate programs. The participants were given the Self-Directed Search (SDS), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and two author developed surveys, the Counselor Educators Survey (CES) and Counseling Theory Survey (CTS). Freeman found no significant results with respect to discriminant function analysis on the SDS and MBTI, or on theoretical orientation and MBTI.

Miller (2006) studied personality types and theoretical orientation among counselors-in-training utilizing two instruments: Holland’s model on the Self-Directed Search (SDS)—a well established reliable and valid measure of personality traits—and the Counseling Orientation Scale (COS)—also established as reliable and valid in assessing theoretical orientation preference. Personality traits on the SDS are categorized as realistic (R), investigative (I), artistic (A), social (S), enterprising (E) and conventional (C). Miller evaluated 58 volunteer graduate students enrolled in a
psychology-counseling master’s program. SDS three-letter combinations of personality preferences were compared to participant reported theoretical orientation identification. Although Miller was unable to establish clear evidence of the relationship between Holland types and theoretical orientation, he did reveal preponderance for the social type as first in the three type combination among the entire sample. Even though Miller was unable to establish significant support matching personality type and theoretical orientation, he still suggested that information on this model had the potential for helping counselor education training by illuminating possible personal preferences in relation to theoretical orientation preferences.

Bitar, Bean, and Bermudez (2007) utilized a grounded theory approach and illuminated how personality, personal philosophy, personal values, pre-and post-graduate training, and clinical experience influenced theoretical orientation selection among marriage and family therapists \((n = 5)\). As a result of their attempt to develop a model and to explain the processes of theoretical orientation, Bitar et al. (2007) stated, “Since congruence between personal values and a theory is central to the theory selection process, both in this study and in past research, 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” (p. 118). They further encouraged counselor educators to facilitate counseling student’s increased understanding of personal values and to explore personal philosophies in a practicum setting. Bitar et al. (2007) declared “Not personally acknowledging and then examining the values and their influence, however, can be problematic” (p. 118). The authors designed nine questions for exploring theoretical development that influence
selection and the selection process. Two of the nine questions queried personal exploration. For example, “How are your personal philosophy and values (including religious and spiritual) influencing your theory selection process?” and “How does your personality relate to your theory selection process?” (p. 118).

**Counselor Values and Theoretical Orientation**

Strupp (1980), in a dated yet highly referenced narrative review of therapist values, stated therapists have traditionally been encouraged to keep silent of personal values within the therapeutic process. The belief at the time was that a therapist was to remain neutral. Strupp stated this goal was not only unrealistic but was “perhaps harmful” (p. 396) to a client when what a client may need is a relationship with a therapist rather than a neutral technician. Strupp claimed a therapist's values are unavoidably interwoven in the therapist/client dyad. The whole person of the therapist, including personal values, is brought into the therapy process. He stated essential therapeutic values underlying therapeutic practice are typically indirectly communicated to the client.

Mahalik (1995) surveyed 119 American Psychological Association members, a majority of whom were psychologists with doctorates, to explore the relationship between a counselor’s personal values orientation and theoretical orientation. The researchers utilized The Intercultural Values Inventory (ICV) which measures five values-orientations: relations, human activity, person-nature, time, and human nature. With 119 participants and a 52.3% return rate, Mahalik was unable to support the hypothesis that mental health practitioners claiming different theoretical orientations
endorse different values on the ICV. However, regardless of theoretical orientation, mental health practitioners were similar with respect to humanistic values on the instrument. The authors claimed their research suggested that although mental health practitioners may operate within a particular theoretical framework, “their own presuppositions and assumptions about the makeup of the world are independent of the theoretical orientation that they use to guide their practice” (p. 232).

Another study that illuminated the existence of values among counselors was conducted by Kelly (1995). In a highly referenced national study of 479 counselors associated with the American Counseling Association, Kelly (1995) investigated the values orientations of counselors in four areas: universal values, mental health values, individualism-collective values, and religious-spiritual values. His result revealed that in terms of universal values, counselors highly endorsed self-directionism, universalism, benevolence, and achievement. With respect to mental health values, counselors highly endorsed disciplined personal living with rational thinking, sexual acceptance, purposeful personal development, autonomy, self-expression, forgiveness, compassionate responsiveness, and human relatedness. In the area of individualism-collectivism, counselors endorsed values of collectivism and a concern for others and leaned toward collaboration. Finally, with respect to religious-spiritual values, most counselors identified as having some level of spiritual orientation. This research emphasizes the point that therapists hold values orientations and further identifies values that may be important factors correlated with orientation choice (Bitar et al., 2007).

More evidence of counselor held values is revealed by Consoli and Williams
The authors investigated personal and mental health values of 161 counselors in Buenos Aires, Argentina. They found mental health providers endorsed values of responsibility, capability, intimacy, wisdom, inner harmony, freedom, health, honesty, and meaning of life. They also revealed mental health providers highly endorsed values of feeling expression, self-esteem, interpersonal loyalty and commitment, flexibility, intimacy, and purposeful living. Mental health providers as a group endorsed values of human relatedness, collectivity, self-awareness, expression of feelings, coping ability, autonomy, and self-control. The authors stated that the implication for counselors is that understanding one’s own personal values allows for the better understanding of how these values affect counselor/client interaction.

The importance of personal values and theoretical orientation selection was also highlighted by Vasco, Garcia-Marques, and Dryden (1993). They constructed an index of dissonance between the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions of selected schools of psychotherapy philosophy and a Portuguese therapist’s commitment to the same philosophies. Their intent was to measure the degree of satisfaction of one’s therapeutic approach, extent to which the approach influences a clinician’s practice, career satisfaction, and one’s chances of leaving that career. They sought to discover what a therapist—who is experiencing dissonance defined as a discrepancy between a counselor’s personal beliefs and tenets to selected theoretical orientation—does with respect to approach to orientation. They also sought to discover other correlates of dissonance. Recognizing the limits of the study such as sample size \( n = 140 \) and generalizability, the authors asserted, “dissonance between therapist’s personal philosophy and values and the metatheoretical assumptions of their selected
therapeutic orientation seem related to dissatisfaction with orientation” (p. 191). The finding of an inverse relationship between personal philosophy/values and therapist dissonance when selecting a theoretical approach is significant. The authors suggested perhaps dissonance is the result of not having considered, in depth, personal values when selecting a theoretical orientation.

In later research, and in an effort to better understand a therapist’s theoretical orientation in relation to clinical practice, Vasco and Dryden (1994) surveyed 161 Portuguese behavioral, cognitive, eclectic, humanistic, psychodynamic, and systemic therapists. The researchers used the Organicism-Mechanism Paradigm (OMP) to measure ontological assertions, the Psycho-Epistemological Profile (PEP) to assess epistemological assertions, and the Broughton’s Developmental Interview to assess individual developmental levels. Vasco and Dryden claimed therapists with different ontological and epistemological commitments “assign different weights to different variables when selecting a theoretical orientation” (p. 331). The authors further claimed personal philosophy and values were ranked the most important variable in theoretical orientation selection, and that counselors from differing theoretical approaches emphasized different personal values. With respect to theoretical orientation selection, the authors claimed humanistic/psychodynamic therapists favored the variable of “the orientation of own therapist” whereas cognitive therapists neglected this variable and favored “research results”. Family systems therapists gave priority to the variables “family experience” and “type of patients I work with” and neglected “research results.” Behavior therapists favored the variable “research results” and neglected “personal philosophy and values” and “ability to help me understand myself.” Lastly, eclectic
therapists favored the variables of “research results” and “ability to help me understand myself” and neglected “personal philosophy and values” and “accidental circumstances.”

In an attempt to understand psychologist awareness and value assumptions, Murdock, Banta, Viena, and Brown (1998) investigated variables related to psychologist choice of theoretical orientation. Murdock et al. (1998) distributed 268 protocols, including a demographic questionnaire, Theoretical Orientation Survey (TOS) short form, Impact Message Inventory (IMI), and the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire—Revised (SLQ-R). They discovered three factors predicted theoretical orientation: philosophical variables, interpersonal elements of control and affiliation and theoretical match with supervisors. Specifically, the authors claimed that of personality dimensions measured, the interpersonal dimension of dominance was the only predictor. The authors argued supervisors are wise to closely consider interpersonal styles of trainees and should help facilitate awareness of interpersonal individual style and fit with theoretical orientation. Murdock et al. also emphasized the importance of supervisory/supervisee exploration of philosophical awareness of a selected theory and further encouraged educators to illuminate biases. Finally, the authors asserted that supervisees’ understanding of theoretical approaches are different at different counselor developmental stages, a factor that should be taken into consideration within the supervision process.

The research and literature explored above suggests that counselors possess values that are unavoidably interwoven in the therapist/client dyad, that mental health practitioners may report similar values as a whole, and that values may be important
factors correlated with orientation choice. Furthermore, the authors suggested that understanding one’s own personal values may allow for the better understanding of how these values affect counselor/client interaction. Some authors suggested that perhaps dissonance with theoretical orientation selection is the result of not having considered, in depth, personal values when selecting a theoretical orientation. Finally, other authors argued that educators and supervisors are wise to closely consider interpersonal styles of trainees and they should help facilitate awareness of interpersonal individual style and fit with theoretical orientation.

Counselor Philosophy and Theoretical Orientation

Fear and Woolfe (1999) examined the relationship between counselor personal philosophy and theoretical orientation. They suggested that congruence between theoretical orientation and personal philosophy is necessary for effective counselor development. A counselor must align with a guiding theory that envelops “the same underlying metatheoretical assumptions as their personal philosophy” (p. 252). Using a narrative approach with the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), the authors demonstrated how a counselor’s personal narrative—or story of one’s life—can be described as a vision of reality. Rooted in Greek literature, as either a romantic, tragic, comic, or ironic vision, the authors utilized a model that revealed a counselors’ vision of reality is largely congruent with the personal philosophical assumptions of the counselors’ approach to either person-centered, psychodynamic, or cognitive-behavioral theories. The authors acknowledge study weakness. However, based on their results, the authors carefully suggested personal philosophy may be reflected in a
counselor’s guiding theory selection. Of the listed visions of reality, they reported on only one. They suggested that those counselors reflecting an ironic narrative had a propensity for integrative or eclectic theoretical orientation. Fear and Woolfe encouraged counselor educators to facilitate epistemological awareness in training programs in order to enhance the congruent selection of counseling theoretical orientation and to enhance a selection that more closely fits with one’s personal philosophy. Although acknowledging weaknesses with their research, the authors did not acknowledge how identification with a theory may have influenced one’s narrative about one’s life. It is important to note that correlation does not imply causation also to ask which factor came first.

Counselor Development in Relation to Theoretical Orientation Selection

In an article emphasizing the developmental aspect of counselor theoretical orientation selection, Spruill (2000) posited a theoretical framework, a non-experimental article, espousing the critical nature of counseling students’ integration of life experience and individual developmental stages. The author contended selecting and integrating a personal guiding theory is a complex and critical component in counselor development. Accordingly, Spruill presented a guiding framework for assisting and strengthening counseling students’ personal theory selection by including integration of life experiences and developmental stages. Spruill stated effective counselor educators and supervisors are wise to integrate and provide various developmentally appropriate strategies when approaching individual counseling students, and he stressed timing of information and exercises as critical for each trainee. Appropriate introduction of theory
building strategies provides the benefit of early theory integration, professional development, and understanding of personal beliefs and values. Spruill offered a framework adaptation of Skovholt and Ronnestad’s model (1992) that included 3 phases. Personal beliefs (Phase 1), described as an exploration of self and others using introspective exercises that facilitate understanding of personal beliefs and values, as well as, personal motivations for entering into the counseling field. Counseling theories (Phase 2) includes the study of various theoretical approaches while integrating personal beliefs and values. Instruction for this phase encourages trainees to explore how personal values align or misalign with theories. Personal theory of counseling (Phase 3) is the actual application of developed skills, concepts, and techniques during the practicum or internship portion of training. This phase includes risk taking in practicing new skills and concepts. Students display various levels of confidence during training, and all phases require high levels of support and encouragement by instructors and supervisors during exploration and personal examination (Spruill).

The tenet that counselors develop a professional identity was illuminated by Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003). Auxier et al. (2003) used a grounded theory approach to develop a theory of counselor identity development. Using typical case sampling, the authors identified eight counseling students enrolled in a master’s program and examined processes related to individual emerging counselor self-concept. The researchers explored important training experiences, personal characteristics, and influences on counselor identity, and how counselor identity impacted personal perception. Auxier et al. formulated the concept of recycling identity formation process that included three related processes; conceptual learning,
experiential learning, and external evaluation. “Participants identified, clarified, and
reclarified their self-concepts as counselors through their learning experiences as
counselors-in-training” (p. 35). This study underscores how student counselors evolve
as professionals within the training process. The implication for counselor education is
that examination of personal beliefs and values may be a beneficial exercise and may
add to counselor development.

Ronnestadt and Skovholt (2003) compiled 15 years of research and formulated a
model of counselor development that included elements of theoretical orientation
development across the lifespan of a mental health provider. Their initial research
focused on discovering how counselors develop as they gain clinical experience
(Skovolt & Ronnestadt, 1992) and evolved to researching how counselors change and
experience themselves over time. They employed cross-sectional and later a
longitudinal approach to their research questions centered on counselor development,
change, counselor perception of change, and patterns of the developmental process
resulting in a reformulation of their earlier model (Skovolt & Ronnestadt). Using a semi-
structured interview approach and with an advantage of past theoretical research and
knowledge, the authors interviewed 100 therapists and counselors at different levels of
clinical experience ranging from student counselor/therapists to those with 25 years of
clinical experience. They created an eight phase model—earlier identified as stages—
as well as illuminated 20 themes of counselor/therapist development. They later
condensed their model into six phases and 14 themes (Ronnestadt & Skovholt). The
following first three phases of counselor development with respect to theoretical
orientation will be highlighted here.
As mentioned earlier, Ronnestadt and Skovholt (2003) uncovered the importance of and changes in theoretical approach over time. During Phase 1, the lay helper phase, the time before formal training, a helping individual acknowledges a problem quickly, furnishes emotional support, and gives advice based on personal experience. In this phase, one is operating from a natural helping stance founded upon personal beliefs of the nature of knowledge and ideas of how to help people in trouble. The lay helper has solutions to others’ problems. Ronnestadt and Skovholt (2003) asserted there are many boundary problems inherent in this phase including over-identification and over-involvement that may spur on intense advice giving.

In Phase 2, the beginning student phase outlined by Ronnestadt and Skovholt (2003), new counseling students are often excited but feel challenged by classes, the prospect of clients, professors, personal abilities, peers, and social environment. In short, they are overwhelmed. Students become acutely aware of how their lay approaches to helping are not in line with a professional approach to counseling. The shift from lay helper to an ambiguous status as a new counselor is a difficult process. They express self-doubt and question, “the ability to bridge the felt chasm between theory and practice” (p. 12). A counseling student finds immense help learning “easily mastered, straightforward, counseling/therapy methods (models, systems, approaches, frameworks) that can be absorbed quickly with focused effort and that hopefully can be applied to all clients” (p. 12). The use of these strategies gives students a sense of peace (Ronnestadt & Skovholt). Students may look for therapeutic models to imitate and may cling tightly to a desired model. The authors claimed, “We cannot emphasize enough the intensity by which students search for viable models” (p. 13), and they
further asserted that openness to learning is a necessary component to the complexities of the professional development process. Many students choose models and methods that appear ‘easy’ in response to this difficulty, and unfortunately, as posited by Ronnestadt and Skovholt, this process may inhibit professional development. The authors made an important and relevant comment: “Although some students feel competent throughout training, this is not the rule” (p. 14). In the present study, I ask if perhaps the lack of personal examination of beliefs related to the nature of humans, maladjustment and change accounts for some of the need to cling to and imitate other professionals.

Phase 3, the advanced student phase, is marked by a student’s desires to excel, to operate at high levels of functioning, and to avoid errors. They can be perfectionistic which leads to cautious and thorough approaches to clients. They are not comfortable or open to risks but instead are typically serious about their work. Students may take on inappropriate attitudes of responsibility towards their roles as counselors. Compared to students in earlier phases of development, advanced students may still feel vulnerable but also feel more empowered with training they have accumulated. They are closely evaluating therapeutic models. They are either identifying with or discarding models that do not apply to them (Ronnestadt & Skovholt, 2003).

Within the advanced student phase, Ronnestadt and Skovholt (2003) identified clear orientations to theoretical systems:

After our analysis of students’ descriptions of attachment to theory/conceptual systems, we identified four distinctly different orientations. They were (a) no conceptual attachment (which we also called laissez-faire orientation to theory), (b) “one theory, open” (which indicates preference for one theory but with openness to others), (c) multiple serial attachments (which indicates a serial monogamy type orientation), and (d) true believer (which indicates a strong belief
in onet theory *in combination with* active rejection of others). The ‘one theory open’ and ‘multiple attachment’ were the most common, and may, from a perspective of research on the professional development of psychotherapists, be most beneficial. (p. 16)

Whereas Ronnestadt and Skovholt (2003) explored how theoretical orientation plays a role in counselor development across the professional lifespan, they do not explore the specific struggle with identifying a particular guiding theory and how this struggle might play a part in the first three phases of counselor development.

One aspect of a counselor’s struggle with choosing and identifying with a particular theoretical framework and can be highlighted by the work of Brabeck and Welfel (1985). Looking at trends towards eclecticism from a developmental perspective, the authors utilized a model of reflective judgment (Kitchener & King, 1981, as cited in Brabeck & Welfel) to better understand a counseling student’s views of eclecticism as a guiding framework. They claimed the reflective judgment model provides a “conceptual model of how individuals choose and justify their beliefs about complex issues, such as what constitutes the best available counseling theory” (p. 343).

In order to understand Brabeck and Welfel’s (1985) hypothesis, it is necessary to explain the reflective judgment model as outlined by King and Kitchener (2004). The model is categorized by three levels and includes 7 stages. The model focuses on development of reflective thinking around controversies that are not easily solved through formal logic alone and that require careful evaluation of one’s beliefs with respect to available evidence. The model does not chronicle the content of one’s beliefs but the cognitive patterns through which one defends one’s beliefs.

Within pre-reflective thinking—Stages 1 and 2, “knowledge is assumed to be certain” (p. 6), distinct answers exist for all difficult problems and can be known with
certainty. Answers come from authority figures. Evidence is not used to arrive at solutions: beliefs or unsubstantiated opinions are used to solve ill-structured problems. Alternative beliefs are not acknowledged and a there exists a ‘right’ answer (Kitchener & King, 2004).

Quasireflective thinking—Stages 4 and 5—includes the thinking and recognition that “uncertainty is part of the knowing process” (p. 6). Development of the ability to see knowledge as an abstraction and the further understanding that knowledge is constructed as opposed to assumed or simply known through external factors as in prereflective thinking. The quasireflective stages start the process of understanding that knowledge is obtained through a personal internal process and becomes contextually relative (Kitchener & King, 2004).

Within reflective thinking—Stages 6 and 7, thinkers, “consistently and comfortably use evidence and reason in support of their judgments” (p. 9). Varieties of sources are used to form beliefs and are pulled from different perspectives and contexts. New evidence is used to reevaluate a stance (Kitchener & King, 2004).

Brabeck and Welfel (1985) claimed:

Researchers have concluded that master’s level graduate students do not consistently differentiate strong from weak evidence, do not form a reasoned synthesis from conflicting data, and sometimes use whim rather than logic and evidence to justify their beliefs. (p. 344)

The authors hypothesized a connection between intellectual development and view of eclecticism by way of anecdotal evidence. They reviewed counseling theory text books and discovered many texts organized and encouraged an eclectic approach to the counseling process. They analyzed papers written by student counselors on a student’s defense and choice of the best possible counseling theory. They discovered, within their
content analysis of 28 student papers, those students “accepted much of the explicit and implicit message about eclecticism that we found in counseling texts” (p. 345). Not only did they accept these messages, “they paraphrased higher stage statements” (p. 345) to fit within their own intellectual level. The authors claimed that student critical inquiry was inhibited by their cognitive developmental level. They also discovered in their sample that none of the students embraced one particular theory of psychotherapy over all others, but considered embracing one particular theory over an eclectic approach “as a danger” (p. 346). In terms of aligning with a single theoretical approach to the counseling process, the authors claimed that students sufficiently explained a rationale for rejecting a single approach but were less able to clearly provide a rationale for their existing beliefs.

Brabeck and Welfel (1985) concluded that in terms of intellectual development within the quasi-reflective stage, counseling students express a relativistic view of knowledge. Brabeck and Welfel encouraged further research in the area of counseling student’s intellectual development and theoretical orientation choice and encouraged counselor educators to adopt an attitude that values the development of a student’s critical examination of counseling theories. They further encouraged educators and textbook authors to reflect epistemological aspects of counseling theory within the highest stages of the reflective judgment model. With regards to a student’s pursuit of choosing a theoretical framework, the authors affirm that during training, theories of counseling “must be examined against one’s beliefs and experience” (p. 345). Because of sample size, sample selection, and influences of instructors and textbook materials, the authors express caution in interpreting results of their preliminary study. However, they offered
important hypotheses about a student’s rationale for theoretical orientation selection and identification.

**Implications of Assessing Theoretical Orientation**

Various variables related to theoretical orientation are examined within research of therapists. Theoretical orientation is typically reported by either acknowledging the number of therapists who adhere to a particular orientation, or by assessing what orientation a therapist declares, or by measuring by therapist self-rating—as in a Likert-type scale instrument (Guinee, 2000).

Instruments are often used to identify and measure theoretical orientation. When considering the usefulness of assessing and investigating a counselor’s guiding theory, it is important to highlight how the measurement of counselor theoretical orientation is complex and is undergoing experimental scrutiny profession-wide (Poznanski & McLennan, 1995a). With some authors claiming there are probably over 400 different systems of psychotherapy (Corsini & Wedding, 2005), the idea that one instrument can assess and measure an individual counselor’s theoretical orientation is unrealistic. The challenge with assessing theoretical orientation is with deciding which dimension of an approach to measure.

Poznanski and McLennan (1995a) reviewed numerous instruments and measurements of counselor theoretical orientation developed from 1954 to 1994. They limited their investigation to 15 various self-report measures assessing the counseling process and to instruments developed from research on theoretical orientation. The authors examined a multitude of dimensions on which counselor theoretical orientation
can be assessed and explored problematic issues related to statistical analysis. They critically reviewed the validity and reliability of various instruments. They concluded two measures allowed for the most useful characterization of counselor’s approach to counseling: the Analytical Versus Experiential factor in Sundland and Barker’s, Therapist Orientation Questionnaire (TOQ), and the Objective Versus Subjective factor in Coan’s Theoretical Orientation Survey (TOS) (Poznanski & McLennan). As a result, Poznanski and McLennan (1999) developed a 40-item instrument that measures two dimensions of beliefs: the analytical-experiential and objective-subjective. The instrument, the Counselor Theoretical Position Scale (CTPS), was further evaluated in a study involving 132 members/counselors of the Australian Psychological Society and was shown to be both reliable and to display construct and criterion-related validity (Poznanski & McLennan, 1999).

Worthington and Dillon (2003) acknowledged that counseling theories are typically categorized into either cognitive behavioral, humanistic/existential, or psychoanalytic/psychodynamic domains. The authors developed The Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R), a brief instrument aimed at assessing counseling practice of utilization, conceptualization, and identification on the six theoretical approaches, psychoanalytic or psychodynamic, humanistic or existential, cognitive or behavioral, family systems, feminist, and multicultural. With 518 participants, Worthington and Dillon utilized a 6-factor analysis and demonstrated 87.5% of the total variance in the scale. The authors claimed that the 18 item scale revealed high reliability and construct validity; therefore, the TOPS-R will be used in this study and explored further in the instrumentation section of Chapter 2.
Activities to Facilitate Theoretical Orientation Selection and Identification

Finch, Mattson, and Moore (1993) acknowledged the necessity and importance of counselors in training selecting a theoretical orientation and offer a teaching strategy aimed at helping students identify personal beliefs about client behaviors. The authors designed a 50 item forced choice inventory in which a student either agreed or disagreed with responses related to human nature, the nature of change, and therapist approaches. The responses were designed to reflect philosophical statements of psychoanalytic, rational/cognitive, client-centered or behavioral theoretical approaches to counseling and were designed to help a student identify a guiding theory. The authors reported the instrument stimulated an appreciable amount of discussion among the students and were used to help students further understand whether the students were practicing with a theory with which they identified. Finch et al. stated, “Students who were both personally and professionally congruent expressed more confidence as neophyte counselors. Non-congruent students were helped to look at the differences between their beliefs and their practice” (p. 99).

Accordingly, Guiffrida (2005) asserted as counselor educators and supervisors facilitate the acquisition of a novice counselor’s alignment with a theoretical orientation, important attention should be paid to the student’s reflection on personal views of the nature of human growth, development, and change. Guiffrida further asserted self-reflection and theoretical fit are central to ongoing development of successful counselors.

Guiffrida (2005) critically reviewed current literature to better understand pedagogical practices used to enhance student counselor theoretical acquisition.
Guiffrida illuminated elements of two competing paradigms in current practices, namely, modernist and constructivist approach to teaching theories. The modernist approach begins with introducing various theories to students and follows with experiential activities and exams to test for understanding. The modernist approach focuses on relaying information, such as from instructor to student. According to Guiffrida, a constructivist approach is subjective in nature. Individual knowledge varies with each person therefore only known through individual experience and presupposed beliefs. Language is a tool used in conveying personal discoveries. Guiffrida asserted teaching counseling theory models are more likely modernist and not constructivist in approach.

Guiffrida (2005) offered an alternative pedagogical paradigm, the emergence model as a philosophical shift in the definition of fundamental training preparations. The model begins with the necessary basic listening and attending skills of empathy, paraphrasing, and open-ended questions, as well as an emphasis on understanding multicultural considerations to the counselor/client relationship. The model continues with students beginning training with a nonjudgmental supported emphasis from instructors on discovering their own natural helping instincts. Students are encouraged to take risks and explore individual interventions and to further examine interventions that do not work. When necessary, supervisors encourage more helpful strategies in order “to push them to consider the strengths and limitations of these interventions” (p. 209). This model encourages a student to use inner resources rather than externally imposed theoretical techniques and strategies. Inner resources are considered natural personal counseling approaches. Guiffrida acknowledged the model elicits concerns among counselor educators with respect to the possible misjudgments of novice
counselor behavior. However, Guiffrida also acknowledged that students will revert to individual helping behavior nonetheless. He further claimed the model allows students to understand the counseling process “without the blinders of externally imposed points of view or the burden of trying to emulate an espoused theory” (p. 209).

Auger (2004) argued that mental health professionals are wise to closely examine the implicit assumptions they hold and are wise to also examine the impact these assumptions could have on one’s practice. Educators shoulder an obligation to facilitate awareness of one’s “unique set of implicit beliefs” (p. 13). In the field this variety of human attributes is called tacit assumptions about human nature, implicit theories, philosophies of human nature, and personal constructs (Auger, 2004). He stated implicit assumptions are expectancies about human nature that are widely held “and they are often difficult for individuals to recognize and verbalize” (p. 14). Unexamined implicit assumptions about human nature have an important impact on individual attitudes and behavior. According to Auger, what we don’t know can hurt us: One’s assumption influences client conceptualization and treatment and ultimately impact clients. He makes the distinction that implicit assumptions are not impressions one makes when in contact with others, they are not personal values guiding one about how the world ‘should’ be, they are not beliefs one holds about one’s reality, and they are not one’s moral beliefs. They are assumptions one holds about human nature that are broader and more pervasive. They are not reflected upon in a conscious manner. He claimed, “The hallmark of these assumptions is that they are unexamined and largely outside of awareness” (p. 15).

Auger further posited that implicit assumptions are brought forth by the process
of self-awareness, by acknowledging reactions to strangers—in order to bring forth unexpected underlying beliefs, and by examining difficult cases with peers and supervisors. He further argued that counselor educators and supervisors play an important role in helping students to identify and to examine individual implicit assumptions about human nature. He called on educators to acknowledge that implicit assumptions exist and to help students understand how these assumptions influence professional interaction. Unlike Guiffrida, Auger further encouraged educators to facilitate a student’s examination of relevant theorists, for it is likely that a student aligns with the underlying assumptions of existing theories—they are drawn to those that are similar to their own philosophies. The facilitative exploration espoused by Auger is aimed at a student developing a better understanding of one’s underlying implicit assumptions about human nature.

Summary of the Literature

Researchers in the field acknowledge the relevance of adopting either a single or eclectic approach to the therapeutic process. Researchers have also explored the impact of personality variables, practitioner values, and individual philosophies with respect to theoretical orientation selection. Developmental considerations have been explored and illuminate important deliberations with respect to novice counselors and theoretical orientation selection. Some professionals in the field offer strategies to enhance theoretical selection and identification. Whereas there are various approaches to assessing a student’s theoretical orientation selection and identification, there exists limited research on individual process.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to facilitate an experiential personal exploration exercise aimed at understanding the process of a master’s counseling student’s exploration of specific beliefs related to the nature of humans, maladjustment, and change. Furthermore, this investigation sought to understand the impact this exploration had on individual theoretical orientation identification consistency and counselor theory confidence when compared to the traditional method.
A review of literature revealed limited theory and research on the theoretical orientation selection and identification process of master’s counseling students. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards require counselors to begin to develop a “personal model of counseling” (CACREP, 2001, II.K.5.c) during training. The personal component of this standard implies an exploration of an individual’s perspective and identification of an approach to the counseling process. This exploratory study employed a repeated measures, quasi-experimental comparison group design, and was used to investigate the effect of personal beliefs exploration on theoretical orientation identification and confidence of master’s counseling students compared to the traditional theory selection method used in a pre-practicum counseling experience at a large metropolitan research university in the southwest United States. Definition of terms, research questions and hypotheses, instrumentation, participant selection, treatment protocol, data collection, and data analysis are discussed in this chapter.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are operationally defined as indicated below. With respect to theoretical orientation acquisition, authors and researchers use the terms selection, choice, and identification in unique ways and to some degree interchangeably. In Chapter 1, I used the authors’ terminology while reviewing the literature. For purposes
of this research, I distinguish a difference between theory selection/choice and theory identification. They are defined in the following section.

*Theoretical selection and choice* are comparable terms and are defined as a reflection of a counselor’s expressed decision of a theoretical framework.

*Theoretical identification* is defined as the assimilation and adoption of one’s expressed selection/choice. It includes a sense of philosophical congruence and agreement.

*Three Questions Personal Beliefs Exercise (3PBEx)* is defined as an intervention adapted from Ray (1999; see Appendix C, Research Protocol) and in part from the principles and ideas outlined by Fall, Holden, and Marquis (2004). For purposes of this study, the 3PBEx is a set of three questions in which a student responds in writing and by a verbal group process to, ‘How do people come into the world,’ ‘How did people get messed up,’ and ‘How do people change?’ are designed to be casual and without theoretical language.

*Beliefs* are defined as enduring accepted truths and opinions held by individual master’s counseling students that are organized around values considered “preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance” (Rokeach, 1973, p.5). Furthermore, Rokeach claimed beliefs are cognitive, affective, and behavioral in nature, and are considered standards that guide individual social conduct as well as guide judgment of self and others (Rokeach, 1973).

*Human nature* is defined as a set of assumptions and beliefs that are learned attitudes and expectations of interpersonal qualities and behaviors of others. These assumptions and beliefs are considered widely held, broad, pervasive, not often in one’s
awareness, and are not easily verbalized (Auger, 2004). For purposes of this study, human nature will be operationalized as “How people come into the world” as used in the 3PBEx.

**Maladjustment** is defined as behavior that is maladaptive or self-defeating to the individual exhibiting it and/or specific behavior that may be considered abnormal to society at-large (Lefton & Brannon, 2006). Maladjustment will be operationalized in this study as “how people get messed up” as used in the 3PBEx.

**Nature of change** is defined as “a process that unfolds over time” (Prochaska, 2004, p. 228) and as altering either wanted or unwanted behavior. For purposes of this study, **nature of change** will be operationalized in this study as “How do people change” as used in the 3PBEx.

**Theoretical orientation consistency** is defined by the degree to which a master’s student identifies, conceptualizes, and utilizes a specific theoretical approach to counseling. Theoretical orientation consistency is operationalized by participants’ responses to the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R; Worthington & Dillon, 2003) subscales specific to their theory selection at the beginning of the study. For purposes of this research, only the TOPS-R Humanistic or Existential and Cognitive or Behavioral subscales were utilized due to the participating counseling program’s requirement that students select and identify theoretical orientations from within a limited number of theories, all of which are captured in these two subscales and were consistent with the TOPS-R’s categorization. The Humanistic or Existential subscale (Humanistic/Existential) was considered to include person-centered and Adlerian/individual psychology theoretical approaches and were Items 4, 5, and 6. The
Cognitive or Behavioral (Cognitive/Behavioral) subscale was considered to include theoretical approaches listed as cognitive, cognitive behavioral therapy, rational emotive behavior therapy, reality therapy/choice theory, and were Items 7, 8, and 9.

Theory confidence is operationalized as the degree to which a counseling student agrees or disagrees with statements about confidence in alignment between personal beliefs and identified theoretical orientation on the Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to explore the following two research questions regarding counseling students’ theory confidence and consistency in theoretical orientation. Hypotheses were formulated to address each question.

Question 1

What effect does exploration of personal beliefs related to human nature, maladjustment, and the nature of change with the 3PBEx have on theory confidence of master’s counseling students’ theoretical identification throughout the prepracticum phase of counselor training?

Hypothesis 1

There will be no statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the comparison groups mean scores over time (Pretest to Post 1, to Post 2) on the Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ).
Question 2

What effect does exploration of personal beliefs regarding human nature, maladjustment, and the nature of change with the 3PBEx have on theoretical orientation consistency during the pre-practicum phase of counselor training?

Because the TOPS-R was used to measure theoretical orientation consistency and is divided into specific subtests that reflect theoretical orientation, and because the participating counseling program limits the theories that students may choose to theories that fall into the Humanistic/Existential and Cognitive/Behavioral subscales, groups were further divided into these two subgroups for analysis of the TOPS-R data. Thus two hypotheses were formulated to examine Research Question 2.

Hypothesis 2

There will be no statistically significant difference between the humanistic/existential experimental and comparison groups mean scores over time (Pretest to Post 1, to Post 2) on the Humanistic/Existential subscale of the TOPS-R.

Hypothesis 3

There will be no statistically significant difference between the cognitive/behavioral experimental and comparison groups mean scores over time (Pretest to Post 1, to Post 2) on the Cognitive/Behavioral subscale of the TOPS-R.

Instrumentation

Instruments used for this study were the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R; Worthington & Dillon, 2003) and the Theory Confidence
Questionnaire (TCQ) designed by me and my doctoral advisor for the purposes of this study (see Appendix B, Instrumentation).

*Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R)*

In counselor education, the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R) has been widely used. The TOPS-R, designed by Worthington and Dillon (2003), is a short and manageable instrument designed to measure theoretical orientations in relation to “distinct theoretical schools” (p.101). The scale contains 18 items categorized into six subscales: Psychoanalytic or Psychodynamic, Humanistic or Existential, Cognitive or Behavioral, Family Systems, Feminist, and Multicultural. Items are rated on a 10-point Likert Scale (1, *not at all*, to 10, *completely*). Items within each subscale are summed and averaged. Items not rated are eliminated. Scores on each of subscale vary between 1 and 10 and assess the extent to which a therapist reportedly identifies, conceptualizes, and utilizes a particular theory. There are no reverse scored subscale items. Scale validation was initiated using 518 participating therapists from the American Psychological Association (APA). Exploratory factor analysis was used throughout three different studies and revealed six factors accounting for a total of 87.5% of the variance. Scale development on study 1 revealed high internal reliability estimates—from .94 to .96 and strong criterion-related validity. The researchers designed Study 2 to explore correlations of TOPS-R and problem etiology attributions of counselors. They reported hypothesized intercorrelations. Study 3 revealed the utility of the Multicultural and Feminist subscales designed to measure the extent that therapists reported multicultural competencies and gender self-confidence. High estimates for
internal consistency were found in both Study 2 (.94 to .97) and Study 3 (.93 to .96) respectively. Written permission for use of the instrument in this study was obtained from the first author of the TOPS-R through e-mail.

Of the six TOPS-R subscales, only two were used for purposes of this research: Humanistic/Existential and Cognitive/Behavioral. Because the participating counseling program limits the theories that students may choose to theories that fall into the above subscale categories, groups were divided into these two subgroups for analysis of the TOPS-R data. With respect to approaches selected during training at the participating university, the Humanistic/Existential subscale included person-centered and Adlerian/individual psychology and the Cognitive/Behavioral subscale included theoretical approaches listed as cognitive, cognitive behavioral therapy, reality therapy/choice theory, and rational emotive behavior therapy.

Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ)

A review of literature revealed no instrument designed to measure counselors’ confidence in theoretical orientation identification. Therefore, my doctoral advisor and I designed the Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ). The TCQ was designed for use during counselor training to assess the degree to which students are confident that their personal beliefs align with their theory identification. The TCQ is a brief self-report Likert scale measurement in which a student rates from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree. The TCQ contains six items and was constructed within prescribed guidelines to elicit information on the single attitude of confidence (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Items on the TCQ were randomly arranged. For purposes of this research, guidelines outlined by
Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) were used and are identified as defining research objectives, selecting an appropriate sample, designing the questionnaire with attention to item formation, and pilot testing the questionnaire. Furthermore, item formation was constructed using further guidelines outlined by Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2008) identified as matching the questionnaire design to the research question, defining participant sample, developing the questionnaire, developing a data collection method, and, finally, analyzing data. Psychometric properties of the dependent variables measured on the TCQ were critically reviewed (Heppner et al., 2008).

Pilot testing of the initial eight items on the TCQ was conducted with 30 men and women doctoral and master’s counseling students ranging in age between 20 and 50 years of age in the counseling program of a large metropolitan southwestern U. S. university. Group and individual verbal and written feedback of the instrument was solicited from students and professors alike. To explore reliability and validity of the proposed instrument, exploratory factor analysis of the initial eight items—four positively worded and four negatively worded—was conducted with the intent of reducing instrument items to a total of six—three positively worded and three negatively worded. For instrument statistical analysis, negative items were reverse coded and ultimately Items 7 and 3 were eliminated for reasons of multicollinearity—one each worded positively and negatively (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Reliability statistics revealed Cronbach’s alpha of .956 for the six remaining items. Scoring of the TCQ was achieved by reverse coding Items 2, 3, and 6 followed by summing and averaging all items. Mean scores range from 1 to 7.
Procedures

Selection of Participants

Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) and counseling department approval, participants from the counseling preparation program of a large metropolitan southwestern U. S. university were recruited from three sections of COUN 5660 Advanced Counseling Skills, the program’s pre-practicum course in the beginning of the fall 2008 semester. Two class sections were taught at the main campus and one section was held at the satellite campus. Prior to attendance in this course, all participants had taken an introductory theories course that included writing a theory paper identifying a theoretical approach to the counseling process. Also, all participants had taken at least one clinical course practicing basic counseling skills. Enrollment in COUN 5660 was required before the practicum and internship phase of training. All enrolled students \( n=38 \) were solicited as research participants. I worked closely in individual meetings with each instructor of each class section to describe the roles they would play as well as the parameters of the study. A uniform syllabus detailing intervention schedules was created and disseminated for all sections (see Appendix C, Research Protocol). In an attempt to preserve the ongoing integrity of the study and research design, meetings with each professor occurred before and after each intervention and at random for the duration of the study.

After explaining the purpose of the study, covering the guidelines of confidentiality, and gaining informed consent, all participants completed a demographics questionnaire (see Appendix A, Informed Consent). Pretest instrument administration followed. The process for participant assignment to groups was then explained.
Participants were selected to treatment groups by random sampling and were representative of a population of counseling students located at the university utilized for this study (Frankel & Wallen, 2003). Prior to data analyses, participants were randomly assigned to treatment groups within class sections to control for instructor variables. A disparity in age within these groups was observed. Therefore, treatment groups were randomly reassigned from within age groups for each section.

Demographic variables of age were 20-29, 30-39, 40 and above. One student dropped out of the course during Week 2 and one student dropped mid-semester. One student did not complete one of three data collections and was dropped from analyses. There was a total of 35 research participants employed for the study. Table 1 represents the demographics information of the experimental (n=19) and comparison (n=16) groups.

Table 1

*Demographic Information on Experimental (n=19) and Comparison (n=16) Group Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>Experimental (n=19)</th>
<th>Comparison (n=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-and above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi/multiracial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># counseling course hrs completed prior to COUN 5660</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 or less</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Treatment Protocol

The following is an overview of the treatment protocol for the experimental and comparison treatment. Both treatment groups received two levels of intervention.

Treatment consisted of two levels of intervention over fall semester 2008 during COUN 5660 Advanced Counseling Skills. In the first intervention, the experimental group received an experimental guiding theory selection and identification intervention exercise, and the comparison group received the traditional curricular activities in guiding theory selection and identification (see COUN 5660 Advanced Counseling Skills Class Syllabus, Research Protocol, Appendix C.) For the second intervention, both groups were assigned a theory exploration paper designed to encourage exploration of personal beliefs and to clarify students’ theoretical identification and approach to the counseling process. The experimental group received a paper outline emphasizing use of the 3PBEx. The comparison group received the traditional theory paper outline designed for the course (see Research Protocol, Appendix C).

After final data collection, end of the semester final group process was conducted with all three sections in order to debrief and disclose elements of the study. Questions were encouraged and answered. The comparison group participants were given the opportunity to participate in the intervention, and all were given my contact information for any future questions and concerns.

Treatment for the experimental group was conducted by two advanced doctoral students in their fourth year of doctoral study at the selected university, and had extensive prior experience supervising master’s counseling students for at least one full academic year. The doctoral students were personally familiar with the intervention
exercise. Treatment for the comparison group was conducted by the course instructors who all held a doctoral degree in counseling. Although not planned, it is important to note that all facilitators for both the experimental and comparison conditions identified their theory as fitting within the Humanistic/Existential group of theories. The number of students participating in the study totaled 35.

**Experimental treatment.** The experimental treatment was provided by two advanced doctoral students and myself, and all identified with a theoretical orientation considered humanistic/existential. The experimental treatment group totaled 19 participants. The first intervention for the experimental group focused on the 3PBEx. In order to better elicit personal beliefs, the three questions were designed in plain and simple non-theoretical language. This approach was designed to prevent academic influenced responses (see Research Protocol, Appendix C). The 3PBEx was adapted from an activity titled Theory Match/Exploration Activity as outlined by Ray (1999) which is based on the following assumptions:

1. Counseling theory provides an explanation of how people enter the world, how they develop personality, and how they develop maladjustment.

2. When a theory provides an explanation for the tenets listed in Assumption 1, counseling techniques will be logically consistent with the belief system. Hence, it is more important to identify theory than it is techniques in order to provide consistent counseling.

3. Each person carries an internalized belief system about people of which they may or may not be aware.

4. Counseling students who become more aware of their personal belief systems will be able to match their beliefs more effectively with a traditional counseling theory.
5. Choosing a counseling theory is not a static process but a changing process that progresses over years of experience. This particular exercise is just the beginning of that process.

6. Activity requires that students have some basic knowledge of many different theories. Hence, it is an exercise usually reserved for students who have passed their basic theory course.

7. The cognitive exercise of writing a personal narrative helps students to focus their thoughts and share their beliefs in a coherent way.

8. Group process is an effective way to develop awareness. (Ray, 1999)

Furthermore, the 3PBEx intervention used for this study was adapted in part from the principles and ideas outlined by Fall, Holden, and Marquis (2004). On page 9, The authors posit questions aimed at facilitating personal exploration with respect to the identification of a guiding theory selection. For purposes of this study, research participants respond to three questions by writing individually followed by a verbal group process. The questions, 'How do people come into the world', ‘How did people get messed up’, and ‘How do people change?’ are designed to be casual and without theoretical language. Given that the experimental groups had taken a counseling theories class, some responses contained theoretical language.

During Week 2, I conducted the experimental intervention exercise. First, experimental participants were given the 3PBEx and were instructed to briefly respond to each of the three questions in 15 minutes. The three questions were “How do people come into the world?” , “How do people get messed up?”, and “How do people change?” After each student completed this step, the experimental participants were randomly divided and separated into three groups with approximately four or five in each. The participants convened in three different rooms with the doctoral assistants.
During the exercise, each experimental participant was asked to voluntarily share their written responses to the 3PBEx with their respective group members. Exercise facilitators then wrote the student’s beliefs verbatim on a white board for all group members to see. A group discussion was encouraged with an emphasis on exploration of how individual responses and beliefs corresponded with philosophical premises of dominant theoretical approaches. Each participant received approximately 30 minutes of individual process time as well as group and facilitator feedback. Exercise facilitators’ observations were reflections, not prescriptions, of students’ personal alignment with counseling theories/philosophies. After each group participant shared their written beliefs, a theory comparison chart (see Appendix C) that highlighted brief philosophical perspectives of person-centered, Adlerian (individual psychology), cognitive-behavioral, reality therapy/choice theory, and rational emotive behavior Therapy (REBT) was handed out for individual comparison and reflection. In closing, group questions were encouraged, and researcher contact information was disseminated. Participants were informed of future meetings and further interventions. To ensure research design integrity, all experimental participants were asked—and all agreed—not to discuss the elements of the intervention exercise with students in the comparison group. They were also asked to keep their individual experience confidential until the end of the semester. Groups were then dismissed.

The second intervention consisted of a theory paper for the purposes of personal exploration of the 3PBEx at greater depth. The paper was assigned during Week 8 and completed on Week 13. The paper was graded by me with the same evaluation rubric used by class instructors and returned to participants during Week 15.
Comparison treatment. Comparison group treatment was provided by class instructors. All instructors identified with a theoretical orientation considered humanistic/existential. Comparison treatment was given concurrent to the experimental treatment. The comparison treatment group totaled 16 participants.

The comparison group received two traditional class instruction intervention activities following the same timeline as experimental group. The first intervention during Week 3 was the traditional curriculum outlined in the class syllabus and included activities and exercises associated with guiding theory selection identification as well as other material (see COUN 5660 Advanced Counseling Skills Class syllabus, Research Protocol, Appendix C). The traditional curriculum included instruction on basic counseling skills, skills mastery tape instructions, procedures and evaluation, skills relevant to new counseling students, review of professional articles focused on student’s reasons for pursuing a counseling career, implications of counselor’s intentions on helping, guidelines for enhanced communication, and elements of establishing a counseling relationship. The theory identification component consisted of individual dyads or group process of identifying student’s selected guiding theory. Items to be discussed were limited to “What is comfortable about using your theory?”, “What is difficult or a struggle with using your theory?” and “How does each student see using the theory in their work setting?” Instructors were briefed in individual meetings and in writing and instructed to avoid any discussion related to the intervention exercise, namely individual personal beliefs related to theory selection and identification.

The second intervention consisted of a theory paper as assigned in the traditional curriculum designed to help a student clarify theoretical orientation. Comparison group
participants used conventional paper assignment guidelines as outlined in the traditional class curriculum. Concurrently with the experimental group, the comparison group paper was assigned during Week 8 and completed during Week 13. Papers were graded by the class instructor and returned during Week 15.

Data Collection

After participant consent was obtained, the TOPS-R and TCQ was administered at three points of time during Weeks 2, 8 and 15. To ensure integrity of data collection, administration of assessments was proctored by me at each point assuring standardized administration in an environment free of distraction. I was available to answer questions at each administration. To ensure confidentiality, participants were assigned random coded identity information for use in all data collection. All data collected during fall semester 2008 in COUN 5660 Advanced Counseling Skills Sections 1, 2, and 3 were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location.

Pretest data collection occurred before the first intervention and included an informed consent and demographics questionnaire followed by the TOPS-R and TCQ. Post 1, the second point of data collection, occurred after the first intervention during Week 8.

The third and final point of data collection occurred during Week 15 of the semester before graded papers were returned to students. The TOPS-R and TCQ were administered to both experimental and comparison groups.

It is important to note that the second intervention, the theory exploration paper, was assigned and explained to both groups following data collection of Post 1. In order
to further control for research design integrity, the experimental and comparison groups
convened separately for instruction on their respective distinct assignments. Theory
exploration papers were due and collected during Week 13 of the semester. Papers
were returned to all participants during Week 15.

Written feedback was solicited from experimental participants regarding
individual experience of the exercise. Following data collection, all participants
convened as a single group where I explained the study and research design to the
comparison group. The experimental participants were asked to share their individual
experience with the comparison group participants. The comparison group participants
were offered the opportunity to engage in the intervention exercise at their convenience,
and my personal contact information was disseminated.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the pretest, Post 1, and Post 2 of the TOPS-R and TCQ were
analyzed in order to examine the effect of the interventions on counseling students’
thetical orientation identification and confidence. To ensure accuracy, the most
current version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0) was
utilized. Data analyses included a 2 (group) x 3 (repeated measures) split plot ANOVA
in order to examine group differences, changes across time, and the possible
interaction of change with group membership. Because of the exploratory nature of this
study, post hoc analysis was conducted. One-way ANOVAs (1 group by 3 measures)
were conducted for each dependent variable to further understand results by examining
within group change over time.
Dependent variables for the multivariate test included the TCQ and TOPS-R Subscales 2 and 3. The TCQ was scored by reverse coding Items 2, 3, and 6 followed by summing and averaging all items. Mean scores ranged from 1 to 7.

As mentioned earlier, TOPS-R Subscales 2, Humanistic/Existential and 3, Cognitive/Behavioral approaches to therapy, were analyzed due to the counseling program requirement that student counselors only select theoretical approaches within these categories during training. Items within each subscale were summed and averaged. Scores on each of the two subscales varied between 1 and 10 and assessed the degree and consistency to which a therapist identifies, conceptualizes, and utilizes a particular theoretical approach. Items not rated were eliminated. In the present study, one student failed to complete one assessment during Data Collection 2 and was eliminated.

Analyses assumptions were met for multivariate RM ANOVA (Field, 2004). Homogeneity was assumed and was determined by the appropriate examination of Box’s test of equality: Results revealed $p > .05$ for statistical analyses utilized in Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 (Field, 2004). The assumption for multivariate normality was met and was assessed by the appropriate examination of the “univariate normality for each dependent variable in turn” (Field, 2004, p. 398). The $\alpha = .05$ level of significance was established to interpret statistical significance and was used to establish retention or rejection of the null hypotheses. Limiting research evaluation to statistical significance is strongly discouraged, and when used singularly, is an insufficient means of exploring a research hypothesis (Henson, 2006). Evaluating effect size statistics is considered a more complete and balanced approach to results reporting and is preferred research
practice (Henson, 2006; Trusty, Thompson & Petrocelli, 2004; Gliner, Leech & Morgan, 2002; Thompson, 2002). Therefore, partial eta-squared ($\eta_p^2$) was calculated to assess the magnitude of the treatment effect in order to determine the practical significance of the intervention.
CHAPTER 3
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents results and discussion of statistical analyses of data collected for this exploratory study. Implications for research and practice, limitations, recommendations for further research, as well as researcher’s observations are provided. A qualified statistician was consulted to ensure appropriateness of all statistical analyses.

Results

The results of this exploratory study are presented in the order of the hypotheses tested. Data analyses included a 2 (group) x 3 (repeated measures) split plot ANOVA to examine group differences, changes across time, and the possible interaction of change with group membership. The TOPS-R (Worthington & Dillon, 2003), and TCQ—designed and piloted by me and my doctoral advisor—were administered at the beginning of an academic semester, prior to treatment, after Intervention 1 (Pretest to Post 1), and after Intervention 2 at the end of the semester (Post 1 to Post 2). Post hoc analysis was performed to further clarify findings.

The TCQ and TOPS-R ratings for the Pretest, Post 1, and Post 2 served as dependent variables. Because the TOPS-R is divided into subtests that reflect theoretical orientation, and because the participating counseling program limits the theories that students may choose to theories that fall into the TOPS-R subscales of Humanistic/Existential and Cognitive/Behavioral, groups were further divided into these two subgroups for analysis of the TOPS-R data. An increase in mean score on the TCQ
indicated a higher degree of confidence with respect to identification with a theory consistent with personal beliefs. An increase in the TOPS-R ratings on the Humanistic/Existential and Cognitive/Behavioral subscales indicates a higher degree in consistency with which one reportedly identifies, conceptualizes, and utilizes their chosen theory. Dependent variables were analyzed for normality, homogeneity of variance, and sphericity.

The $\alpha = .05$ level of significance was established to interpret statistical significance and was used to establish retention or rejection of the null hypotheses. Partial eta-squared, a variance-accounted-for effect size statistic ($\eta^2$) was calculated to assess the magnitude of the treatment effect in order to determine practical significance of the intervention (Henson, 2006). Effect size results were evaluated on the basis of prevailing benchmarks identified as an effect ($d$) of small, ($d=.01$), medium, ($d=.06$), or large ($d=.14$) (Cohen, 1988) and should be interpreted with caution due to study sample size.

Results for Hypotheses 1

Table 2 presents the Pretest, Post 1, and Post 2 means and standard deviations for the experimental and comparison groups on the TCQ. Due to small sample size, results are interpreted with caution.

Hypothesis 1

There will be no statistically significant difference between the experimental and the comparison groups on the Pretest to Post 1, to Post 2 mean scores on the Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ).
### Table 2

**Group Mean Scores for the Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TCQ</th>
<th>Experimental group (n=19)</th>
<th>Comparison group (n=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Post 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>.921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of the multivariate analysis of the dependent variable, TCQ, revealed a statistically significant main effect for time (Pre to Post 1 to Post 2) and a large effect size, Wilk’s lambda = .50, $F(2,32) = 15.62, p< .01, \eta^2_p = .49$. Analysis revealed a non-statistically significant interaction effect and small effect size, Wilk’s lambda = .95, $F(2,32)= .69, p= .50, \eta^2_p = .04$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 1) indicates that over time both groups reported an increase in theory confidence. On the basis of these results, Hypothesis 1 is retained.

![Figure 1](image.png)

**Figure 1.** Estimated marginal means of Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ) for total group.
Post Hoc Analysis for Hypothesis 1

Given the statistically significant main effect for time, as well as large effect size on the TCQ, one-way ANOVAs (1 group by 3 measures) were conducted for each dependent variable to further understand results by examining within group change over time. Table 2 presents the Pretest, Post 1, and Post 2 means and standard deviations for the experimental and comparison groups on the TCQ. Due to the small sample size, results are interpreted with caution.

Results for the experimental group participants revealed a statistically significant increase in theoretical confidence from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2, with a large treatment effect, Wilk’s lambda= .59, $F(2, 17) = 5.69$, $p=.01$, $\eta^2_p =.40$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 1) indicates the experimental group reported a steady increase in confidence from Pretest to Post 1 and from Post 1 to Post 2, which suggests that the impact of Intervention 1 and Intervention 2 had a similar effect on participants’ confidence in theory alignment with personal beliefs.

Results for the comparison group participants revealed a statistically significant increase in theoretical confidence from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2, with a large treatment effect, Wilk’s lambda= .40, $F(2, 14) = 10.17$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2_p =.59$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 1) indicates the comparison group reported an overall increase in confidence from Pretest to Post 1 to Post 2 with a greater gain from Pretest to Post 1, which suggests that Intervention 1 had a slightly greater impact on participants’ confidence in theory alignment with personal beliefs. Overall, the comparison group reported a greater mean gain in theory confidence, over the experimental group, with the greatest difference in change accounted for from Pretest to Post 1.
Results for Hypotheses 2 and 3

Table 3 presents the pretest, post 1, and post 2 means and standard deviations for the humanistic/existential and cognitive/behavioral experimental and comparison groups on the TOPS-R. Due to small sample size, results are interpreted with caution.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanistic/Existential and Cognitive/Behavioral Experimental and Comparison Groups Mean Subscale Scores and Standard Deviations for TOPS-R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOPS-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale 2 Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale 3 Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 2. There will be no statistically significant difference between the humanistic/existential experimental and comparison groups’ mean scores over time (Pretest to Post 1, to Post 2,) on the Humanistic/Existential subscale of the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R).

Results of the multivariate analysis of the dependent variable TOPS-R Humanistic/Existential subscale revealed a statistically significant main effect for time and a large effect size, Wilk’s lambda= .61 $F (2, 19) = 6.00$, $p= .01$, $\eta^2_p = .38$. Analysis
revealed a non-statistically significant interaction effect and small effect size, Wilk’s lambda = .96, $F(2, 19) = .31, p = .73, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 2) indicates that both groups identified as humanistic/existential reported a higher degree of theoretical orientation consistency over time. On the whole, the comparison group reported greater gains in identifying, conceptualizing, and utilizing their theory from Pre to Post1 to Post 2 than did the experimental group. On the basis of these results, Hypothesis 2 is retained.

Figure 2. Estimated marginal means of experimental and comparison groups identified as Humanistic/Existential on the Humanistic/Existential subscale of the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R).

Post hoc analysis for Hypothesis 2. Given the statistically significant main effect for time, as well as large effect size, one-way ANOVAs (1 group by 3 repeated measures) were conducted for each dependent variable to further understand results by examining within group change over time. Table 3 presents the Pretest, Post 1, and Post 2 means and standard deviations for the humanistic/existential experimental and
comparison groups on the TOPS-R. Due to small sample size, results are interpreted with caution.

Results for the experimental group participants revealed a statistically significant increase in theoretical consistency from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2, with a large treatment effect, Wilk’s lambda = .60 $F(2,12)= 3.99, p=.04, \eta_p^2 = .40$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 2) indicates that the experimental group reported negligible gain from Pretest to Post 1, with much greater gain from Post 1 to Post 2, indicating that the Intervention 2 seemed to have the greatest impact on increasing their consistency in theoretical orientation.

Results for the comparison group participants revealed a statistically significant increase in theoretical consistency from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2, with a large treatment effect, Wilk’s lambda = .18 $F(2,6)=13.35, p< .01, \eta_p^2 = .81$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 2) indicates that the comparison group reported a steady gain in theoretical consistency over time, with a slightly greater gain from Pretest to Post 1, indicating that the Intervention 1 seemed to have the greatest impact on increasing their consistency in theoretical orientation. Overall, the comparison group reported a higher degree of theoretical orientation consistency from pre to Post 1 to Post 2 than did the experimental group. Notably, the treatment effect size for the comparison intervention was twice as large as the effect size for the experimental condition.

**Hypothesis 3**

There will be no statistically significant difference between the cognitive/behavioral experimental and comparison group mean scores over time (Pretest to Post}
on the Cognitive/Behavioral subscale of the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R).

Results of the multivariate analysis of the dependent variable TOPS-R Cognitive/Behavioral subscale revealed a non-statistically significant main effect for time and a moderate effect size, Wilk’s lambda= .94, $F(2, 10) = .32, p= .733, \eta^2 = .06$. Analysis revealed a non-statistically significant interaction effect and moderate effect size, Wilk’s lambda= .86, $F(2, 10) = .77, p= .48, \eta^2 = .13$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 3) indicates that, over time, both the experimental and comparison cognitive/behavioral groups reported a change in the degree of theoretical orientation consistency.

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3.** Estimated marginal means of experimental and comparison groups identified as Cognitive/Behavioral on the Cognitive/Behavioral subscale of the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R).

The experimental group reported an overall steady decrease in consistency from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2, while the comparison group reported an overall gain from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2. These results indicate that the cognitive/behavioral comparison group made greater gains than the experimental group in their reported consistency in identifying,
conceptualizing, and utilizing their theory. On the basis of these results, Hypothesis 3 is retained.

Post hoc analysis for Hypothesis 3. Given the statistically significant main effect for time, as well as moderate effect size, one-way ANOVAs (1 group by 3 repeated measures) were conducted for each dependent variable to further understand results by examining within group change over time. Table 3 presents the Pretest, Post 1, and Post 2 means and standard deviations for the cognitive/behavioral experimental and comparison groups on the TOPS-R. Due to small sample size, results are interpreted with caution.

Results for the experimental group participants revealed a non-statistically significant result in theoretical consistency from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2, with a large treatment effect, Wilk’s lambda= .52 $F(2,3)= 1.36, p=.37, \eta_p^2 = .47$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 3) indicates the experimental group reported an overall lower degree of theoretical consistency from Pretest to Post 1 to Post 2 with the greatest decline from Post 1 to Post 2 indicating that Intervention 2 seemed to have the greatest impact on decreasing their consistency in theoretical orientation.

Results for the comparison group participants revealed a non-statistically significant result in theoretical consistency from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2, with a moderate treatment effect, Wilk’s lambda= .89 $F(2,6)=.33, p=.72, \eta_p^2 = .10$. Visual examination of the means (see Figure 3) indicates the comparison group reported an overall higher degree of theoretical consistency from Pretest to Post 1 to Post 2 indicating that, overall, the comparison group reported a higher degree of consistency than did the experimental group.
Further Analysis

As mentioned earlier in this manuscript, participants were divided into two broad theoretical orientation categories identified as humanistic/existential or cognitive/behavioral for the TOPS-R data. In order to provide consistency in data, and in order to better understand student counselor confidence as it relates to theoretical orientation, further analysis was performed on the TCQ. Data analyses included a 2 (group) x 3 (repeated measures) split plot ANOVA in order to examine group differences, changes across time, and the possible interaction of change with group membership.

Table 4 presents the Pretest, Post 1, and Post 2 means and standard deviations for the experimental and comparison groups delineated by theoretical orientation on the TCQ. Due to small sample size, results are interpreted with caution.

Table 4
Humanistic/Existential and Cognitive/Behavioral Experimental and Comparison Group Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Theory Confidence questionnaire (TCQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TCQ</th>
<th>Experimental Group (n=19)</th>
<th>Comparison Group (n=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Post 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic/Existential (n=14)</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.812</td>
<td>.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive/Behavioral (n=5)</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analysis on humanistic/existential participants. Results of the multivariate analysis of the dependent variable, TCQ, revealed a statistically significant main effect for time (Pre to Post 1 to Post 2) and a large effect size, Wilk’s lambda = .299, $F(2,19)$
= 22.29, \( p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .70 \). Analysis revealed a non-statistically significant interaction effect and moderate effect size, Wilk’s lambda = .90, \( F(2,19) = .95, p = .40, \eta_p^2 = .09 \). Visual examination of the means (see Figure 4) indicates that over time both groups reported an increase in confidence in theoretical identification. Due to small sample size and unbalanced number of participants in each group theoretical orientation results is interpreted with caution.

Figure 4. Estimated marginal means of experimental and comparison groups identified as Humanistic/Existential on the Theory Confidence Questionnaire.

**Further analysis on cognitive/behavioral participants.** Results of the multivariate analysis of the dependent variable, TCQ, revealed a non-statistically significant main effect for time (Pre to Post 1 to Post2) and a large effect size, Wilk’s lambda = .76, \( F(2,10) = 1.50, p = .26, \eta_p^2 = .23 \). Analysis revealed a non-statistically significant interaction effect and small effect size, Wilk’s lambda = .94, \( F(2,10) = .95, p = .30, \eta_p^2 = .05 \). Visual examination of the means (see Figure 5) indicates that over time both
groups reported an increase in confidence in theoretical identification. Due to small sample size and unbalanced number of participants in each group, theoretical orientation results are interpreted with caution.

![Figure 5. Estimated marginal means of experimental and comparison groups identified as Cognitive/ Behavioral on the Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ).](image)

**Discussion**

This exploratory study investigated the effects of two interventions on 35 master’s level pre-practicum counseling students’ reported confidence in theory identification alignment with personal beliefs and consistency of theoretical orientation. The experimental intervention included exploration of personal beliefs related to human nature, maladjustment, and the nature of change with the Three Question Personal Beliefs Exploration Exercise (3PBEx) and a theory paper assignment. The comparison intervention consisted of the standard theory selection activities provided in the COUN
course packet and included a theory paper assignment as well. The following discussion will explore results with respect to current research and literature.

The TCQ and TOPS-R were used to examine the effect of treatment interventions. Assessments were administered at three points: pre-treatment, after the first intervention (Post 1), and again after the second intervention (Post 2). Of the three null hypotheses tested all were retained at the $\alpha=.05$ alpha level, indicating that there was no difference in treatment groups over time on reported theory confidence or theoretical orientation consistency. Because of the exploratory nature of this study and because findings revealed statistically significant main effect for time, with effect sizes ranging from moderate to large, post hoc analyses were conducted. One-way ANOVAs (1 group by 3 times) were conducted for each dependent variable to further understand results by examining within group change over time.

Post hoc analysis results of the TCQ indicated that both the experimental and comparison group reported a statistically significant increase over time in theory confidence. Further, within group differences over time showed large treatment effects for both groups, with the comparison treatment demonstrating slightly greater effect. A visual inspection of the means on Figures 1, 4, and 5 revealed that the comparison group receiving the traditional theory selection activities reported greater increases from Pre to Post 1 to Post 2.

Post hoc results on the TOPS-R Humanistic/Existential and Cognitive/Behavioral subscales revealed mixed results regarding treatment effect. Whereas both humanistic/existential experimental and comparison groups showed statistically significant within group change over time, the treatment effect for the comparison
intervention was twice as large as the experimental intervention. Figure 2 graphically displays that the greatest difference occurred from Pre to Post 1 indicating that Intervention 1 had a greater impact on comparison group participants than the experimental group.

The greatest discrepancy in findings was between the cognitive/behavioral experimental and comparison groups on the TOPS-R post hoc analysis. Figure 3 graphically displays that the cognitive/behavioral experimental group showed a steady decline in their reported consistency in identification, conceptualization, and utilization of their theory. Whereas the cognitive/behavioral comparison group reported an increase in theoretical consistency from Pre to Post 1, their scores declined slightly from Post 1 to Post 2. As a whole, students who identified with a theory categorized into cognitive/behavioral subgroup reported less consistency in theoretical orientation compared to their humanistic/existential counterparts. This issue will be explored later in discussion of results related to theoretical orientation.

Overall, findings from the analysis of the TCQ and TOPS-R indicated that the comparison group performed better over time in regards to theory confidence and consistency in theoretical orientation. One possible explanation is that the experimental intervention may have encouraged experimental group participants to question if their beliefs aligned with the theory that they had selected at the beginning of the course, and perhaps created an internal struggle around whether their selected theory was, indeed, a good fit with their beliefs. The experimental group’s self-report of less gain in theory confidence than the comparison group from Pre to Post 1 may be reflective of the more in-depth personal evaluation of beliefs required in the first experimental exercise.
Results of the comparison group reporting an overall increase on the TCQ and TOPS-R may be due to not having deeply questioned the basis of their allegiance to an identified theory, and they may have responded with a 'superficial' confidence.

Recent literature posits that guiding theory selection is more appropriately acquired by deeper reflection of personal beliefs (Fall, Holden, & Marquis, 2004; Murdock, 1998; Schmidt, 2001; Watts, 1993), and understanding personal beliefs is integral to counselor theoretical orientation development (Bitar, Bean & Bermudez, 2007). Due to research design limitations, the present study did not provide clear support or denial of this view. The present study does suggest that the experimental intervention results in less theory confidence initially. It is possible that requiring deeper reflection of personal philosophy requires more time in order to align beliefs with theoretical orientation. Thus, the possible benefits of this approach may not have been realized within the constraints of a semester long study. It is also possible that the interventions would have been more effective if introduced at a different stage in student counselor’s development.

Discussion of Results Related to Counselor Development

It is important to consider developmental processes when teaching counselors at the stage of theoretical orientation selection and integration. Effective counselor educators and supervisors are wise to introduce appropriate theory building strategies that can provide the benefit of early theory integration, professional development, and understanding of personal beliefs and values (Spruill, 2000). The differences in mean scores on the TCQ and TOPS-R subscales can be better understood using the model
explored earlier of Ronnestadt and Skovholt (2003). The authors emphasize the importance of and changes in theoretical approach over time. Counseling students at the beginning stages of professional development undergo unique processes. Students in this exploratory study enrolled in COUN 5660 Advanced Counseling Skills can be considered in the early stages of Phase 2, The Beginning Student Phase, and Phase 3, The Advanced Student Phase: They are at the shift from lay helper, advice giver, and problem solver to an ambiguous status as a new counselor. They may feel challenged and overwhelmed by theoretical approaches. Thus they display various levels of confidence during training (Spruill, 2000). They are faced with realizing their natural helping characteristics may differ from desirable facilitative counseling approaches in Phase 2 and may experience continuing feelings of vulnerability but are more empowered with accumulated training marked in Phase 3 (Ronnestadt & Skovholt, 2003). It is important to note that students in both groups during the semester were closely evaluating self and therapeutic models as marked in these phases. The postulation that theoretical approach evolves and is an ongoing process is an important consideration. Students in the present study are in the beginning phases of professional identity which may have impacted the results of this study. It is logical to assume that over time measurement on the TCQ and TOPS-R would change and may provide valuable information about further development.

As mentioned earlier in this manuscript, Brabeck and Welfel (1985) posited that due to intellectual and cognitive development, counseling students may use idiosyncratic criteria when selecting theoretical orientation. The authors affirm that during training, theories of counseling “must be examined against one’s beliefs and
experience” (p. 345). Considering approximately 63% of the participants in this study were between the ages of 20 to 29, and considering these participants are captured in the reflective judgment stages of 2, 3, and 4 (King & Kitchener, 1994), it is a strong possibility that most of the participants in this study were using intellectual criteria specified for those stages.

In middle stages of reflective judgment, counseling students tend to adopt a relativistic view of the role of counseling theory and may tend to structure theoretical information “to fit with their existing views of the nature of knowledge and the role of evidence and authorities” (Brabeck and Welfel, 1985, p. 345). The authors call for counselor educators to reflect epistemological aspects of counseling theory within the highest stages of the reflective judgment model in text books and training. Whereas the author’s hypotheses were with respect to a student’s unexamined selection of eclecticism as a guiding framework to the counseling process, their position is relative to this research. The counselor training program used in this exploratory study required students to select, and identify with, a single guiding theoretical approach to the counseling process at the beginning of the pre-practicum course. Without the curricular expectation that a student spend important time exploring personal beliefs in relation to human nature, maladjustment, and the change process related to an identified theoretical approach, one may hypothesize that some students may not go beyond using the idiosyncratic criteria outlined by Brabeck and Welfel particularly within the constraints of one semester.
Discussion of Results Related to Theoretical Orientation

The overall differences between the humanistic/existential and cognitive/behavioral participants may be understood with respect to the work of Vasco and Dryden (1994) cited earlier in the review of literature. The authors claimed therapists with different ontological and epistemological commitments “assign different weights to different variables when selecting a theoretical orientation” (p. 331), and counselors from differing theoretical approaches emphasized different personal values. With respect to theoretical orientation selection, the authors claimed humanistic/psychodynamic therapists favored the variable of ‘the orientation of own therapist’ and cognitive therapists neglected this variable and favored ‘research results.’ Differences between the experimental and comparison groups in this present study may be explained similarly. Whereas this exploratory study did not focus on counselor values, it did encourage exploration of specific beliefs which can be reflected in values as “an enduring belief” (Rokeach, 1973, p.5).

Both experimental and comparison humanistic/existential and cognitive/behavioral groups were required, as part of their class grade, to identify a guiding theoretical framework to the counseling process. This may have impacted their commitment to an approach—their grade depended on it—and may be reflected on the TCQ and TOPS-R. Perhaps the comparison groups were more committed to an approach than the experimental groups, who were encouraged to question, examine, and explore their theoretical alignment.

Discussion of humanistic/existential groups. One explanation for the gains for both humanistic/existential experimental and comparison groups over the
cognitive/behavioral treatment groups may lay with the influence of espoused theoretical orientation of the facilitators for the experimental intervention and class instructors for the comparison intervention who all identified as humanistic/existential. Murdock, Banta, Viena, and Brown (1998) investigated variables related to psychologist choice of theoretical orientation. They discovered theoretical match with supervisors was an influence on supervisee’s selection of theory which may account for the steady gains of the participants identified as humanistic/existential.

_Discussion of results for cognitive/behavior groups._ This study revealed mixed results for the participants identifying as cognitive/behavioral. Data analysis revealed that both the experimental and comparison groups reported an overall change in the degree of theoretical orientation consistency on the cognitive/behavioral therapy approach over time. The experimental group showed a steady decline, and the comparison group showed a small increase from Pre to Post 1 and a slight decrease from Post 1 to Post 2. Figure 3 graphically represents a decrease in the experimental cognitive/behavioral group and reflects an apparent decline in theoretical orientation consistency. The cognitive/behavioral experimental group was exposed to an experimental intervention exercise that encouraged participants to reflect on individual beliefs in a more time consuming and more intensive and thoughtful manner than the traditional curriculum. As with the humanistic/existential group, the influence of intervention facilitators and class instructors may also account for this decline in that the cognitive/behavioral participants may not have been or felt supported in their theoretical orientation and were influenced either implicitly or explicitly to reconsider. Perhaps the students identifying as cognitive/behavioral selected this approach because it is
prominent in the mental health field or because they anticipate applying their training in work settings—such as schools: They may not necessarily align with the philosophical tenets of the approach. When discussing the selection of eclecticism as an approach to the counseling process, Schmidt (1999) claimed it can be the result of avoiding deeper understanding of counseling theory and that “Intentionality is often sacrificed for expediency” (p. 97). Accordingly, the students who identified as cognitive/behavioral in the present study may have selected the approach without deeper personal examination as well, and results may reflect a reconsideration of theoretical alignment.

**Researcher’s Observations**

Researcher observations and experimental group feedback suggests the experimental treatment was meaningful. I observed two distinct reactions to this exercise. First, I observed most experimental participants reported they were relieved to have the topic of theoretical orientation identification and selection explored with them. They were concerned with whether they had selected the ‘right’ theory and were ‘happy’ and ‘glad’ to be a part of the exploratory study so that they could explore their individual choice. Moreover, at the end of the study, and during group process of the study with both experimental and comparison groups, comparison group participants expressed an interest in receiving the experimental intervention exercise. Secondly, I observed participant surprise that their individual beliefs were considered an important part of the theoretical identification process.

In an attempt to evaluate the usefulness of the intervention exercise, experimental participants were asked to make a statement and to respond to four
feedback questions: “Please write a brief statement regarding your experience as a participant in the personal beliefs/theoretical orientation exercise. What did you gain, if anything, from this exercise? Was it helpful in any way? Was it not helpful? Please feel free to comment on changes or recommendations.” All but two experimental participants responded. Of the 17 responses collected, all expressed gratitude of being given the chance to explore beliefs with use of adjectives such as, ‘helpful’ \( (n=13) \), ‘enjoyed’ \( (n=1) \), ‘grateful’ \( (n=1) \), ‘glad’ \( (n=1) \) or ‘appreciated’ \( (n=1) \). For example, one participant stated:

I was glad that I had the opportunity to do this because I was able to think about my personal beliefs in a deeper way. It was better for me to get my ideas straight and then think about a theory that better fits with my beliefs.

Another participant claimed:

This exercise really forced me to seriously think about my beliefs. I had never fully explored my beliefs about human nature and I was grateful for the opportunity.

The study protocol specifically called for individual and small group discussion during the 3PBEx intervention. One participant expressed how this aspect was personally facilitative:

I believe I found my guiding theory this semester...this exercise definitely helped me focus and organize my thoughts. The most helpful part was answering the questions and then going over them together, working through them and thinking about them out loud (emphasis from participant).

Another example of the facilitative nature of the group process during the first intervention is highlighted by another participant who stated:

I gained most of my growth through this process during the initial group meeting. By identifying my personal beliefs free of the theory, I was able to determine how close or far I align with it. It was helpful overall.
The second intervention, the Three Question Personal Beliefs Exercise Theory Paper, was designed to help a student further clarify an identified theoretical orientation selection. One participant shared how the second intervention made an impact:

I thought it was very helpful. It helped me to narrow down which theory best fit within the beginning of the semester. But writing the paper really made it clear for me that the theory I had picked matched my beliefs. Instead of just writing a research paper, I was able to view my chosen theory through my beliefs. I was very lost at the start of the semester in choosing a theory and now I feel much more confident about my choice.

Soliciting exclusive feedback from experimental participants was important in order to further understand the effects of intervention exercise lost in data analysis and in order to refine further research in this area.

Limitations of the Study

However positive the comments made by the experimental group mentioned above, a limitation to this study is with not soliciting the comparison group for feedback on their experience. The comparison group evaluation of the traditional curriculum method is unknown.

One important concern in experimental research is controlling for extraneous variables to ensure the observed differences on the dependent variable can be considered directly related to the independent variable (Frankel & Wallen, 2003). In this research, extraneous variables that may have impacted internal validity are: 1) the personal history of the counselors-in-training, 2) maturation and inherent skill development as the participants progressed through COUN 5660 Advanced Counseling Skills (Gall & Gall, 2007), and 3) Implementation threat, namely, the difference in teaching styles and professed theoretical orientation of professors and doctoral
assistants participating in this study. All are an important consideration in this study: Whereas each was briefed on the parameters this study, individual approaches and adherence to treatment protocol and traditional curriculum are to be critically considered.

Another limitation to the generalizability of the results of this study is sample size. This exploratory study included 35 experimental and comparison research participants. Because smaller sample size may inflate analysis results (Pierce, Block, & Aguinis, 2004; Thompson, 2002), interpretation of this study should be made with caution and results cannot be assured.

A further limitation to this study is with respect to group assignment and theoretical orientation. Participants’ individual theoretical orientation was not identified prior to treatment and was not equally matched between groups (experimental and comparison humanistic/existential, \( n=14 \), \( n=8 \) respectively, and experimental and comparison cognitive/behavioral, \( n=5 \), \( n=8 \) respectively). Also not initially identified was the extent to which each participant had concretely identified with at least one theoretical approach before the first intervention. Another important point regarding theoretical orientation in this study is that some authors consider cognitive therapies as belonging to the larger category of humanistic psychology (Lefton & Brannon, 2006). The TOPS-R differentiates between humanistic/existential and cognitive/behavioral on the subscales and the present study used the same differentiation—this may have confused participants. Furthermore, my decision to randomly assign from within age groups is considered by some authors stratified random sampling (Frankel & Wallen, 2003), and arguably, may have impacted the true random assignment requirement.
necessary to calculate repeated measures ANOVA used in this study.

Finally, generalizability is limited to the population of students in the participating counseling program. Differences in participant sample characteristics are an important consideration and may have an effect on treatment results. Although students were randomly drawn to groups within classes and within age groups, experimental participants may have been characteristically less confident or identified, conceptualized, and utilized a given theory uniquely different from the comparison group (Frankel & Wallen, 2003).

Recommendations for Further Research

An exploratory study is a small scale preliminary investigation aimed at developing and testing instruments or interventions for further research (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Accordingly, this study developed the Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ) and introduced an intervention exercise, widely used at the participating university, to a broader educational arena of masters’ level counseling students. Replicating this study in a different counselor education environment using the same interventions and assessments would help to better understand their potential usefulness. Furthermore, an increase in sample size may increase statistical power and therefore the possibility of establishing statistical significance not detected in this study (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). The most important recommendation is performing the study over a longer period of time in order to better understand ongoing development of counselor confidence in and identification of theoretical orientation. An ideal study would
introduce the experimental intervention during an initial counseling theories course and continue with similar activities at least to point of degree completion.

Conclusion

Identifying specific beliefs and values may play a role in enhancing theoretical orientation selection (Strupp, 1980). Given that a counselor’s various philosophical beliefs exert an influence on client conceptualization (Hersch, 2001), and that personal philosophy is reflected in a counselor’s theoretical approach (Fall, Holden, & Marquis, 2004; Fear & Woolfe, 1999), it is paramount that a student begin to acknowledge what one believes in order establish a guiding framework.

A counselor’s education can be a challenging experience filled with concerns of competence and with self-doubt (Woodside, Oberman, Cole, & Carruth, 2007), and selecting and integrating a personal guiding theory is a complex and critical component within counselor development. Counseling students display various levels of confidence during training (Spruill, 2000), and the present study supports the idea that counseling students display various levels of confidence during training.

Educators are encouraged to facilitate exploration of personal beliefs (Carlson & Erickson, 1999). Unfortunately, published training strategies aimed at advancing a counseling student’s self-reflection and theoretical fit are scarce (Giuffrida, 2005). It is important that counselor educators and supervisors facilitate the acquisition of a novice counselor’s alignment with a theoretical orientation. Important attention should be paid to the student’s reflection on personal views of the nature of human growth, development, and change (Giuffrida, 2005).
The present study suggests that the process of identifying a guiding theory includes changes in counselor theoretical orientation confidence and the degree to which a student identifies with a selected theory. The present study also suggests that understanding the process of identifying a guiding theory may require exploring effects over a longer period of time and should include a sequence of carefully planned classroom experiences to encourage ongoing self-reflection.
APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORMS
Research Consent Form

Subject Name:________________________________Date:__________________

Title of study: Process of Identifying a Guiding Theory: A Pilot Study.
Principal Investigator: Lezlie Burwell-Pender, MS, NCC, LPC-Intern

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed procedures. It describes the procedures, benefits, risks and discomforts of the study. Understand that no guarantees or assurances can be made as to the results of this study.

Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time during the study without penalty of any kind. Your signature indicates that you meet all of the requirements for participation and have decided to participate and you have been told that you will receive a signed copy of this consent form. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your standing or grade in COUN 5660. At the conclusion of this study, a summary of results will be made available to all interested participants.

Purpose of the study and how long it will last:
At UNT, and as per The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards, master’s students in counselor training are required to choose a personal theoretical approach to the counseling process. Sometimes they struggle with deciding which guiding theory to adopt. This study is aimed at strategies for helping students select a guiding theory. This study involves participation in an exercise during COUN 5660.

Description of the study including the procedures to be used:
If you choose to participate, you will be placed in either the experimental group or the comparison group through all three levels of intervention. For the first level of intervention, students selected for the experimental group will receive a one time exercise designed to help you select a guiding theory. This intervention will take approximately three hours—which is the length of the regular scheduled class time—and includes a 15 minute break. For the second level of intervention, students selected for the research will also write a paper—in place of the regular class paper. The paper will be assigned during week eight and will be turned in during week 15 allotting for seven weeks for construction. This paper will be graded using the same outline as used by the class instructor. All participants—experimental and comparison—will be assessed using two instruments, the Theoretical Orientation Profile Scale-Revised (TOPS-R) and Theory Confidence Questionnaire (TCQ) over three points of time during COUN 5660. These instruments will take approximately 15 minutes to complete at each administration. The Principal Investigator and her dissertation committee chair, Dr. Sue Bratton, will ensure that all assessment information will be kept confidential.

Description of the procedures/elements that are associated with foreseeable risks, discomfort or inconvenience:
There are no foreseeable risks and there is no personal risk of discomfort directly involved with this study other than those associated with your normal daily activities as a counseling graduate student. You may choose to withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice.

**Benefits to the subjects or others:**
Theoretical orientation selection is important to counselor education and development. Participants in this research may benefit by gaining helpful strategies in selecting a guiding theory.

**Confidentiality of research records:**
The information you provide when you respond to the instruments and questionnaire will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed in any publication or discussion of this material. All data including assessments will be assigned a code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet in order to preserve confidentiality. Only the Principal Investigator and her dissertation committee chair, Dr. Sue Bratton, will have access to assessments and to the list of participants’ names and code numbers. At the end of this study the list of names will be destroyed.

**Review for protection of participants:**
This research project has been reviewed and approved by the University of North Texas, Institutional Review Board. Contact the UNT IRB at 940-565-3940 with any questions regarding your rights as a research subject.

**Research Subjects’ Rights:**
I have read or have had read to me all of the above. The Principal Investigator has explained the study to me and answered all of my questions. I have been told there are no foreseeable risks or discomfort directly involved with this study other than those associated with normal daily activities. I have also been informed of the possible benefits of participating in this study. I understand that I do not have to take part in this study, and my refusal to participate or to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights of benefits or legal recourse to which I am entitled. The study personnel may choose to stop my participation at any time. In case there are problems or questions, I have been told that I am to call Dr. Sue Bratton at telephone number, (940) 565-3864. I understand my rights as a research subject, and I voluntary consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and why it is being done. I have been told that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

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<thead>
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<th>Printed name of Subject</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Signature of Subject</th>
<th>Date</th>
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**For the Investigator or Designee:**
I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the person signing above, who, in my opinion, understood the explanation. I have explained the known benefits and risks of the research.

__________________________________________  __________
Signature of the Principal Investigator               Date
APPENDIX B

THEORY CONFIDENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (CTCQ)
(Burwell-Pender, 2008)
Please circle the number that most closely reflects your opinion regarding the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Tend to disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am certain that the basic tenets of my guiding theory of counseling are consistent with my personal beliefs about self and others.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am unsure whether my personal views about people are reflected in my theoretical orientation.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am not certain that my guiding theory is consistent with my personal views about people.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have no doubt that my theoretical orientation reflects my personal beliefs.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am sure that the theoretical framework that guides my work with clients mirrors my personal views about people.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I am not at all confident my personal views align with the underlying principles of my counseling approach.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

TREATMENT PROTOCOL
Introduction Course requirements & practice for Listening Skills Tape.

Denton intro/informed consent—pre-test (Sue) Have students tear out pg 11.
Dallas intro/informed consent—pre-test (Lezlie) Have students tear out pg 11.

Listening Skills DVD & Orientation to Counseling rotation
Week 2
Read: Identification of Guiding Theory Course Packet 1-14, 51-63, 66-72, 140-144; Bernstein ch 1-4
DUE: Professional Disclosure Statement Packet 147-148
Dallas Intervention—Lezlie

Listening Skills DVD & Critique due
Week 3
Read: Adjuncts to, crisis management in, and research on effectiveness of counseling; Identification of Guiding Theory - Packet 64-68, 70-72, 75-78, 121-139; Bernstein ch 5-7
Denton Intervention—Lezlie, Kathryn and Kate
(have all experimental participants meet, introduce exercise, then divide into 3 groups for individual processing).

Biological and Genetic Factors in Counseling
Week 4
Read: Review Intake Session Critique assignment - Packet 73, 79-128, 145-174; Bernstein ch 8-11

Counseling: Intake Session 1
Week 5
Read: Packet 145-167; Bernstein ch 12-14

October

How to write case notes; Theory-specific Technique Intensive
Week 6
Read: Packet 140-141; 169-174
DUE: Baseline Critique of session 1 & DVD

Counseling Session 2
Week 7
Read: Packet 175-179; Bernstein ch 15-16
Dallas post-test 1. Assign/Explain theory paper
Week 8  15  Ethics
Read: Bernstein ch 17-19;
DUE: files/case notes for review
Denton post-test 1.  Assign/Explain theory paper

Week 9  22  Counseling Session 3
Read: Packet 181-185; Bernstein ch 20-23

Week 10  29  Counseling Session 4
Read: Packet 187-191; Bernstein ch 24-26

November  5  Counseling Session 5
DUE: Case notes for review

Week 11  12  Counseling: Session 6
Group Supervision; Preparing for termination; Review Final
Project assignment, including DSM-IV diagnosis
Read: Packet 205-225; Bernstein ch 27-29

Week 12  19  Counseling Session 7
Read: 193-197; 199-203; Bernstein ch 31-32
DUE:  Theory comparison Paper

Week 13  26  Thanksgiving

December  3  Small-group Supervision & Ethical/legal Issues in Counseling;
Week 15  Read: Packet 237-240; Bernstein ch 37-46
DUE:  Final Projects
Papers returned to students in Denton?  Post-test must follow
paper return
Denton post-test 2

Week 16  10  Group Supervision & Processing
Close files; Course evaluation; bring all confidential client DVDs
for destruction. Papers returned to students in Dallas. Post-
test Dallas. Processing of research
# The Three Question Personal Beliefs Exercise Intervention Protocol for Experimental and Comparison Treatment

## 5660 Advanced Counseling Skills, Sections 1, 2, and 3

**Fall semester 2008, Week two:** Introduce self and purpose of study. Have participants read cover letter, complete informed consent, and demographics questionnaire. Group will be briefed on limits to confidentiality, respect for diversity of beliefs.

### Data Collection 1

**Administer pre-test TOPS-R and TCQ.** To help control for threats to internal validity, assessment administration will be provided by researcher at each point of measure and will be standardized assuring environment free of distraction. Researcher available to answer questions. Approximate time for presentation 30 minutes.

Participants will be assigned to the experimental or comparison group treatment by stratified random drawing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Guiding Theory Selection Intervention</th>
<th>Traditional Guiding Theory Selection Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2008  COUN 5660 - Week three:</strong> First Intervention Approximate time three hours.</td>
<td><strong>Fall 2008  COUN 5660-Week three:</strong> First Intervention Approximate time three hours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| During three hour regular scheduled class time for all three sections, experimental group will engage in the Three Question Exercise as follows:  
- Informal introductions activity  
- Handout The Three Questions Personal Beliefs Exploration Exercise.  
- Ask each student to briefly respond in writing their personal views regarding “How do people come into the world?”, “How do people become messed up?, and “How do people change?” Allow approximately 15 minutes.  
- After brief written responses, students will be randomly divided into small groups to process their answers and to share their beliefs with the group. Groups will be lead by researcher or advanced doctoral facilitator.  
- Researcher/facilitator to write key words and phrases on a white board that highlights the student’s beliefs and how they relate to philosophical underpinnings of major theoretical approaches. Researcher will encourage individual and group process and discussion of how individual beliefs collate with philosophical premises of dominant theoretical approaches.  
- Each student will be given the opportunity and encouraged, not required, to share their beliefs related to the 3 questions. Approximate time for each student, 30 minutes.  
- Handout Theory Comparison Chart and explain how it is used. Each student is encouraged to keep notes on personal observations of individual beliefs and how their beliefs compare to theoretical approaches.  
- Researcher will ask participants to not share the elements of the exercise with comparison group.  
- Conclude session with repeating information about follow-up post-testing dates and contact information for questions or concerns of research study. | During three hour regular scheduled class time, comparison group receives traditional guiding theory selection curriculum as outlined in class syllabus. Students are to identify guiding theory and break into groups of similar selection and discuss main points of theory. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Guiding Theory Selection Intervention</th>
<th>Traditional Guiding Theory Selection Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall semester 2008</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Week 8-12</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Second Intervention</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Three Question Personal Beliefs Exercise Theory Paper assigned week 8. Participants will be instructed to explore beliefs related to three questions, “How do people come into the world?” , “How do people get screwed up?”, “How do people change?” in further depth and how beliefs compare to counseling theoretical approaches.</td>
<td><strong>Fall semester 2008</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Week 8-12</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Second intervention</strong>&lt;br&gt;Theory paper assigned week 8. Paper designed to clarify student’s theoretical approach to counseling as outlined in COUN 5660 syllabus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall semester 2008 week 8-12</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Second Intervention</strong>&lt;br&gt;Data collection two (post-test 1)&lt;br&gt;Fall semester 2008 week eight.&lt;br&gt;Approximate time 15 minutes.&lt;br&gt;Experimental and comparison groups will be administered TOPS-R and TCQ. Assessments will be proctored by researcher assuring standardized administration in environment free of distraction. Researcher available to answer questions.</td>
<td><strong>Fall semester 2008</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Week 8-12</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Second Intervention</strong>&lt;br&gt;Data collection three (post-test 2)&lt;br&gt;Fall semester 2008 week 15&lt;br&gt;Approximate time 15 minutes.&lt;br&gt;Experimental and comparison groups will be administered TOPS-R and TCQ. Assessments will be proctored by researcher assuring standardized administration in environment free of distraction. Researcher available to answer questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall semester 2008 week 13, papers due both groups.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Papers to be graded by researcher using similar grading rubric as instructor.</td>
<td><strong>Fall semester 2008 week 13, papers due both groups.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Papers to be graded by class instructor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall semester 2008 week 15, graded papers returned to both groups.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fall semester 2008 week 15, graded papers returned to both groups.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group discussion of research study. Experimental group shares experience with comparison group. Researcher offers intervention exercise opportunity to comparison group participants.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Researcher contact information disseminated.</td>
<td><strong>Group discussion of research study. Experimental group shares experience with comparison group. Researcher offers intervention exercise opportunity to comparison group participants.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Researcher contact information disseminated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered:</td>
<td>Theoretical Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-Centered Counseling</td>
<td>*non-directive Counselor/client relationship necessary and sufficient for client change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic or Existential Orientation (Worthington &amp; Dillon, 2003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adlerian Counseling (Individual Psychology)</td>
<td>*directive/ collaborative Counselor/client relationship necessary part of change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Counseling</td>
<td>*directive/ collaborative Counselor/client relationship necessary part of change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive or Behavioral Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Considered:
Theoretical Approach

View of Human Nature

View of Maladjustment

View of Client Change

Cognitive or Behavioral Orientation

(Worthington & Dillon, 2003)

Reality Therapy/Choice Theory

*directive/
collaborative

-Counselor/client relationship
necessary part of change process

* People are born with basic needs
* Genetically enabled to meet needs and to
  turn into wants
* NOT blank slates externally motivated but
  are internally motivated to meet needs
  (people are goal oriented and self-
  determining)
* Behavior is aimed at controlling external
  world so to fit internal need satisfying world
* Family as early environment impacts
  choices of how to fulfill early needs
* Environment does not determine current
  behavior but provides opportunities for
  choices

- Lack of satisfying significant relationship
- People choosing external control
- Restricted inner picture of self and
  following choices are unsuccessful at
  meeting basic needs
- Self-created total behavior
- People responsible for own change; is a
  choice
- Can change total behavior
- Must be able to evaluate and change
  choices
- Satisfying the need of love is key to
  meeting other needs
- Solutions are in the present, not the past
- Starts with evaluating thinking in order to
  find better ways (behavior) to meet needs

- People are born with basic needs
- Genetically enabled to meet needs and to
  turn into wants
- NOT blank slates externally motivated but
  are internally motivated to meet needs
  (people are goal oriented and self-
  determining)
- Behavior is aimed at controlling external
  world so to fit internal need satisfying world
- Family as early environment impacts
  choices of how to fulfill early needs
- Environment does not determine current
  behavior but provides opportunities for
  choices

- Innate desire to survive, pleasure, to self-
  actualize
- Innate tendencies to behave irrationally
  and rationally
- Genetic and biological aspects of
  personality exist
- Environment strong influence in early life

- Self-created disturbances
- People create faulty irrational beliefs
- Genetics and experience account for one’s
  vulnerability to irrational beliefs
- People are responsible for change
- Must explore irrational beliefs and thinking

References:

The Three Question Personal Beliefs Exercise Theory Paper

The purpose of this paper is to help you clarify your beliefs about people and thereby identify the counseling theory with which your beliefs most closely align. After engaging in The Three Question Exercise, express how your personal beliefs about people align with a theory that you most closely identify. **First**, address your beliefs as you did in the three question exercise. In general, this will take the form of statements such as, “I believe…….” **Next**, address how the proponents of your selected guiding theory explain certain areas listed below. In general, these statements will take the form of statements such as, “The Person-centered tenet that….which is similar to my belief that…” or, “The Individual Psychology philosophy that….which is different than my belief that….”. **Finally**, for each question, address how the tenets of your guiding theory best or least fit with your beliefs.

Please fully explore your beliefs and the tenets of your guiding theory while addressing each of the questions below (your responses should cover but are not limited to the following prompts).

1. **a) How do we come into the world?** What did you come into the world with or without? How did your personality come to be? To what extent does genetics/heredity play a role in your life? What influences your development?
   **b) How do the proponents of your guiding theory explain the following?**
   What structures—actual or potential—are innate in the psyche of a newborn infant?
   What drives or tendencies are present in the newborn infant and provide the basic motivations for behavior throughout?
   How does experience in the environment contributes to development of personality?
   **c) What elements of your guiding theory best fits or least fits your beliefs?**

2. **a) How do we get messed up?** Assuming that people have some form of maladjustment, including you, how did that happen?
   **b) How do the proponents of your guiding theory explain:**
   What characterizes a healthy and unhealthy person?
   **c) What elements of your guiding theory best fits or least fits your beliefs?**

3. **a) How do people change?** What is necessary for you to change?
   **b) How do the proponents of your guiding theory explain:**
   1. What motivates people to change?
   2. What motivates people to seek counseling?
   3. What is the role of the counselor, counseling relationship, and counseling strategies in fostering client change?
   4. What are the causes of client resistance and how the counselor can most effectively respond to it?
   **c) What elements of your guiding theory best fits or least fits your beliefs?**

Please also briefly address how each of the following interfaces with your personal beliefs and your guiding theory:

a. Material on “Genetic Origins of Behavior” (In your class notes packet),
b. DSM-IV diagnosis
c. Empirically supported approaches to psychotherapy, and
d. use of psychoactive medication

Maximum length: 10 pages of text—this requires you to be concise.
**Format:** Follow guidelines in current APA Publication Manual, but do not include an abstract.
**Your paper will be evaluated on:**
1) Thorough exploration—*not the content of*—your beliefs and theoretical content of your guiding theory.
2) Writing and organization,
3) Adherence to APA format, and
4) Bibliography (see class notes packet for source information).

Theory Paper

The purpose of this paper is to help you clarify your beliefs about people and thereby identify the counseling theory with which your beliefs most closely align. Upon identifying your "guiding theory," express how your personal beliefs about people align with that theory. In general, this will take the form of statements such as, "Like TA counselors, I believe...", "I agree with the TA tenet that..."; and "I disagree with the TA assertion that...".

Address, at least briefly, each of the following issues:

1. Personality Development
   a. The nature of persons*
      (1). Structurally (What structures--actual or potential--are innate in the psyche of a newborn infant?), and
      (2). Functionally (what drives or tendencies are present in the newborn infant and provide the basic motivation for behavior throughout life?);
   b. How experience in the environment contributes to development of personality;
   c. What characterizes the mentally healthy and unhealthy person?

2. The Counseling Process
   a. What motivates people to seek counseling;
   b. How people change;
   c. The role of the counselor, counseling relationship, and counseling strategies in fostering client change; and
   d. The cause of client resistance and how the counselor can most effectively respond to it.

3. Related Issues: How well each of the following interfaces with your theory:
   a. Material on "Genetic Origins of Behavior" (in your class notes packet),
   b. DSM-IV diagnosis,
   c. Empirically supported approaches to psychotherapy, and
   d. Use of psychoactive medication.

Maximum length: 10 pages of text

Format: Follow guidelines in current APA Publication Manual, but do not include an abstract.

Your paper will be evaluated on

1) content (the characteristics of a good theory: internal consistency, parsimoniousness, comprehensiveness, etc.),
2) writing and organization,
3) adherence to APA format, and
4) bibliography (see the following pages).

The most common pitfall involves introducing a new, fundamental concept late in the paper for which the groundwork was not laid earlier. For example, previous students have said that people seek counseling to escape from pain of some kind, without ever having mentioned "pain-avoidance" as either an inborn or a learned motive! The motive to seek counseling should be conceptually related to either the inborn motives described in the "nature" section or among the learned motives discussed in the "environment" section. Your paper should describe a conceptually tight, internally consistent theory of human personality. Loose ends detract from that goal.
Theory Match/Exploration Activity

Dee Ray, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, RPT-S; Associate Professor, University of North Texas

The Theory Match/Exploration Class Activity is based on the following assumptions:

9. Counseling Theory provides an explanation of how people enter the world, how they develop personality, and how they develop maladjustment.

10. When a theory provides an explanation for the tenets listed in Assumption 1, counseling techniques will be logically consistent with the belief system. Hence, it is more important to identify theory than it is techniques in order to provide consistent counseling.

11. Each person carries an internalized belief system about people of which they may or may not be aware.

12. Counseling students who become more aware of their personal belief systems will be able to match their beliefs more effectively with a traditional counseling theory.

13. Choosing a counseling theory is not a static process but a changing process that progresses over years of experience. This particular exercise is just the beginning of that process.

14. Activity requires that students have some basic knowledge of many different theories. Hence, it is an exercise usually reserved for students who have passed their basic theory course.

15. The cognitive exercise of writing a personal narrative helps students to focus their thoughts and share their beliefs in a coherent way.

16. Group process is an effective way to develop awareness.

Activity Steps:

1. Facilitator should be extensively knowledgeable of all traditional counseling theories, and many others.

2. Facilitator requests that students remove all materials from their work space except for a piece of paper and pen. Facilitator requests that each student try to dismiss any scholarly knowledge of counseling theories. Facilitator might say, "Pretend you’ve never heard of a counseling theory."

3. Facilitator gives prompt, "I want you to answer 3 questions in paragraph form. You will have 15-20 minutes to answer the questions. Try to answer as much as possible from your own personal experience. Don’t worry about your writing or spelling."
4. Facilitator will write the three questions on a whiteboard or chalkboard.
   a. What is the nature of the person? What did you come into the world with? Before anyone had any influence, what did you have? How did you come into the world?
   b. What is the nature of personality development? How did you become the person that you are? What made you who you are today?
   c. What is the nature of maladjustment? Assuming that everyone has some form of maladjustment, including you, how did that happen? How did you get messed up on the way to becoming who you are?

5. Facilitator will give 15-20 minutes for students to write responses. A five minute warning will be given before the end of the writing activity.

6. At end of the writing activity, facilitator will ask for one volunteer to begin the process. The facilitator will ask the volunteer to recite verbatim the exact words that are written on his or her paper. The facilitator will write the words on the board in order of Question 1, 2, & 3.

7. As the facilitator is writing the student's answers, the facilitator will ask for help from the other students in remembering words and will also clarify with the volunteer student that everything is being written accurately. During this time, the facilitator does not ask for any further explanation, only what is written.

8. When the answer to all 3 questions is written on the board and visible to the group, the facilitator will ask the group to look for patterns in wording between the answers, unique use of words, or the multiple use of certain words. The facilitator will also ask the group if they have any questions for the student to provide clarification of the answers. The facilitator might also ask questions for clarification. The volunteer student expands on any concepts until they feel understood.

9. The group then engages in an exploration of how the volunteer student's responses match different known theories. This might be a time where certain theories can be ruled out as others seem to be a closer match. The activity comes to a close when the volunteer student feels that he/she has a direction to explore involving the motivation to further check out 1 or 2 theories that appear to match the internal personal theory.

10. This process continues until each student has experienced an opportunity to explore his/her counseling theory.
REFERENCES


