The Lived Experience of Novice Counsellors:
A Qualitative Phenomenological Approach

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand and describe the lived experience of novice counsellors. Specifically, this study sought to determine what common experiences aid development and/or detract from a counsellor’s self-identity. It details what counsellors bring to their work and identifies how a counsellor is shaped by their experience and training. As well, it establishes the significance of understanding the impact of personal experiences on a counsellor’s professional development and isolates the needs of the developing counsellor as expressed by the participants themselves.

The lived experience of novice counselors is not acknowledged in counselling literature. This study aims to address the gaps found in counsellor development literature, namely the inconsistency in the models of learning and development, the failure to state the specific methodology used in previous studies, the importance of retrospective reflection for novice counsellors, the lack of consistency in definitions among the literature, and the gap between historical and postmodern theories of counseling development. Participants of this study are novice counsellors who graduated from a post-secondary education program and are approximately one to five years in the field of counselling. This study consists of five participants, in total. Each participant engages in semi-structured interviewing and is asked to holistically reflect on their life and training experiences using creative, reflective practices including phototherapy, collaging, and storytelling.

Together, the lived experiences of all participants shared four common themes: anchoring, uncertainty, knowledge seeking and self-awareness. These four themes frame the over-arching phenomenon that describes the collective experience of the novice counsellor - transition. The significant feature or essence of transition is accepting and acknowledging on-
going learning and change. To the field of counselling, the conclusions of this study promote
discourse on the training experience of counsellors in the hope of modifying counsellor training
programs.
Chapter One

Why do people help? Is it an innate ability people are born with or a skill set that is learned over time? Some may believe that helping is both innate and learned where an individual knows they have the ability to help, but actively pursue the potential to be better at it. Being a helper is a personal act, but becoming a counsellor is a professional act and career choice. Individuals often attempt to be a helper in their interpersonal relationships where they reach out to their friends, family, or co-workers. As a counsellor, they are looked to as an expert or a person of knowing which can bring about doubt in one’s own ability. In other words, when a helper has the intention to help but doubts their ability to do so, what does one deal?

Counsellor Identity Development refers to the growth and progress of a counsellor over the span of one’s career based on the influence of new issues, clients, and experiences. Identity development includes the component of personal growth where counsellors experience changes in themselves and acquire a heightened awareness of self. Within the modern scope of counselling, identity development occurs through various avenues and training programs, which are established to encourage the growth process. This growth process is best defined by counsellors themselves. Moreover, the lived experience of novice counsellors is the most comprehensive source for defining the variables of this developmental process and therefore, is an area in need of attention. In comprehending this phenomenon, one can identify and cater to the needs for growth.

Given the appeal for new methods of inquiry in qualitative research, postmodern counselling practices seek to follow suit. The historical approaches of counselling carry significant weight and value from the theoretical perspective because it provides groundwork for counsellor identity development. However, there is a need for re-evaluation and modification of
the theories as a means to modify the practices. This study aspires to promote the implementation of the creative arts into the process of identity development for novice counsellor, specifically the use of collages and the therapeutic act of storytelling in self-reflective practices. Creative therapies have several benefits such as “an increase in personal awareness, a means to mitigate emotional responses to stress, an opportunity to express deeper personal meanings, and the provision of a container for unpleasant emotions” (Shepard & Guenette, 2010, p. 296).

From a methodological standpoint of research, this study implements Husserl’s Phenomenological approach (also known as Transcendental Phenomenology as expanded upon by Moustakas (1994), to illustrate the significance of the lived experience of a novice counsellor. Both the professional and the personal developmental aspects of a novice counsellor’s course of growth are imperative to fully understanding and accepting what is needed to become a good counsellor. In phenomenology, the researcher extracts the essence of the experiential phenomenon to produce a meaning behind the experience, and in this instance, to answer the question of what it essentially means to be a novice counsellor.

**Statement of the Problem**

The key to being an effective counsellor is to establish a stable identity that integrates both professional and personal development, enhances the skill set of a counsellor, and expands his or her awareness of self. However, the primary issues lie in determining what is necessary to develop a strong novice counsellor identity. From the classroom to the workplace, counsellor identity development is composed of many stages, experiences, and challenges, all of which shape the identity of a novice counsellor. The vast amounts of literature on the topic of counsellor identity development are impressive, but inconsistent in their findings and conclusions. For example, the literature contains various models of counsellor identity
development ranging from traditional theories such as Skovholt and Ronnestad (1995)’s stages in helper development to more contemporary models such as Auxier, Hughes and Kline’s (2003) Recycling Identity Formation Process (RIFP) model (Skovholt & Rivers, 2004). Overall, these theories do not draw the same conclusions nor do they overlap in their frameworks resulting in little common ground.

Although there are many levels of overlap in the groundwork of these theories, it is difficult for the modern researcher to establish a framework for research when there is more than one theory to consider. In studying the lived experience of novice counsellors, one can verify and validate what is already known and identify the areas of deficiency. For this reason, this study aimed to amalgamate the various angles of counsellor identity development into a common view, which stabilizes a holistic perspective of counsellor identity development.

Kennedy and Black (2010) explore the affect of professional development on the person behind the counsellor. This study visits the importance of self in counsellor development and exposes the lack of emphasis on self and personal experiences in academic programs. Kennedy and Black (2010) states, “counsellors’ attempts to provide a stable, neutral, and safe environment for their clients, requiring that counsellors restrain emotional reactivity, could lead to the development of ‘emotional tightness’ as counsellors minimize or deny their own feelings and inner experience” (p. 423). The study proceeds in identifying the common stressors faced by developing counsellors, which include: the unspecified nature of psychotherapeutic work, psychological mindedness, personal psychopathology, and changes in values and perspectives (Kennedy & Black, 2010).

In contrast, Jensen (2007) presents a study that explores and analyzes how personal experiences affect the professional self of therapists. It is stated, “family of origin forms one
important context for understanding the family therapist’s experience. Others include the therapist’s political and cultural background, the social and economic setting and the religious commitments and values that have formed the therapist” (p. 376). The researcher examines three separate cases where participants relate and connect their personal experiences to their current clinical practices. The study emphasizes a year of education, personal therapy and extensive clinical experiences are not indicative of a good therapist. They go on to present the theory of “reference” and “request”. In the context of the study, reference is defined as a counsellor’s professional background where as the request is a counsellor’s interpersonal approach to their practice of therapy. “When we refer here to request, we mean entering into a relationship characterized by communication, reciprocity, co-operation and respect” (Jensen, 2007, p. 381).

Quite simply, it can be concluded that both theories are just as significant and must co-exist in counsellor identity development. There exists a gap between professional and personal development in counselling training programs whereby there is a strong emphasis on professional and not much on personal development. This qualitative study is significant in that its objective is to identify the specific areas of counsellor identity development that require additional attention and advancement from the source, novice counsellors themselves.

**Significance of the Study**

This study’s significance is two-fold; it intends to bridge the gaps found in the counsellor identity development literature as well as the gaps in what a novice counsellor requires for strong identity development. As well, this study’s findings have future implications in the professional and educational aspects of development. In professional practice, novice counsellors may come to use the findings of this study to help identify their professional needs in developing their identity as novice therapists. In the educational process, the findings of this study could support
a potential pilot project dedicated to implementing a “transition” process for novice counsellors entering the career field. Moreover, this “exiting” process includes the use of creative self-reflective practices, prior to graduation from a counsellor training program, as a tool for novice therapists to acknowledge and prepare for future potential challenges; more important, this process will help graduates identify the strengths they will take into the field.

**Purpose of the Study**

Academics are not all that a novice counsellor requires to be viewed as a novice counsellor. Experiences, both professional and personal, are essential in understanding the needs of novice counsellors to succeed. The literature on the lived experience of novice counsellors had many gaps when addressing experience which made it difficult to comprehend the concurrent personal and professional changes. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand and describe the lived experience of a novice counsellor from a retrospective view point to better grasp how personal and professional experiences effect novice counsellor identity development. It aimed to provide an understanding of a novice counsellor’s needs of development and identify the challenges to be prepared for. This study is an attempt to help novice counsellors share their experience as a means to help future therapists succeed in workforce.

**Research Questions**

The research question to be focused on in this qualitative study is:

What is your experience of being a novice counsellor?

The primary research objectives of this qualitative study are:

1. Identify what defines a novice counsellor.

2. Identify the importance and effect of personal experiences (earlier influences) on a novice counsellor’s professional development.
3. Identify how a novice counsellor is shaped by their development.

**Definition of Terms**

Terms applicable to personal and professional development of counsellors.

- **Novice counsellor:** A graduate from a help-related professional program that has been working in the field of counselling for approximately one to five years (Zahm, 2009; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992).

- **Counsellor Identity:** Counsellor identity is a progressive but gradual process that occurs over time and through progressive stages and is comprised of multiple aspects including personal and professional experiences, growth edges, theoretical approaches, comfort zones, values, and ethics (Auxier, Huges, & Kline, 2003; du Preez & Roos, 2008).

- **Counsellor Identity Development:** Counsellor identity development is the growth and progress of a novice counsellor over the span of one’s career based on the influence of new issues, clients and experiences that encountered (Auxier, Huges, & Kline, 2003).

- **Post-practicum:** The time span following the completion of one’s practicum leading up to establishment of a job in a helper related field (Gruman & Nelson 2008).

- **Feelings of incompetence:** FOI is described as feelings of doubt experienced by counsellors due to a lack of confidence in their abilities as a therapist (Theriault, Gazzola & Richardson, 2009).

- **Self-Reflection:** Self-reflection is the process of understanding and becoming aware of one’s personal experiences as a means to attain a fuller perception of self personally and/or professionally (Shepard & Guenette, 2010).
• Self-Awareness: Self-awareness is defined as an understanding of which includes one’s self-esteem, self-concept, sense of self, personal insight, and areas of growth. It is identified as a skill (Payne, 1999).

Terms applicable to creative arts.

• Creativity: Creativity is a process in which people who are more congruent with themselves and their environments try new behaviors” (Gladding, 1998).

• Collage: A collage is an artistic mosaic. In other words it is a collection of various images, each with a common theme. Together the images produce a larger image representing the same theme (Weiser, 1999). Collages can include various images including photographs, pictures from magazines, newspapers, calendars, posters and/or words or phrases cut out of documents or set images.

• Phototherapy: Phototherapy is the use of photographs as a therapeutic instrument to understand all aspects of self-including self-perception, self-identity, and self-esteem (Boisvert, 2003).

• Storytelling: Storytelling is an act of disclosure where a client reveals his or her story through the narration of their personal experiences. It is a universal tool which is utilized by all ages, cultures, or educational levels and requires little or no expertise or equipment. More important, it is a tool to attain personal awareness and self-discovery (Allen & Krebs, 2007)

Terms applicable to Methodology:

• Phenomenological methodology: Phenomenological methodology is a qualitative, theoretical approach that has evolved into a profound philosophical stance utilized vastly
within psychological research. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) a German mathematician was the founder of phenomenology (Laverty, 2004; Moustakas, 1994).

- Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Hermeneutic Phenomenology states that a human being could not be elevated from the essence of the research; rather it is through the “historicality of background” and the tool of “interpretation” that one may explore the lived experience of various worlds and/or individuals (Laverty, 2004).

- Pure phenomenology: (also referred to as Transcendental Phenomenology) is the revelation of a phenomenon of human experience (Laverty, 2004; Moustakas, 1994).

- Meaning: Meaning is process in which humans make sense of or define how they experience an event or thing. In turn they produce a meaning or an essence as a way of understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

- Intention: Intention is the mind’s understanding of an object (Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality is an action performed by human consciousness where regardless of whether the object of the intention is real or imaginary, the directedness of consciousness to the object in question defines the intention behind the research (Moustakas, 1994).

- Intuition: Intuition is a fundamental component of phenomenology where it is described as innate human ability where one is able to produce concrete perception of all things one encounters (Moustakas, 1994).

- Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction: Transcendental phenomenological reduction is the act of separating the perceived experience from the positing of characteristics within the experience (Giorgi, 1931).
• An Essence: An essence is the integration of the fundamental textural and structural
descriptions to produce an explanation to describe the essence of an experience which in
turn describes a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

• Horizontalization: The search for descriptive examples that pertain to the phenomenal
experience in question (Moustakas, 1994).

• Invariant Constituents: Invariant constituents are examples examined to determine if
they address the experience in question and provide a solid understanding of a particular
phenomenon. Invariant constituents must be able to be abstracted and labelled
(Moustakas, 1994).

• Trustworthiness: The verification that data is authentic and reliable. It includes:
  *Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability* (Moustakas, 1994).

• Epuche: To situate oneself in reference to their research is to support the research with
personal understanding but also to prevent the effect of personal predisposition
(Moustakas, 1994).

**Theoretical Framework Selected**

Determining the appropriate theoretical framework for a qualitative study is like finding
an ideal partnership. Choosing a method of inquiry in qualitative research is crucial in that the
way data is collected, analyzed, and portrayed must appeal to the audience the researcher is
looking to attract. More important, the researcher must find a method of inquiry that most
effectively represents them and their stance on the research. In other words, an ideal fit within
qualitative research is finding an approach to research that adequately evaluates the data
collected, while accounting for the assumptions the researcher brings to the study.
According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study is one that “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 57). To define a phenomenon is to declare a lived experience as a common occurrence amongst individuals of a select group. Although each individual comes from a unique background and offers an exclusive recount of the phenomenal experience, all are inevitably bound by familiar themes and the overall essence of being a novice counsellor.

The phenomenon of a counsellor’s lived experience should be universal among all novice counsellors. Counsellors are individuals learning about people and are in turn learning to understand how they are affected by the people they help. As a result, to produce adequate counsellors, training programs must cater to both the professional as well as the personal development of therapists.

The phenomenological approach requires the researcher to be aware of the phenomenon in question because only then does the study fully incorporate the experiences of the participants. That said, the researcher’s interest and experience is noted and considered by the reader to be convincing because they are fully aware of how the participants feel about the topics, yet have bracketed themselves from the data collected. Interpretation is not effective in this type of approach because interpretation dilutes the truth of the participant’s experience. Dowling (2007) states, in phenomenological research, “the entities for study are experiences as described by people who have lived them” (p. 137).

In relation to this research study, the lived experience of the novice counsellor is the phenomenon in question. A phenomenological approach is best suited to the focus of this study because its methodology is ideal for revealing the professional and personal aspects of the lived experience of a novice counsellor. Specifically, this study will use the Transcendental
Phenomenological approach as depicted by Moustakas (1994) due to the heavy use and emphasis of *Epoche* (also known as *Bracketing*), to be further discussed (Creswell, 2007). Transcendental Phenomenology does not require a large number of participants; however it is specific in terms of its sample selection.

**Assumptions of the Researcher**

Participants of this study were assumed to be self-motivated individuals who are secure in their decision to become counsellors. Next, participants will be expected to be able to read and write in English to allow for accuracy in receiving and representing the data collected by the researcher. This criterion also acts to avoid the loss of information that may occur during translation. The completion of graduate-level training for counsellors is particularly favoured in this study due to the rigor of post-secondary education. It is assumed that due to the similar expectations across these programs, these novice counsellors share common experiences from being counsellors-in-training, which will be relevant to the study. Participants, after completing their storytelling and sharing their experiences, are assumed to be recounting accurate, honest, retrospective events from their time as novice counsellors in an attempt to fully describe the essence of being a novice counsellor. In being a novice counsellor, this researcher acknowledges the importance of learning from the experiences of other novice counsellors and thus has benefited from the stories shared. As a result, this researcher assumes that participants will accurately recount their own experience in the hopes of passing along beneficial advice or “words of wisdom” future novice counsellors.

**Delimitations of the Study**

The criteria for population selection for this study included four characteristics to be met. Participants must be able to speak and write in English, have completed a graduate degree in a
counselling or helping-related field, be 1 – 5 years out of their professional training program and working in career related position, and be willing to explore and articulate their lived experiences as a novice counsellor. Five participants were recruited for data collection. This study abided by phenomenological methodology. The choice to limit sample selection to those who have graduated and been out of school for a minimum of one year to a maximum of five is to truly hear the experience of a novice counsellor. Next, a willingness to explore and share lived experiences is pertinent to this study, as it is the participant’s experiences that the research intends to highlight and essentially understand.

Finally, the five participants were selected according to methodological standards. According to phenomenological research, the method of criterion sampling is used to ensure that quality data is collected from a limited number of participants so as to extract the richness of each participant’s experience. The initial decision of methodology was a choice between a case study framework and a phenomenological approach. A case study “involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Its methodology centers on multiple aspects of a single case or multiple cases focused on a single subject. In relation to the objectives of this study, a case study does not appropriately represent the lived experience of counsellors-in-training on the whole. As a result, an overall understanding of the lived experience is best portrayed as a phenomenon.

Summary

The introduction is a brief overview of this study’s focus on the phenomenon of novice counsellor’s lived experiences. It addresses the theoretical framework of the study’s approach and provided the significance of identity development for novice counsellors, while acknowledging the need for further discussion and awareness of this topic. Although some
research has been conducted regarding the needs of novice counsellors, gaps remain to be filled. This study’s objective is to identify and acknowledge the key theories of identity development, investigate the needs of novice counsellors during development, and determine the meaning behind novice counsellor experience. The following chapter is an exploration of the literature spanning from local to international perspectives on counsellor development, as well as the core models of learning, identity development, and creative arts. Although there are various models to address, the literature review will recognize the theories relevant to this study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify and acknowledge the evolution of theories supporting the development of counsellors and, in turn, fortifying their identity as novice therapists in the field. The chapter explores the key pieces of literature from both local and international journals, while examining the focal theories pertaining to the development of counsellors worldwide. It will identify the various models of learning and apply them to the process of identity development. Finally, this chapter will acknowledge the areas in which the literature requires additional research and further inquiry.

Historical Development and Current Recognition of Professional Development of Counsellors

It is the focus of this study to determine the areas of counsellor development that are essential to produce strong, credible counsellors. This section aims to identify the various worldviews of counsellor development. It will highlight several models of development. In addition, this section will detail areas in counsellor development that the literature deems important.

Key American research and influence on professional development of counsellors.

American literature provides a wide array of development models, each of which describe a different perspective on the professional growth of therapists. More importantly, there is an overlap in the specific areas of development, which are considered essential to counsellor development: self-awareness through a means of self-reflection, the involvement of a counsellor-in-training in their development, significance of personal development alongside professional
development, and the non-linear models of identity development for counsellors. The following section will discuss areas of development identified in American literature and in turn the popular models of development.

The need for developing counsellors to be self-aware is deemed an essential piece in professional growth. Aspects of awareness include strengths, weaknesses, fears, biases, personal perspectives, experiences, beliefs, and values (McWhirter, 1998). The literature provides the unanimous approach of self-reflection as the most appropriate means of achieving self-awareness. However, it is argued that developing counsellors do not receive enough opportunities for self-reflection to facilitate adequate development (Sue & Sue, 1990). Rak, MacCluskie, Toman, Patterson and Culotta (2003) agree in stating, “most of the research on developmental models examines quantitative indices of internship development but has neglected student self-reflection” (p. 137).

According to Auxier, Hughes and Kline (2003), theorists suggest that the “actual developmental experiences” of developing counsellors are crucial to outlining the developmental structure of counsellor identity (p. 26). The descriptions of the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of counsellors-in-training not only illustrate the commonalities among individuals developing in the field, but aids supervisors and educators in establishing programming that caters to the developmental needs of novice counsellors. Self-reflection, also referred to as critical self-reflection by McWhirter (1998), is explained to have a strong impact on the empowerment of a counsellor whereby awareness is attained through consciousness-raising, a method of bringing areas of awareness to the forefront of the mind. In turn, consciousness-raising allows for developing counsellors to create an understanding of their self, surroundings and the contexts in which they work with clients (McWhirter, 1998).
According to a study conducted by Rak et al. (2003), a sample of master’s level internship students completed pre- and post-questionnaires regarding their perceptions of counsellor development. One significant finding of the study is that as students progressed in their training they report “an increase in self-awareness and an intangible feeling of ‘awe’ with regard to the complicated and interrelated process of counsellor development” (p. 142). As well, it is acknowledged that students “appeared to be more self-reflective” (p. 143). Self-reflective practices have also led to increased self-awareness where the general thought process of developing counsellors is challenged. Paisley and Benshoff (1998) present the activity of “role-taking” whereby the counsellor-in-training is placed in a fabricated but realistic setting outside their area of comfort. The researchers state, “this experience also needs to be examined through reflection, which individuals being given the opportunity to process feelings and understand their experiences from different perspectives” (p. 30). Self-awareness attained through self-reflection has proven to be an undeniable skill-set that is essential to the professional development of a counsellor.

Auxier et al. (2003) report that self-reflecting is a tool utilized by participants when comparing their self-perceptions to the received, external evaluations. Pederson (2002) reports that in counsellor training the fundamental skill is to be aware. To be aware is to perceive from various angles and to understand using a solid knowledge base. For example, the significance of multicultural counselling is to be competent of the fact that the world is filled with various experiences, each of which contains significant meaning. Multiculturalism articulates the very significance of experience, meaning and the necessity of understanding prior to assessing one’s self or others. Pedersen (2002) states, “Within their particular cultural contexts, behaviors can be
measured more accurately, personal identity can be more clearly defined, the consequences of problems are better understood, and counselling interview become more meaningful” (p. 3).

The article proceeds to outline a three stage model including: assessment, definition of objectives, and evaluation. These stages are applicable to the process of self-reflection and provide a step-by-step look at the value of self-awareness. In assessment, an individual has “the ability to judge a situation accurately” (p. 9). In relation to self-reflection, the ability to situate oneself in the shoes of another allows for an accurate understanding of self to surroundings. To a novice counsellor, having an awareness of their position in the counselling field and of their development allows them to have an honest view of where they stand. Likewise, in self-reflection, being aware of assumptions or inaccurate understanding is the first step to changing or challenging them. As novice counsellors, feelings of incompetence or insecurities often create and imbed distorted views of self; therefore, the best way to challenge those thoughts is to acknowledge their existence. Finally, evaluation is the ability to assess what is learned and compare it to what is known (p. 11). In other words, in order for novice counsellors to develop, they must understand what needs to change and why. The importance of self-awareness is how it teaches one to be aware of others.

The process of self-reflection can be undertaken through various methods. However, in the modern scheme of training practices, theorists have determined that artistic displays of reflection are an innovative and effective technique for counsellors-in-training. In a study conducted by Wong-Wylie (2006), it is suggested that a counsellor’s personal experience directly correlates with their theoretical approach to counselling. Therefore, in hearing and understanding the lived experience of novice counsellors, one can comprehend the direction of their professional identity development.
Seymour (1995) conducts a study to determine if the use of collaging in a nursing classroom setting is a successful means of reflective thinking. The measure of success is demonstrated by the “construction of meaning” from knowledge gained during reflection (p. 19). The study concluded that, “both the students and the faculty learned more and learned more effectively” (p. 20). To programmers, supervisors and educators, this appears to be a technique worth investing in. On the contrary, some might state that reflective practices tend to require additional effort and emotional energy because it is not a structured procedure. It requires emotional depth and deep consideration of elements that one may or may not be prepared to acknowledge. There also exists the possibility of revealing aspects of identity one may not be aware of or prepared to handle.

A successful counsellor is able to “facilitate and support the client’s connections with community, and to enhance the client’s ability to support the empowerment of others as appropriate to the client’s current situation” (Rak et al., 2003, p. 14). In other words, a skilled counsellor is aware of how to guide as opposed to lead, and allows their client to be involved in their own process of change (Rak et al., 2003). That said, to create a counsellor who is skilled and knowledgeable in this dynamic style of therapy is to allow them to be a part of their own development. Developing counsellors are the source for determining what they need for professional growth, hence why they must be the focus of multiple studies; they are the experts in knowing what they need. Paulo Freire (1971) presents the theory of a collective effort between teacher and student (co-teacher and co-learner). Moreover, students work in collaboration with their teachers, so that a student may attain an education that is customized to their needs and interests.
McWhirter (1998) applies this concept to the supervisor-supervisee relationship in counsellor training whereby the supervisor and supervisee create a relationship, which is focused on the supervisee’s goals for development. As a result, “these interventions and change strategies are consistent with the client’s/students values, goals, skills, experiences and abilities. The [student] is viewed as an active member of a team rather than a passive recipient of services” (p. 15). In support of this theory, Paisley and Benshoff (1998) assert that “involving students in decision-making concerning program policies, plans and issues can begin to bring the just community to counsellor education” (p. 33). To substantiate the effects of collaborative efforts between supervisor and supervisee in counsellor development, Rak et al. (2003) report that counsellors-in-training demonstrate “an equal and shared responsibility for growth and development, between client and counsellor” (p. 143).

Counsellors are often viewed as the experts or professionals of the counselling field; they are also human. They grow and develop on a personal level just as they do as professionals, perhaps even more. With personal development comes empowerment which is “associated with positive human growth and change processes” (McWhirter, 1998, p. 12). Professional development entails changes in skill-set, conceptualization, and understanding, however personal development in counsellor education “inevitably invites re-examination of personal history, relationships, and behaviors; a process that for many reveals new perspectives on self, family and friends” (McWhirter, 1998, p. 21). Paisley and Benshoff (1998) report that it is the responsibility of counselling education programs to provide counsellors-in-training with safe and supportive environments for personal development be it in the classroom, through supervision, or on a casual basis. Personal development is an inevitable change, which occurs for all developing counsellors. In the study conducted by Rak et al. (2003), post-test responses of graduate students
acknowledge the occurrence of personal development, which they describe as “ever-evolving” (p. 142).

Although the literature does not explicitly state how personal development is as crucial as professional, it is safe to report that personal and professional development must co-exist. For example, McWhirter (1998) presents the example of personal strengths and weaknesses. Personal development includes an individual’s view of themselves and how they feel about their abilities as a person, counsellor, or any role they play in their lives (parent, sibling, partner, colleague, etc.). Within each role are aspects they excel at and aspects they identify as a growth edge, an area in need of development. Developing counsellors can better appreciate, accept and empathize with their clients’ strengths and weaknesses when they acknowledge and appreciate their own (p. 15).

American literature has identified themes that are prominent in counsellor development, one of which is classified as the process of individuation. Individuation is defined as, “an increasingly higher order integration of the professional self and the personal self. This integration includes a strong consistency between ideology—one’s values and theoretical stance—and methods and techniques used by the individual” (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992, p. 507). Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) broke down individuation into three periods: pretraining, training, and post-training. In the pre-training period, the novice counsellor “operates as a helper of others according to the known and natural rules that govern the individual’s behaviour in personal relationships” (p. 507). Novice counsellors base their understanding of the counselling field on their personal experiences and their natural inclination to function as a helper throughout their lives. It is their perception of being a helper as well as their identity as a helper that leads them to pursue counsellor education. Davidson and Gilbert (1993) address the meaning of
personal identity in an individual career choice. They conclude, “a person's career is a primary source of personal identity” (p. 150).

In the training period, the distinction between personal and professional understanding of counsellor identity becomes apparent where the process of learning initiates the “external and rigid” mode of conduct (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). In the post-training period, novice counsellors are released from the rigid framework of the academic expectations of the program. Consequently, they enter a honeymoon phase after graduating from the program. Although this phase begins with increased confidence due to the feeling of achievement from completing the program, this feeling is soon followed by the new lack of guidance. The loss of guidance elicits, “the demand-to decide which elements of the professionally imposed rigidity to shed and which elements of the internal self to express” (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992, p. 508).

As the literature suggests, there are numerous models of counsellor development, each with their rationale and evidence to support their frameworks. The models are to be further discussed; however, the common conclusion amongst the various development models is that no model can be a linear process. In other words, developmental models are multi-dimensional because they consist of various stages also making them complex. Developing counsellors cannot move through the stages of development at the same pace, as each counsellor enters their training at a different stage of development, based on their experience. For example, Whirtker (1998) presents the model of empowerment as a means of development for counsellors-in-training in which she states, “empowerment is not a linear process, nor one that concludes with the achievement for a particular ‘empowered’ state” (p. 14). In addition, Rak et al. (2003) concluded in their study, “development in the five categories is not always linear and reflect complexity...individuals differ in rate and quality of skill development...This suggest that
learning counselling skills may be a fluid process, not static or linear” (p. 146). Paisley and Benshoff (1998) use Piaget’s model of development via cognitive developmental theory, where Piaget himself “delineates” his model by identifying two processes within the model: assimilation and accommodation. Developing counsellors may use either or both of these processes. Developing counsellors differ across the board in their past experiences, personality traits, methods of learning, or intentions of development. As a result, models are ever changing and being adapted to new methods. To have a linear model is to assume all counsellors develop the same way, which is simply not the case.

**Key Canadian research and influence on professional development of counsellors.**

Canadian literature in the area of counsellor development is a growing entity. The literature is relevant, but limited in quantity. This fact is reflected in the research that compares American and Canadian counselling psychology programming. Hiebert, Simpson and Uhlemann (1992) discuss the professional identity of the Canadian counselling profession in which they report that Canada fosters only one Counselling Psychology program in comparison to the United States, which has established more than twenty. In addition, Canadian counseling programs are situated and administered through Education faculties, which suggests Canadian counselling programs “do not have a clear identity”, which in turn affects the therapists they produce. Nevertheless, the literature does present rich information contributing to the development and learning of novice counsellors.

Self-awareness through a means of reflective practice is a reoccurring theme in Canadian counsellor development. Theriault, Gazzola and Richardson (2009) and Wong-Wylie (2007) reference Socrates’ philosophy to identify how to explore self-awareness: to look within as a means to know oneself. It is reported in the literature that a counsellor’s self-awareness benefits
the therapeutic process (Theriault et al., 2009), strengthens personal development (Wong-Wylie, 2007); identifies relevant experiences (Cohen, 2004), identifies limits, and empowers the individual (Sawatzky, Jevne, & Clark, 1994). Self-awareness in recent years has evolved into a mainstream tool in counsellor development. Counsellor self-awareness serves as a key indicator of an individual’s understanding of their personal experiences, which in turn enables them to feel grounded in their identity as counsellors and their preferred theoretical counselling approaches (Wong-Wylie, 2006).

To the developing counsellor, self-awareness can be both empowering (Sawatzky, Jevne & Clark, 1994) as well as hindering (Theriault, Gazzola & Richardson, 2009). Empowerment to a developing counsellor “implies a reliance on internal authority” (Sawatzky, Jevne & Clark, 1994, p. 180). In other words, a developing counsellor benefits from having an internal sense and understanding of self on a professional and personal level, in addition to relying more on their self-belief rather than the judgement of others (i.e., supervisors, peers, clients). Much like it is reported in American literature, Sawatzky, Jevne and Clark (1994) agree that the model of empowerment in counsellor development is a spiral process rather than a linear one (p. 180). The use of empowerment in counsellor development, counsellors-in-training are expected to develop a professional identity as a therapist and a confidence in self, both personally and professionally.

In contrast, self-awareness also elicits factors which when identified, can hinder counsellor development if not properly guided and dealt with. Such factors have been identified in the literature as fear of incompetence (Theriault, Gazzola, & Richardson, 2009) and increased experience of dissonance (Sawatzky, Jevne & Clark, 1994). Each of these hindrances can be broken down further into the specific effects they have on developing counsellors, such as self-doubt, emotional turmoil, insecurity, uncertainty, increased anxiety and second guessing.
Attaining self-awareness as a developing counsellor is most popularly achieved through forms of self-reflection. Shepard and Guenette (2010) state, “self-reflection is the process of examining the impact of personal values, beliefs and experiences to develop a deeper understanding of one’s personal and professional biases, experiences and beliefs as these may influence future action and learning” (p. 302). Self-reflective practices delve into “thoughts, feelings, attitudes, behavior, therapeutic experiences, life history, inner cast of characters, personal story, family life, and philosophical beliefs” (Wong-Wylie, 2007, p. 61).

Self-reflecting practices can take on the form of soul-searching, self-analysis, journal writing and/or collegial dialogue (Sawatzky, Jevne & Clark, 1994). Shepard and Guenette (2010) state, “creative therapies can provide a safe emotional outlet that allows individuals to gain personal insights and to move forward psychologically” (p. 296). Shepard and Guenette (2010) specifically study the effectiveness of collaging as an aid for counsellors-in-training to reflect on their graduate experiences in counselling. Participants are encouraged to story their collages, which were followed by discussions that reportedly broached themes such as: developing a sense of competency, discovering strengths, finding personal and professional balance, and understanding the counselling field for what it is.

Key international research and influence on professional development of counsellors. Theoretical frameworks and the use of counselling across the globe is a different topic altogether. A counsellor’s development is hoped to be applicable and relevant to the circumstances to which it is applied (Du Preez & Roos, 2008). Similar to American and Canadian literature, international research suggests self-awareness is a fundamental aspect of counsellor development. Du Preez and Roos (2008) state, “the training of a multicultural counsellor does not rest on gaining knowledge and skills with regard to different theories, but
also on producing counsellors who have self-awareness” (p. 699). As well, it is noted that personal development is as crucial to development as professional training. Contrary to American literature but similar to Canadian literature, international research addresses the need for established standards for counsellor development.

Self-awareness is defined as “having self-knowledge and understanding including notions of self-esteem, self-concept, self-disclosure, sense of self, personal insight, personal growth. It can be defined as a skill” (Payne, 1999, p. 57). Self-awareness is developed in individual, supervisory and/or group environments. (King, 2007; Zorga, 2003; Payne, 1999). However, in a study conducted by Izzard and Wheeler (1995), where the aim of the research is to measure self-awareness in a group setting, it is concluded that self-awareness is “not directly observable” (Payne, 1999, p. 58). Consequently, other means of measurement must be determined to evaluate the development of a counsellor.

The first tool of measurement, as suggested in the literature, is levels of self-disclosure whereby a positive correlation between levels of self-disclosure and self-awareness was found. In other words, it is observed that an increase in the amount and depth of self-disclosure is indicative of a higher sense of self-awareness (Izzard & Wheeler, 1995). Another method of measurement is self-reflection, which is identified as a means of facing our “defences, emotional contents and behavioral styles” (Zorga, 2003, p. 265). On an individual developmental basis, it is suggested counsellors-in-training are observed to have a high level of uncertainty in themselves. For this reason, it is recommended that developing counsellors embark on reflective practices, which is identified as “the best method of novice professional growth” (King, 2007, p. 393). A third measure of self-awareness is increased confidence. King (2007) samples 22 training counsellors with a questionnaire pertaining to career developments. The results suggested that
those who report experiencing a gain in self-awareness also report a gain in confidence.

Participants identified they “learned how to contain, manage and understand their anxieties. ‘I have had to learn to deal with my own difficulties and prejudices along the way and have had to assess my own strengths and weaknesses more competently and honestly” (p. 398).

Overall, there is overwhelming evidence to sustain the significance of self-awareness in counsellor development, it is a matter of implementing the appropriate means of development. Zorga (2003) also attests to the correlation between self-confidence and self-awareness in the environment of supervision. The study reports that counsellors developed self-confidence and self-respect through supervision, self-reflecting and becoming aware of their abilities and growth edges.

Personal development is an inevitable change in counsellor development. To understand others, counsellors must be aware of themselves. Naturally, empathy is developed when an individual understands and creates meaning for his or her emotions and experiences; only then can they relate and understand how another feels. Counselling training programs, across the board, encourage training exercises that promote personal development along with the professional. The research suggests participants, themselves, address the importance of personal change and reflect on the various training they received to implement the change. For example, Payne (1999) discussed the use of personal development groups (PD groups) and its effect on the personal development of counsellors-in-training. He states that the group experience provides “a framework for students to prepare for practice by, for example, gaining personal insights into aspects of themselves, enhancing their awareness and improving interpersonal communication” (p. 56). To further support this line of reasoning, King (2007) presents the feedback of counsellors-in-training and their perspective around their personal changes. The study reports
“there was a clear desire to learn more about themselves” (p. 397). A participant of the study shared, “having had counselling myself I wanted to understand its mystery and to use the skills with others to facilitate their changes. I also wanted to study at a higher level to prove to myself that I could and to enable me to be more empathic with people and to understand them more” (p. 397).

Personal counselling for counsellors-in-training is also encouraged. Macaskill (1988) argues there are two rational explanations for the importance of personal counselling for developing therapists. First, he reports it is vital for developing counsellors to have internal knowledge of themselves, which includes insight into their personality, conflicts, and their awareness of both. Second, he states that a thorough perception of what it is like to be a client creates a stronger ability to empathize with future clientele. In an analysis of three major studies, Macaskill (1988) concludes the majority of research testifies personal counselling for counsellors-in-training is “satisfactory” and a “valuable experience” for developing counsellors (p. 224). Additional evidence is reported in a UK survey conducted by Macaskill and Macaskill (1992), where 87% of participants identified a positive effect on both their professional and personal development as counsellors. Specific effects included “increased self-awareness (76%), increased self-esteem (47%) and reduction on symptoms (43%)” (p. 133). More important, personal therapy is a strong attribute for personal growth and development.

In a more recent study conducted by Rake and Paley (2009), the researcher uses a phenomenological research approach to determine how personal therapy aids the personal and professional development of counsellors-in-training. The study sampled thirty professional therapists with at least two years of experience and who underwent personal therapy in their training. Using a semi-structure interview process, the researcher collected and analyzed data,
which produced three focal themes: “I learnt how to do therapy” (p. 281), “I know myself much better” (p. 284), “A very dissolving process” (p. 286). Within these themes, participants had described their development of empathy towards the client experience, their understanding of emotional change, and identified some aspects of personal therapy they had a difficult time processing for themselves. All things considered, it is safe to conclude personal development is as critical to the development of counsellors as professional skill development.

The international research has addressed and supported the various areas of counsellor development, which are considered crucial to training future therapists. However, a critique found in the research identifies the need for training standards. This critique, although identified in the Canadian and international research, is common to all professional counsellor training programs. Each educational program encompasses diverse methods of training however, “there is little agreement on how counsellors should be prepared” (Pelling & Whetham, 2006, p. 190). Pelling and Whetham (2006) identify the lack of standardization in Australian programming, which reflects the inconsistencies in Canadian literature. The ideals behind self-awareness, counselling skills, personal skills (warmth and caring), and self-development are recognized in the literature, however the varying degree of standards around credentials and methods of training are indeed absent.

**Personal and Professional Development of Adult Learners: Learning Process of Counsellors**

This section will explore the theories of learning and the significance of experiences in the learning process. First, this section discusses Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory, which addresses learning as an accumulation of knowledge attained through the understanding of experiences. Second, it examines the use of creative arts (collaging, phototherapy, and
storytelling) as a vehicle to extract meaning from life experiences. Third, this section speaks to the importance of using creative arts in the development of a strong sense of identity. Kolb’s (1984) work provides a framework to understand learning through experiences, however it also creates a perception of the difficulties faced during the course of learning. Be it a fear of incompetence due to lack of experience, the ability to anchor oneself to the experiences that shape the individual, or the experience of being in a state of transition, Kolb’s (1984) theory of experiential learning offers a method of learning to help overcome each of these obstacles.

**Experiential learning theory of development.** Learning is “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). For all counsellors, the process of learning is on-going hence why an understanding of how learning occurs is essential to successful development. Human beings learn from experience. This process is also known as Experiential Learning Theory.

Experiential learning theory is “a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behavior” (Kolb, 1984, p. 21). Experiential learning theory is applicable to adult learning as a whole, and its relevance to counsellor development is also significant. To a developing counsellor, personal and professional growth is a direct result of on-going learning from past and present experiences. Likewise, the characteristics of experiential learning theory can be applied to counsellor development, to improve training methods for better learning. Experiential learning theory consists of six major characteristics which describe the perspective of learning and development through experience. These characteristic include: learning is a process, learning is continuous and grounded in experience, learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectics, learning is a holistic
process of adaptation, learning involves transaction between person and environment, and learning creates knowledge (Kolb, 1984).

First, learning as a process is described as such because it is believed “concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 26). Similarly, counsellor development is also described as a multidimensional process due to its constant changing dynamic. Every new experience encountered can either challenge one’s perception of past experience or reinforce it. In any case, the process continues until the experiences cease to exist. According to experiential learning theory, the amount an individual learns cannot be measured by the amount of fixed ideas they retain, because ideas or concepts about the world are ever-changing by new experiences.

Second, learning is continuous and grounded in experience where “knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner” (Kolb, 1984, p. 27). Continuous and experiential learning are also referred to as “relearning” whereby human consciousness is consistently altered by new experiences. Many developing counsellor enter the counselling field with past experiences or notions of helping and understanding others, which lead them into the helping field (Barnett, 2007). Barnett (2007) aims to determine the unconscious motivations for individuals entering the counselling field. Experiences of loss and narcissistic needs were discovered and identified as motivators; however, these therapists were asked to embark on personal therapy so their understanding of their experiences could be helpful to their future practice as opposed to hindering them. In other words, these future therapists relearned how to use their personal experiences to improve their therapeutic practices, as well as determine which methods of training are “most useful for reducing unnecessary pains associated with learning counselling” (p. 262).
The third characteristic of experiential learning theory is a result of conflict among various experiences. Kolb (1984) states, “new knowledge, skills, or attitudes are achieved through confrontation among four modes of experiential learning” (p. 30). These modes of learning include: concrete experience abilities, reflective observation abilities, abstract conceptualization abilities, and active experimentation abilities. Developing counsellors encounter each phase of development in their training. For example, the concrete experience, which Kolb (1984) refers to the ability to involve oneself in new experiences without preconceived notions, is an ability readily focused on in multicultural counsellor training. Pedersen’s (2002) training design for developing counsellors insists upon the development of counsellor awareness. He states, “the teaching of awareness relies primarily on experiential exercises that directly challenge the person’s assumptions” (p. 11). Counsellors-in-training are expected to set aside their biases and open their minds to a new experience and the experiences of their clients. Reflective observation is the ability for one to view their experiences from various angles and reflect on each one (Kolb, 1984).

Reflective practices in counsellor training are an accepted training method worldwide. Upton and Asch (1999) explore various methods of reflection including audio/video monitoring, verbal and written reflection, and their observed improvement in counselling skills (self-awareness, other-awareness, empathy, and unconditional positive regard). Abstract conceptualization is the ability to relate personal observations to theoretical frameworks (Kolb, 1984). Zorga (2003) refers to this ability as a search for meaning in experiences. She states abstract conceptualization is when counsellors are “comparing and searching for possible connections between reflective experiences and other past experiences (one’s own or the experiences of colleagues), linking this with theoretical knowledge, attitudes, etc.” (p. 265).
Finally, active experimentation is the ability to use theoretical knowledge in action (Kolb, 1984). Supervision in counsellor training is a safe environment for active experimentation, where under the watchful eye of an experienced counsellor, counsellors-in-training have a means to consult, review, and apply their knowledge to their clinical work. Zorga (2003) strengthens this assertion by reporting, “we do our job, at the supervision meeting we reflect about what we have done and learn from it, then we return to our work and test what we have learned” (p. 266).

The fourth characteristic of experiential learning theory learning is a holistic process. In other words, “learning is the major process of human adaptation” and it is holistic because it occurs in all environments and in all states of human development (Kolb, 1984, p. 32). When applied to counsellor training and development, adaptation is an on-going occurrence whether it is adapting to new settings, theoretical frameworks, client experiences, or personal experiences. The counsellor learning process is always changing.

The fifth characteristic of experiential learning theory is the transaction between person and environment. Learning is simply not limited to internal processes. Human beings are continuously stimulated by the surrounding environment; and how they create meaning from their interpretation of the stimuli is the work of the human consciousness. A counsellor’s internal and external experiences are frequently in “transaction”, resulting in their influence on one another. As these experiences interact, their effect one another creates a change in perception and, in turn, causes learning to occur. Kolb (1984) states, “individuals learn to the extent that they expose their needs, values, and behavior patterns so that perceptions and reactions can be exchanged. Behavior thus becomes the currency for transaction” (p. 36).
The final characteristic of experiential learning theory is the process of creating knowledge. Knowledge is what is known and what is known is acquired through “the transaction between these objective and subjective experiences in a process called learning” (Kolb, 1984, p. 37). Counsellor knowledge is derived from differences encountered in personal and professional experiences. In counsellor training, there are many opportunities and persons to learn from (i.e. self, supervisors, colleagues and clients) and although not all experiences will coincide with one another, differences promote thinking, decision making and in turn problem solving (Zorga, 2003).

**Use of creative arts in understanding counsellor identity development.** In counselling practices, collaging and storytelling branch from the more general practice of creative arts. Gladding (1998) defines creativity as, “a positive defence mechanism...creativity is an integrative process in which people who are more congruent with themselves and their environments try new behaviors” (p. 3). It is said that creativity, in psychotherapy, elicits the ability for an individual to fully explore themselves without apprehension and display their findings in a visual format. For a novice counsellor the opportunity to be creative throughout identity development creates an avenue to explore their sense of self, without boundaries or specific procedures. The sense of freedom is liberating creates a, “‘non-threatening medium where an individual does not need to feel ‘artistic’ in producing their piece of work’” (Shepard & Guenette, 2010, p. 298).

In a study conducted by Neswald-McCalip, Sather, Strati and Dineen (2003), five graduate students in counselling were invited to create their own supervisory program, which they termed *creative supervision*. Within their established 90 minute supervision sessions, these students engaged in creative exercises so as to achieve a two-fold goal. First, the students
partook in the creative exercises to help them identify with their clients and understand how it feels to engage in creative activities within a counselling session. Second, the graduate students chose to use creative exercises to focus on their personal and professional development as counsellors, where “activities such as the Maori Drawing (i.e., a personal growth activity recommended specifically for counsellors that encourages the counsellor to view his or her growth from an indigenous worldview” (Neswald-McCalip, Sather, Strati & Dineen, 2003, p. 225-6).

Historically, the use of creative arts dates back as far as 500 B.C., where the Egyptians believed that, “through such activities feelings could be released and personas made whole again” (Gladding, 1998, p. 3). Music tended to be the primary expression of creative arts dating back to the Greek era leading up to the early Hebrews. However, it remains that regardless of the time period or the culture of the individuals who used it, the creative arts has existed as a universal, metaphorical language that has persisted into our current culture (Gladding, 1998). To renowned individuals in the psychotherapy profession, such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Jacob Moreno, the research backing the use of creative arts has grown exponentially due to the need for new and innovative methods of psychotherapy and its growing popularity in the modern community (Gladding, 1998).

**Application of creativity to identity development.** According to Gladding (1998), creativity is broken down into a six step process, all of which are applicable to the practice of counselling. The first step is *preparation* where information is searched for and collected to produce something new. This stage promotes the opportunity for a novice counsellor to compose their thoughts, emotions and experiences and bring them to the forefront of their mind. Edwards (2010) explores the use of metaphors and images to emphasize the importance of linking
thoughts with emotions in clinical supervision where, “any given supervision session may, therefore, encompass both a theoretical discussion concerning an aspect of clinical practice and an exploration of thoughts and feelings arising in response to client’s material” (p.249). The second stage is incubation where an individual is given time to divert themselves from their initial thoughts. It is here that a novice counsellor may find the need to develop and conceptualize each of the new thoughts that surfaced. Following incubation, there is ideation where thoughts transform into ideas. A novice counsellor attempts to filter and decipher their ideas during this stage. The illumination stage is where “enlightenment” takes place. For the novice counsellor, enlightenment entails the commencement of meaning behind a particular thought or idea. The next stage is evaluation where “critical thinking” takes place. The evaluation stage allows a novice counsellor to modify or enhance their ideas before moving into the final stage - verification/production. In the final stage, the, “original idea becomes a new or refined product or action” (Gladding, 1998, p. 3). A novice counsellor verifies the components (thoughts, emotions, meanings) that compose their final idea(s) and puts them into action, or in this case, their stories.

A counsellor’s identity is their trademark. It not only describes who they are as counsellors, but it illustrates the strengths and skills that make them great counsellors. It is for this fundamental reason that a strong and grounded counsellor identity is crucial to the experience of the novice counsellor. “Creative arts in counselling concentrate on going beyond emotional release to the process of building self-concepts that are stronger and more congruent than before” (Gladding, 1998, p.143).

Teaching. The use of creative arts has been examined from the novice counsellor perspective, however from a teaching point of view, the goal of expanding the number of ways
one can learn is a budding endeavour. The use of creative arts in teaching is growing in attractiveness for more reasons than one. First, biologically, sight develops before speech therefore, the first collection of data from the surrounding world is accumulated through the eyes (Simons & Hicks, 2006). Pictures, videos or mirror reflections are images that carry vast amounts of information that the imagination processes and generates meaning from. Simons and Hicks (2006) state, “Imagination...is central to our capacity to confront and deal with obstacles in life and to invent solutions to problems” (p. 82).

Second, collaging and storytelling are both artistic teaching tools that enable novice counsellors to safely explore and identify the various inputs that affect them including: emotions, memories, problems, and experiences. Simons and Hicks (2006) state, “the art-work becomes a symbolic language for...inner feelings and helps...to makes a bridge between the inner and outer reality” (p. 82). For programmers, supervisors and/or educators, utilizing these artistic methods to provoke self-reflection helps the developing counsellors bring their inner feelings to the forefront to be acknowledged and addressed. Third, evidence indicates reflective practice is not only overwhelmingly effective, but it is fundamental to counsellor development. Upton and Asch (1999) argue that a sizable number of counsellor development theories expect developing counsellors to “review personal performance” or to discover alternative means such as the use of creative arts, to examine their development as they progress.

**Phototherapy.** The practice of phototherapy is an element that can have the potential to belong to a larger image (i.e. collage). Photographs are described as “mirrors which we project up and have reflected back to us various aspects of our awareness” (Krauss, 1983, p. 65). A working definition of phototherapy is the use of photographs as a therapeutic instrument to understand all aspects of self-including, self-perception, self-identity, and self-esteem (Boisvert,
2003). Boisvert (2003) provides an intimate and sensitive recount of her experience as a survivor of anorexia through a photographic diary. She quotes Freeman Patterson in saying, “a camera always looks both ways [as a] photographer…my images are as much a documentation and interpretation of myself as of the subject matter I choose” (p. 28).

The therapeutic use of photographs was initially introduced by Dr. Hugh Diamond in 1856. It is used in medical practices where patients were able to project meanings, experiences and emotions as a means to conceptualize how their awareness affected them and their lives (Wald, Norman, & Walker, 2010). As a result, phototherapy is a promoted means of reflection in various helping professions such as medicine, nursing, and therapy. In turn, reflection through phototherapy is said to encourage and develop self-awareness in healthcare professionals (Wald, Norman & Walker, 2010). Simons and Hicks (2006) report, “familiarity with photographs is part of social life, and their diversity and versatility can generate new ways of seeing and reconstructing our social worlds” (p. 81). Wald, Norman and Walker (2010) quote a study by Elder, Tobias, Lucero-Criswell and Goldenhar (2006) where second year medical students participated in a course dedicated to art exercises. Student reviews of the course indicate the exercises “enhance self-reflection and personal development of students, including understanding emotional responses to patients” (p. 546). Much like the development of medical students, counsellors-in-training are also encouraged to participate in reflective practices for the same reasons.

Within this therapy there exist five techniques, each of which exemplifies the two relationships that can be interpreted through the photographs taken: person and camera or person and photo. The five techniques when applied to novice counsellor identity development include: photos taken of the novice counsellor, photos taken by the novice counsellor, photos taken of and
by the novice counsellor (self-portrait), biographical snapshots (family and friends, may or may not include the client), and the projective technique (Weiser, 1999). Photos taken of the novice counsellor represent how the external world perceives them. Typically this method entails a novice counsellor learning how those around them view them in the profession. This may be a portrayal of verbal and/or written evaluations, constructive criticism or client feedback/disclosure. Photos taken by the novice counsellor reflect what the counsellor believes is important to them. A novice counsellor can be influenced by multiple factors including his or her “goals, hopes, desired outcomes”, personal circumstances, fears, and relationships (Weiser, 1999, p. 23).

Photos taken of and by the novice counsellor tend to be under the most scrutiny resulting in self-confrontation. The principles of self-awareness are represented by the opportunity for a novice counsellor to confront themselves (Weiser, 1999). The ability for one to be held accountable to oneself is the best method of self-realization. Interpretation of biographical snapshots that may or may not include the novice counsellor portrays the influence of the student’s “interrelationship dynamics” (Weiser, 1999, p. 25). As noted previously, with regards to a counsellor’s identity, he or she behaves “according to the known and natural rules that govern the individual’s behaviour in personal relationships” (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992, p. 507). Consequently, biographical snapshots tap into the counsellor’s understanding of their personal and familial systems, which in turn may bring to light clarifications of current thoughts or behaviours in counsellor development.

The projective technique “is based on the phenomenological fact that the meaning of any photo is primarily created by its viewer during their process of perceiving it – as thus any photograph that draws interest from client or therapist has potential use in the counselling
setting” (Weiser, 2001, p. 13). Appropriate debriefing of each of these methods with a supervisor or peer can reveal information that will be imperative to identity development. Taking one’s own photos is approximately equivalent to selecting set images from magazines, newspapers, calendars, and posters, except that there is more autonomy in what the photo will look like. As well, a counsellor’s “choice of these personal symbols in the photographs and the therapeutic interpretation can bring to awareness that which formerly took place primarily at an unconscious level (Krauss, 1983, p. 65). Boisvert (2003) concludes with her implications of phototherapy on novice counsellor identity development by stating, “I am aware that those practitioners in the area of eating disorders who risked expressing their own voice within academic and professional worlds have filled the gap between research and practice by sharing their personal and professional learning” (p.30). In other words, voicing the experiences of novice counsellors helps identify where the academic and professional worlds are lacking in counsellor development.

**Storytelling.** This section is dedicated to uncovering the therapeutic process and benefits of disclosure, pertaining to counsellor training and development. First, the physical, emotional and self-revealing nature of disclosure will be explored. Second, this section will visit the current considerations of disclosure, specifically the use of Dramatic Psychological Storytelling (DPS) as a tool for disclosure. Edwards (2010) visits the importance of incorporating play within supervision. The study reveals that without creativity in the supervisor-supervisee relationship, the relationship becomes controlled and therefore “may serve only to inhibit the disclosure of any perceived shortcomings the supervisee fears they may have, thus further stifling creativity in supervision and possibly leading to a collusive or controlling relationship” (p.251). On many accounts the literature encourages and pronounces the significance of reflective practices within counsellor development. Storytelling is a powerful means of self-disclosure and reflective
practice and within a safe environment can be profound for the development of therapists. With creativity comes the comfort to disclose; subsequently, disclosure brings the opportunity to reveal what the mind is feeling.

**Contending with incompetence, anchoring and transition.** In addition to relying on self, novice counsellors often report feelings of incompetence (FOI). Feelings of incompetence are described as “the emotions and thoughts that arise when therapists’ beliefs in their abilities, judgements, and/or effectiveness in their role as therapists are reduced or challenged internally” (Theriault, Gazzola & Richardson, 2009, p. 106). Feelings of incompetence have proven to have both positive and negative effects on novice counsellors. In a study exploring the effects of FOI on novice therapists, the researcher identifies the negative effects, which include: burn out, depression, insecurity, uncertainty, low self-esteem, perfectionism, and premature career abandonment. Positive effects are identified as increased responsiveness, increased knowledge, self-acceptance, personal and professional growth, and implementation of self-care techniques (Theriault, Gazzola & Richardson, 2009). Regardless of the effects of FOI, there is a need for developing counsellors to have an awareness of its existence because, “counselling students must learn to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, grow in their understanding of how to utilize their strengths more effectively, and how to enhance area of weakness” (McWhirter, 1998, p. 16).

FOI in novice counsellors commonly occur in the form of anxiety or a fear of the unknown shortly after graduation (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) argues, a method of countering anxiety is the increase of experience. However, McWhirter (1998) contends that an awareness and personal acceptance of competencies invoke an understanding of one’s abilities and confidence of what they do offer. A counsellor with a
strong identity is a counsellor who knows themselves (du Preez & Roos, 2008). Inevitably, a novice counsellor must conclude there is much they bring to the table, yet they too must accept that as a novice counsellor they are still learning. If achieved, increased competence is demonstrated through a satisfaction with acquired skills, a sense of autonomy, a trust in self, an understanding of professional place, and an acceptance of ongoing learning (Sawatzky, Jevne, & Clark, 1994). This shift in mental processing functions as a coping mechanism whereby self-criticism gradually transforms into acceptance. An example of such a shift is the acceptance of responsibility. Theriault, Gazzola and Richardson (2009) state that novice counsellors who do not assume full responsibility of the therapeutic relationship, but rather share the responsibility with their clients are able to reduce the symptoms of FOI. A second technique is the ability to admit mistakes or limitations, which reportedly elicited a sense of relief.

Career choices are motivated by a plethora of experiences, both professional and personal, be it relationships, work experiences, trauma, loss, mental health, or any life changing experience. Ultimately, the individual learns who they are from their experiences (DiCaccavo, 2002). It is stated, “Applicants for training commonly express a desire to ‘help’ and ‘understand’ others, often with minimal awareness of the origins of that desire” (Barnett, 2007, p. 257). It is the “minimal awareness” which is concerning because without an understanding of the experiences, which stimulated the choice to become a counsellor, novice counsellors have no grounding or anchor to reinforce their reason to pursue counselling.

Barnett (2007) states a common experience found among care providers which appeared to be a contributing factor to their development as a helper, is a perception or insight to the needs of others and an urge to facilitate guidance and support. It is believed their empathy is a direct result of their experience of similar emotions or events. According to a study conducted by Mani
(2005), a sample of Sikh, Indo-Canadian women are asked to describe the influence of their cultural backgrounds on their career decision-making process. All participants report their understanding of the “norms and expectations” of their culture, which allowed them to relate to others with similar experiences (p. 205). Likewise, novice counsellors who channel their experiences are known to have a higher level of empathy and ability to relate to their clientele. This level of understanding or awareness is primarily attained through self-reflective practices and should be reinforced in counsellor training.

Experiences provide an anchor to self, which is crucial in the counselling field. In a field widely recognized for its increased rate of burnout, compassion fatigue, and traumatic stress, a counsellor, especially a novice one, should and must have an anchored sense of self and the abilities they bring to the field (Jensen, 2007). The literature does not define a specific term to describe the process of grounding one’s career choice using their experience. “Anchoring”, within the confines of this study, is the term chosen to fulfill this gap in the discourse. Moreover, anchoring is the process of utilizing experiences to rationalize the choice to become a counsellor, thus serving as a foundation for developing self-awareness and identity.

Confidence is often lost during transition (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Change is a positive occurrence, but it is also misleading. Transition is a change all novice counsellors encounter and the term can be used to describe the novice phase of their career, because a novice counsellor is neither a student nor an experienced therapist. Change is intimidating due to a fear of the unknown (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Graduation from training brings excitement and a sense of autonomy, however with that there is the loss of supervision, fear of incompetence and a need for empowerment. Autonomy is a critical aspect of identity as it is the “true sense of one’s own choices and decisions in a situation” (Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982, p. 21). As one’s
personal sense of self is empowered, autonomy follows suit. On the contrary, without a strong identity the loss of supervision is unnerving to the novice counsellor.

The novice counsellor eventually must transition from a novice to an expert. Etringer, Hillerbrand and Claiborn (1995) explore the cognitive transition via cognitive competency. The article insists that novice counsellors who strive for the status of an expert must learn how to “structure their knowledge in ways that are meaningful and useful to their practice”, however this is best achieved with the gain of experience and conceptualization of knowledge (p. 5). Transition is a change most novice counsellors are not adequately prepped for, hence the need for further research on a means for enhanced methods of training.

Self-Disclosure and Current Considerations of Disclosure.

Once collages have been completed, what happens next? What do you do with the image(s)? A picture speaks a thousand words, but a thousand pictures can recount a lifetime. Every life is composed of experiences and each experience is significant to the understanding of life issues, and in turn the human condition. Storytelling is indeed an avenue for sharing and listening, but more important, it is a vehicle for finding meaning. As well, storytelling is a universal tool which is used by all ages, cultures, or educational levels and requires little or no expertise or equipment. It is “utilized for personal awareness and self-discovery” (Allen & Krebs, 2007, p. 4). It is an effective means of communication and likewise, is a means for self-disclosure.

Storytelling, in counselling is an act of disclosure where a client reveals his or her story through the narration of their personal experiences. Disclosure is a historical practice, which is used globally. It is a method that has survived over the years due to its apparent success in various cultural customs (i.e. confession), as well as its value in the therapeutic process.
Research, over the years, shows that there is a direct correlation between the act of disclosure and human physical wellbeing, hence the practice of counselling. Leading up to the mid 1980’s, disclosure is primarily associated with psychological wellbeing (Pennebaker, 1995).

According to narrative therapy methods, storytelling is imbedded in the strength of language. White and Epston (1990) state, “…our understandings of our lived experience, including those that we refer to as ‘self-understanding’, are mediated through language” (p. 27-8). Storytelling is a form of narrative therapy that uses language to share lived experiences and the use of language is imperative in the delivery of meaning (White & Epston, 1990). It is important to also recognize the effects self-disclosure have on the physical and mental well-being of individuals.

In Forrest’s (1975) earliest work, clinical observations showed an increased display of anxiety and discomfort due to the lack of self-disclosure in individuals struggling with alcoholism (Forrest, 2010). This example speaks to the human, physiological reaction when one does not engage in self-disclosure. More recently, researchers began visiting the effects of immune functions following written disclosure of traumatic events (Pennebaker, 1995). In an experiment measuring the physical response to disclosure about trauma, “…reductions in blood pressure, muscle tensions, and skin conductance [occurred] during or immediately after the disclosure” (Pennebaker, 1995, p. 5). The element of physical healing is a motivating factor in the continued use of self-disclosure in therapy.

In relation to Pennebaker’s (1995) research, a study conducted to determine if emotional disclosure has an effect on the chronic pain syndrome Fibromyalgia; the results affirmed Pennebaker’s findings. Participants diagnosed with fibromyalgia are asked to write while at home for four consecutive days, in which both before and after writing they are asked to rate
their mood. They are asked to continue this process over a 3 month span. The conclusions of the study “suggest[ed] that at-home written emotional disclosure leads to a greater degree of improvement on various health indexes 3 months after writing than does emotionally neutral control writing” (Gillis, Lumley, Mosley-Williams, Leisen, & Roehrs, 2005, p. 142). Self-disclosure is completed in more than one format (verbal and written). Similarly disclosure in counsellor identity development is expected to be just as promising.

Disclosure elicits the sharing of personal experiences while expressing deep emotions during what is believed to be a vital piece of the healing process. “…once an experience has been organized and given meaning, the…emotions associated with the event become more manageable” (Theadom, Smith, Horne, Bowskill, Apfelbacher & Frew, 2009, p. 45). To be aware of emotions is to acknowledge their existence and bring them to the forefront of self-awareness. Only upon knowing how a person feels can understanding the meaning of an experience or story occur. For a novice counsellor, disclosing their lived, counselling experience will trigger a variety of emotions, all of which carry a different meaning to be deciphered.

For the majority of human beings, the search for meaning occurs daily and endures for their lifetime. Meaning is often uncovered through the art of storytelling as “stories have long assisted individuals and cultures in making meaning of experience” (Sommer, Derrick, Bourgeois, Ingene, Yang, & Justice, 2009, p.206). For the novice counsellor, the search for meaning of experience is to create an identity for themselves. One may wonder how finding meaning through experience is correlated to the education and development of counsellors, however the answer is simple. To find meaning from experience is to create a purpose and a direction. Many novice counsellors linger in their process of development without a sense of who they are, because they no longer identify as students, but they are not yet experienced
counsellors (Stickel & Trimmer, 1994). Experience provides a direction and a drive to do what we do (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). In evidence-based practice, both professional and personal experience assist in the overall cognitive development of counsellors (Jensen, 2007). Extracting meaning from experiences through narrative practices (in counsellor education) can promote self-reflection, increase awareness and strengthen the understanding of self.

There is a grave importance for the use of storytelling as “stories are an integral part of human existence and if storytelling is a familiar mode of delivering information and constructing meaning, then using this method in supervision seems natural” (Sommer, Derrick, Bourgeois, Ingene, Yang, & Justice, 2009, p.208). Storytelling in counsellor education and development is significant because it is a means of reflection. There is a common thread that connects storytelling to self-reflection and that is the growth of self-awareness. Awareness allows for a novice counsellor to conceptualize and gain perspective of their identity as a therapist.

It is crucial to acknowledge the different models of disclosure for the purpose of understanding the model most suited to this study. The core models of disclosure include: Johari Window, social penetration model, and the dramatic psychological storytelling (DPS). Each model highlights the significance of disclosure yet varies in their approaches. This study chose to focus heavily on the DPS model as it emphasizes storytelling as a primary means of self-disclosure.

**Johari Window.** The Johari Window, created and defined by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (1970), is “a model of self-disclosure that reflects the movement of information about yourself from Blind and Unknown quadrants to Hidden and Open ones” (Beebe, Beebe, Redmond & Geerinck, 2008, p. 57). This model is also referred to as an “interpersonal mapping device” used to help understand disclosure within interpersonal encounters (MacLennan, 2008,
The movement of this information exemplifies the act of self-disclosure (Trenholm, Jensen, & Hambly, 2010). The model itself is fashioned into a window divided into four quadrants, which are numbered from one to four starting from the top left, moving to the top right, then to the bottom left and finally to the bottom right.

The model consists of four quadrants labeled as open (one), blind (two), hidden (three) and unknown (four). The open quadrant consists of information, which are known to oneself and others. An example is one’s name or occupation. The blind quadrant is made up of information, which is known to others but not known to oneself. For example, an individual who bites their lip when there are frustrated is categorized in this quadrant. This is a characteristic that the individual may do unconsciously, though it is noticeable to an observer. The hidden quadrant is composed of information that is known to one’s self but not known to others. For example, personal fears or embarrassing stories are pieces of information in which individuals do not openly share without the establishment of trust. The act of sharing this type of information is self-disclosure. Finally, the unknown quadrant carries information that is unknown to the individual as well as unknown to others. When encountering new experiences, many individuals learn things about themselves in which they are not aware of. However, the discovery of personal information encourages self-awareness, which in turn allows one to reach self-actualization (Trenholm, Jensen, & Hambly, 2010).

**Social Penetration Model.** Developed by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor, the Social Penetration Model is a process of self-disclosure in which the level of disclosure is observed through the “depth and breadth” of the information revealed by an individual (Altman & Taylor, 1973). The model is represented by a circle divided into slices, each of which depicts a facet of oneself. The “concentric” circles of the model characterize the depth of openness whereby more
personal or intimate information is found towards the centre of the circle. Taylor, Wheeler and Altman (1973) state that “…reciprocal disclosures…are normally orderly, systematic, and occur gradually, reflecting a general caution as regards openness” (p. 39). Over time, as trust develops, openness to self-disclosure changes in depth and breadth, where an individual feels safe to disclose more information from other aspects of their lives, along with more intimate details. It is also reported that those with a predisposition to empathy and a “willingness to risk rejection” display a higher level of self-disclosure (Taylor, Wheeler & Altman, 1973, p. 46).

**Dramatic Psychological Storytelling (DPS).** Allen and Krebs (2007) adequately define and explain the theoretical framework of Dramatic Psychological Storytelling while capitalizing on the theory’s primary focus on finding meaning. “DPS combines drama (expression through seven different Expressive Art types), with psychology (experiences of the individual and the collective), and storytelling (the content, the expression of an experience or situation)” (p. 3). Although DPS is composed of multiple methods of expression, the focus of this research shall remain on the collaboration of narrative and visual art. “Storytelling is an effective form of communication for the construction of a collective sense and combined with drama can become a powerful visual connection for deep meaning” (Allen, 2003, p. 162). DPS is a seven step model designed to take an individual on a search for meaning through their personal stories. Each stage offers an opportunity for a novice counsellor to discover a new aspect of their personal story and reveal another piece of their counsellor identity. The DPS steps shall be described and exemplified in relation to counsellor identity development. The steps are: expressive arts, element, craft, story map, meaning, and Touchstone Story.

*Step one: expressive arts.* Initially, a novice counsellor explores the various forms of expressive arts to select a format that best represents and displays the essence of the counsellor’s
story. The seven categories of expressive arts include: *narrative, film, theatre, music, visual art, dance* and *kinaesthetics, ritual* and *epic*. For the purpose of this study, the methods under investigation are the combination of narrative (oral storytelling) and visual art (collage). It is stated that “the combination of dialogue with drawing promoted an in-depth exploration of the client-counsellor relationship”, illustrating that although both methods are individually successful, combined they are powerful in a clinical setting (Shepard & Guenette, 2010, p. 297).

Questions to be answered during this stage are, “what is the type of story? Is there a foundation that reflects the structure of the story?” (Allen & Krebs, 2007, p. 33).

*Step two: element.* The second stage entails three elements, each of which determine “…the context of the application, in particular whether it is an individual, couple or group, and to a more limited extent the issue determines which psychotheatric method will be employed” (Neal, 2008, p. 214). The three forms of psychotheatrics are *imaginial, playwright* and *montage*. For simplicity sakes, this study addressed imaginal psychotheatrics as it is most applicable to the object of the research. “Imaginal psychotheatrics is designed for people who hold an important characteristic in common” (Allen & Krebs, 2007 p. 119). The common characteristic in this case, is the lived experience of being a novice counsellor. Although this method requires individuals to be in a group setting for this process, for the purposes of this study, each individual novice counsellor shall embark on “…a process that utilizes artistic creativity to illuminate… [the] issues” faced by novice counsellors (Allen & Krebs, 2007 p. 119). The use of artistic representation exemplifies that “image[s] enable people to reconnect with memories and experiences” (Simons & Hicks, 2006, p. 81).

*Step three: craft.* The third stage works in correlation with the type of psychotheatrics used where the craft that identifies the action necessary for the selected method of
psychotheatrics. The crafts are: rhetorical reality analysis (imaginal), expressive writing (playwright), and method of physical action (montage) (Allen & Krebs, 2007). Rhetorical Reality Analysis allows a novice counsellor to utilize any of the seven expressive arts to share a story related to the identified characteristic, the lived experience of a novice counsellor. In the original format of this step, group members are invited to add on a piece of their experience that is related to the subject of the initial story (Allen & Krebs, 2007). A novice counsellor is encouraged to describe additional and related experiences to their original story so as to reinforce the feelings and emotional values of the initial telling of the story.

**Step four: story map.** This stage requires the novice counsellor to create a story map to specifically identify the components of the story as well as the pertinent details.

**Step five: dramatic enactment.** In an attempt to promote meaning, Dramatic Enactment is the use of any of the expressive arts to briefly represent the significant aspects of the novice counsellor’s story. “The key is to promote Meaning; reason is critical, moving beyond the pure emotional feelings of Aristotelian catharsis. Instead, a dynamic is created to make choices…From the outside looking in, one can alter viewpoint s and take different sides in the issue being explored” (Allen & Krebs, 2007, p. 38).

**Step six: meaning.** Extracting meaning from the act of storytelling is a means of personal conceptualization. In stepping back to view the larger picture, a novice counsellor is compelled to consider answering questions like: “What is the Meaning of all this? What values and attitudes were expressed? What is known and what has been discovered? What is disturbing and what is precious? Where will this lead in the future? What will happen? In which areas can I/we make choices?” (Allen & Krebs, 2007 p. 39).
Step seven: Touchstone Story. A Touchstone Story is the moment of reflection for the novice counsellor. “The Touchstone Story is the nugget that the [novice counsellor] as creator takes from the process, a succinct reminder of what has transpired that can resurrect the power of the experience in the future” (Allen & Krebs, 2007, p. 40). Naturally, storytelling “…is the way we remember; it is vital to our existence. Stories offer the images we need for a sense of personal calling, a reason for living” (Allen & Krebs, 2007, p. 16). To a novice counsellor, the search for a calling to the counselling field is what they search for. They are waiting for a reason to believe that they have a place in the world of therapy.

Counsellor Professional Identity and Development

This section intends to describe the aspects of professional learning and development as experienced by novice counsellors. First, it discusses the interpersonal and intrapersonal characteristics and skills that develop during the process of professional learning. Secondly, it provides the core frameworks behind the various models of learning. Each model identified is described so as to identify the model best associated with counsellor identity development. Finally, this section explores the Recycling Identity Formation Process, a model used to describe the process of identity development. Overall, the aim is to provide a theoretical framework that illustrates the learning process most appropriate for strong identity development and to identify the characteristics and skills which develop as a result.

Interpersonal dimensions. To the novice counsellor, development and change occurs in multiple dimensions where over time, the effects are readily observable. From an interpersonal standpoint, novice counsellors bring with them their personalities, innate skills and abilities. At the same time, they develop new assets to enhance their clinical practice. It is proven that stronger interpersonal relationships with clients have a direct correlation to client outcomes.
It is not uncommon for trained or training therapists to struggle in the implementation of interpersonal dynamics in their practices (Anderson, Ogles & Weis, 1999). A major area of change for a developing therapist is the ability to create and maintain an authentic therapeutic relationship through which interpersonal skill development is imperative. Although there are various interpersonal skills that are essential to counsellor development, there are key skills a counsellor, at any stage of development, cannot function without. Such interpersonal dimensions include: development of empathy, perception, and communication (verbal and nonverbal) (Anderson, Ogles & Weis, 1999). In turn, these interpersonal dimensions are applicable to the identity of developing therapists.

Multiple pieces of literature identify the use of empathy as an indispensable, interpersonal skill every counsellor (novice or experienced) should master (Anderson, Ogles & Weis, 1999; Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth, 1982; Crews, et al., 2005, Lyons & Hazler, 2002). Interpersonal skills are important to the novice counsellor because it is the basis on which a therapeutic relationship is based. Empathy is described as a central concept in therapy and is defined as the ability of knowing and understanding another’s experiences or worldview. For the novice counsellor, the development of empathy facilitates: a higher level of cognitive functioning, personal awareness of development, a stronger sense of self.

Counsellors who exercise empathy effectively are proven to function at a higher level of cognitive development (Lyons & Hazler, 2002). Lyons and Hazler (2002), survey an equal number of first and second year Master’s level counselling students, to measure their level of cognition in correlation with their levels of empathy. The study concludes there is statistically significant evidence that developing counsellors at a higher level of conditioning did in fact
produce higher scores of empathic understanding. Although statistical evidence provides a strong representation of development, personal acknowledgement of development also proves to be secure evidence.

Novice counsellors must be able to recognise their own development. In a study conducted in the United Kingdom, a sample of 143 counsellors-in-training are asked to complete a questionnaire devised to explore their experience of counsellor training. The study reports regarding the development of skills, “respondents commented that the training enhanced their listening and interpersonal skills and helped them to be more empathic and understanding professionally and in their close personal relationships” (King, 2007, p. 398). Counsellors-in-training and novice therapists, themselves, are able to identify and acknowledge the growth of their empathic understanding during their development.

Development of empathy occurs in individual training on a professional and personal level. Using personal therapy as a training technique in counsellor development is a growing trend, whereby counsellors-in-training partake in personal therapy as a means to develop a strong sense of self. It is argued in the literature, therapists who undergo personal therapy in their training are able to more effectively empathize with their clientele as a result of having a better understanding of themselves. Macaskill (1988) states, “a related reason for undergoing personal therapy is that by this means the therapist will himself experience the process and be able to empathise better with the patient and to understand how the patient may experience psychotherapy” (p. 219).

Immediacy, also referred to as the “here–and–now” in a therapeutic alliance, is “a counselor’s understanding and communicating of what is going on between the counselor and
client within the helping relationship, particularly the client’s feeling, impressions, and expectations” (Turock, 1980, p. 168). Turock (1980) identifies immediacy as an “interpersonal transaction” between a counsellor and their clients, whereby the focus of the communication is strictly on what the client is expressing in the moment as opposed to bigger picture of why they are there. Immediacy is a complex skill that is acquired through training and practice during development (Longbill, Hardy & Delworth, 1982). However, it is a skill composed of even more basic micro skills. In the process of development, one of the basic beginner skills, which is often emphasized at the start of training, is active listening. It is stated that counsellors-in-training enter their programs with an interest in “conducting counseling correctly”, which often takes their attention away from listening to the client (Levitt, 2008). Levitt (2008) reports counsellors-in-training that are able to successfully master active listening skills are more effective with immediacy in their therapeutic alliances.

A case study by Kasper, Hill, and Kivlighan (2008) set out to measure the occurrence of client immediacy in response to counsellor immediacy. When the counsellor uses immediacy, the clients responded 79% of the time. When immediacy is not used, the client responses are at only 20%. Collingwood and Renz (1969) report that “…immediacy is highly related to the core facilitative conditions of empathy, respect, genuineness, concreteness, and patient depth of self-exploration” (p. 224). Therefore, counsellors who encourage a therapeutic alliance, which promotes these core conditions, are also able to offer high levels of immediacy. Collingwood and Renz (1969) went on to state that higher functioning therapists are more likely to address immediacy with their clients than lower functioning therapists. Novice counsellors or developing counsellors, as previously stated, report that with time they do experience higher levels of
empathy, need for genuineness and self-exploration after completing their training, which allows them to be in the moment and present with their clients (King, 2007).

**Intrapersonal dimensions.** In counsellor development, the professional self is created and refined, but the personal self also endures change and development. A significant change in a novice counsellor’s personal self is development of self-awareness. The literature explores the effect of self-awareness on therapeutic performance. Self-awareness is a critical asset to novice counsellor identity and is a reported personal change that is noticed and identified by novice counsellors. King (2007) conducts a study dedicated to revealing what novice and developing counsellors feel they have gained from their training. The study quotes a participant, who states that their training provided them with an awareness and understanding of their personal difficulties, prejudices, strengths, and weakness (King, 2007). Self-awareness is a feature of personal change in which an individual’s increased sense of self allows for a better understanding of their role as a counsellor, their state of mind when working with clients, and a better perception of how their clients affect them personally (Zorga, 2003).

Grzegorek and Kagan (1974) present a study in which they assess the need for novice counsellors to be aware of their own affective reactions to their clients. The study is conducted using two approaches to training: affective and cognitive. In the “affective” approach, the training that takes place focuses on the novice counsellors feelings, while the “cognitive” approach highlights the client’s feelings and the novice counsellor’s technique. The study concludes those who “learn about and ‘own up to’ their own feelings” construct and maintain a stronger therapeutic alliance with their clients.

The importance of self-awareness is strongly perceived in the literature, however there is growing interest in the means by which self-awareness is attained. Self-reflective practice is that
method. Reflecting is a “process of examining personal experience” (Wong-Wylie, 2007, p. 59). Personal experiences include strengths, areas of growth, behaviours, thoughts which all directly affect one’s professional performance (Osterman, 1990). On the other hand, self-reflective practice is the “mindful consideration of one’s actions, specifically, one’s professional actions” (Osterman, 1990, p. 134). Self-reflective practices are a significant component in identity development of counsellors for three fundamental reasons: its natural occurrence in the process of learning, its growing popularity in counsellor education, and the various and creative means in which self-reflection can occur.

The practice of reflection ultimately aims to make one aware of their own knowledge, which they can use to change and enhance their professional self. Although Upton (1999) argues there is no distinct evidence that self-reflective practices facilitate counsellor development, it is research like Kolb (1984) which insist on its necessity for effective learning. Kolb (1984) insists that learning is a cyclical process, based on experience, reflection, conceptualization and experimentation. Reflection is a natural occurrence in the process of learning in early childhood. According to Piaget’s stages of development, children as young as two engage in “reflective orientation”, where the individual learns to internalize their perceived actions (Kolb, 1984, p. 24). Zorga (2002) states “in the reflection process we are able to contemplate the experiences from a distance. We can thus meet with the background of our action and the forces which...led us to behavioral patterns we might not like, nor are they professionally adequate” (p. 265). Self-reflection is a way of learning how to understand one’s self, so as to be aware of what fuels their intentions and actions.

For the developing counsellor, self-reflective practices are beginning to shape and modify counsellor education (Osterman, 1990; Wong-Wylie, 2007; Magnuson & Norem, 2002). The
collective opinion within counsellor development literature concludes that reflective practices facilitate change and action (Osterman, 1990; Wong-Wylie, 2007; Magnuson & Norem, 2002). Change is inevitably a universal occurrence in that it is observed on a global level, as self-reflective practices become more widely used. Osterman (1990) implores educators across the board to consider more effective approaches to training successful and competent counsellors. She states, “the interest in reflective practice signifies some important and dramatic changes in our ideas about school leadership and school reform” (p. 134). She goes on to promote the importance of self-reflective practices in organizational effectiveness as well as the professional effectiveness of developing counsellors.

Wong-Wylie (2007) researches the overall impression self-reflective practices on five doctoral counselling graduates. The study measures the student’s perception on the effectiveness of self-reflection during therapeutic critical incidents. It is concluded of twenty-four critical incidents, sixteen facilitated the use of self-reflection. This research is an example of the weight a first person perspective has on the importance of self-reflection. Wong-Wylie (2007) quotes a participant as they describe their self-reflective experience, “[instructor] got me to think about what are all the different things in my life that have really helped to nurture, focus, and develop my hope. It was the whole process of reflecting” (p. 69). A student’s first person account speaks to their needs and observed changes in development which in turn supports the move to modify counsellor development programming.

Self-reflective practices are an up and coming means of development and actively incorporate many creative techniques to aid in the growth of self-awareness and identity (Wald, Norman & Walker, 2010; Shepard & Guenette, 2010). It is this stage where change transitions into action respectively. As developing counsellors take what they have learned, they begin to
apply it to their on-going development as therapists. Various methods of self-reflective practice include note-taking, journal writing, reflective narratives (storytelling), and visual arts (photography, collaging) (Upton & Asch, 1999; Wald, Norman & Walker, 2010). Written reflections are said to encourage the gathering of facts, leaving little room for subjective interpretation (Wald, Norman & Walker, 2010).

Stickel and Trimmer (1994) make use of journal reflections for novice school counsellors, to help acknowledge their concerns and reconstruct their path to success. The researchers of this study also participated in the exercise as they are also novice counsellors. The reflection questions include: describing: what do I do, informing: what does this mean, confronting: how did I come to be like this, reconstructing: how might I do things differently? Upon reflecting on their experiences, the study concludes that, “being reflective means starting with reality and solving problems by reasserting the importance of learning” (Stickel & Trimmer, 1994, p. 8). Narrative methods of self-reflection “acknowledges the centrality of the researcher’s experiences: her or his own tellings and retellings” (Wong-Wylie, 2006, p.264). Stories are a reflection of self and individuals often use them as tool to seek and produce meaning from their personal experiences (Wong-Wylie, 2006).

Visual arts promote reflection and the development of self-awareness. Photography is a projection of one’s experiences and gives one the opportunity to “see” their experiences before them (Wald, Norman & Walker, 2010). The use of visual arts is a growing phenomenon that is not limited to photography. Shepard and Guenette (2010) visit the use collaging and report that they “offer nonverbal ways to express feeling that are difficult to put into words” and they can “provide a safe emotional outlet that allows individuals to gain personal insights” (p. 296). In training environments, creative and artistic means of self-reflection is more commonly observed.
and used in current times. Seymour (1995) speaks to the use of collaging in her classroom and states, “when humans deeply learn something, in contract to storing information temporarily in short-term memory, it involves the construction of meaning” (p.19). The researcher relates her methodology to the process of learning and provides evidence that self-reflective practices promote awareness, development of meaning and understanding of self.

Self-care is vital to the development of a novice counsellor’s personal and professional identity as it is a necessary technique used to combat the obstacles that come with being a novice therapist. As previously identified in the literature, common obstacles encountered by novice counsellors include fear of incompetence, increase in anxiety, and lack of experience, to name a few. Novice counsellors report that when aware of their needs both professionally and personally, they “began to take better care on their own health and well being by looking for the balance between ‘what they can and what they wish to do’ and by learning how to take for themselves what they are in need of” (Zorga, 2002, p. 271). Self-care techniques, as reported by counsellors, vary among individuals and can take the forms of: relaxation, exercise, social activities, creative activities, spiritual activities, or reading (Savic-Jabrow, 2010). Therefore, self-care is imperative to examine and uncover the facets of self-awareness and its importance for the identity development and functioning of the novice counsellor.

Self-care to a counsellor, novice or experienced, is a skill learned and exercised throughout one’s career. Richards, Campenni and Muse-Burke (2010) address the lack of a solid definition for self-care by exploring the concept in four dimensions: physical, psychological, spiritual, and support. Self-care as a physical dimension speaks to “bodily movement that results in the utilization of energy, which can occur through exercise, sports, household activities, and other daily functioning” (Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010, p. 248). Exercise is proven
to have positive effects on mental health issues including depression, anxiety, and cognitive functioning and is said to function in the way of an anti-depressant (Callaghan, 2004). Carroll, Gilroy and Murra (2008) conduct a study whereby 76% of female mental health workers report depression as a result of work related stressors. It is stated there are “numerous signs and symptoms of distress in mental health practitioners: irritability, depression, boredom, withdrawal, loss of energy, feelings of failure, somatic complaints, lowered self-esteem, and decreased exercise” (p. 134). Ultimately, it is a means of physical well-being which in turn can release the stress that prevents novice counsellors from performing to the best of their ability.

The psychological dimension of self-care entails a therapist seeking personal counselling as a means of personal and professional growth, development of empathy, and an opportunity to increase their self-awareness (Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010). First, personal therapy for the developing therapist is a method of empathy where counsellors can experience, understand, and address the notions of being the client and the emotions that come with the territory (Macaskill, 1988). Second, Richards et al. (2010) state, “personal counseling supports personal development by allowing one both to understand how to care for oneself and to develop an awareness of one's boundaries and limitations” (p. 249). Personal therapy is identified and frequently used as an intrapersonal tool to expanding one’s self-awareness. Carroll, Gilroy and Murra’s (2008) survey concludes that 85% of responding female therapists access personal therapy as a means of self-care. As well, female therapists seek personal therapy more often than males in the clinical field, as they are suspected of having multiple care giving roles in addition to their careers. It can be concluded that even a counsellor needs a counsellor every now and then.
Self-care as a spiritual dimension is loosely defined as “a sense of the purpose and meaning of life and the connection one makes with this understanding” (Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010, p. 249). Hamilton and Jackson (1998) conduct a study to reveal the essence of spirituality in the holistic well-being of helping professionals. Through the use of focus groups, the study sampled 12 female helping professionals and extracted three major themes in the discussion of spirituality: self-awareness, interconnectedness, and a relationship to a higher power. Of the three themes, the analysis of the study is focused on the significance of self-awareness in connecting to one’s personal and professional selves. The research states, “spiritual development is frequently an element of "helping," and thus helping professionals who have a role in aiding others with developmental issues need to become aware of their own emerging process of spirituality before they can facilitate this process in others” (p. 269).

Mindfulness is a vehicle for spiritual development frequently in use in present times. Christopher and Maris (2010) define mindfulness as “a type of awareness that entails being fully conscious of present-moment experience and attending to thoughts, emotions and sensations as they arise without judgement and with equanimity” (p. 115). The practice of mindfulness, specifically mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), was implemented by Jon Kabat-Zin in 1990 and provides a direct link between self-care and self-awareness (Christopher & Maris, 2010; Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010; Christopher, Christopher, Dunnagan & Schure, 2006). Mindfulness techniques do appear in counsellor training in the form of yoga, meditation, or body scan, however it is not a major component that is emphasized in counsellor training programs (Christopher, Dunnagan & Schure, 2006; Christopher & Maris, 2010; Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010). Rather, it is “typically presented to the student as an individual responsibility and is not taught directly through the curricula” (Christopher, Dunnagan & Schure,
2006, p. 496). According to MBSR, each of its techniques is focused on the specific needs of the individual. For example, those who struggle with physical anxiety use meditation while those who experience cognitive distress use yoga. The body scan is an exercise dedicated to attaining awareness rather than relaxation. Overall, the literature reveals those who practice mindfulness techniques have experienced renewed confidence, reduced anxiety, personal/professional growth, increased awareness, increased patience and reduced stress (Christopher, Dunnagan & Schure, 2006; Christopher & Maris, 2010).

The final dimension of self-care is support. Support is identified as networks of professional and personal relationships. Professional support includes “consultation and supervision from peers, colleagues, and supervisors and the continuation of professional education” whereas personal support includes, “relationships with spouse, companion, friends, and other family members” (Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010, p. 250). The necessity of support lies in the need for balance, stress reduction, burnout prevention, prevention of exhaustion (physical and emotional), and maintenance of self-confidence, to name a few (Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010; Casas, Furlong & Castillo, 1980; Savic-Jabrow, 2010). In the study by Casas, Furlong and Castillo (1980), counsellors are asked to rank nine sources of help in order of their personal preference. Counsellor’s report their first four choices consisted of: self, professional friend, family member, and work associate (p. 369). Overall, there is a significant balance between both professional and personal relationships in their help network. Savic-Jabrow’s (2010) study also concludes that 97% of their 30 participants (private practice practitioners) had a substantial need for support from both professional and personal relationships.
The many means of self-care are proven to be a necessity to both the professional and personal development of novice counsellors. It is a process of learning and becoming aware of the needs of the professional and personal self. This awareness will help novice counsellors continue to conduct effective therapeutic work. As a result, novice counsellors with a better sense of self create and maintain a stronger counsellor identity.

The ongoing professional development and learning process, in counsellor development, is described as a cyclical progression due to the reoccurring issues within the profession (Sawatzky, Jevne & Clark, 1994). The counselling profession is ever-changing with new techniques for development, issues in counselling and models of practice. Likewise, counsellors, both novice and experienced, are forever learning. Skovolt, Grier, and Hanson (2001) state what is “important to creating and sustaining an active, individually designed development method is openness to new information and feedback about one’s performance” (p. 173). The researchers go on to suggest, on-going retrieval of new information prolongs development and expands a knowledge base for on-going practice (Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson, 2001). Life-long learning and knowledge seeking aids in dealing with deficiencies by allowing one to acknowledge what they do not know and find the information they need to fill the gaps in their development (Sawatzky, Jevne & Clark, 1994). The role of a novice counsellor is stressful, but acquiring knowledge does indeed serve as a strengthening tool. Following graduation, the developing counsellor is “freed from the rigid learning processes used uniformly in formal schooling” and “is increasingly able to choose how to continue the learning process” (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992, p. 510).

A significant component of learning is transition. Transition is movement from one stage to another. Being a novice counsellor in and of itself is a transition in that the novice counsellor no longer identifies as a student and has the autonomy for individuation. The novice counsellor
has an increased sense of confidence, which is still accompanied by anxiety (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). However, the novice counsellor is also not yet considered an experienced professional in the counselling field. Levels of knowledge and learning style assist developing counsellors in their transition from a counsellor-in-training to a novice counsellor, and soon after to an experienced professional in the field (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Novice counsellors differ cognitively (Etringer, Hillerbrand & Claiborn, 1995), and emotionally (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Etringer, Hillerbrand and Claiborn (1995) insist that novice counsellors remain systematic in their cognitive processes and still require time to process incoming knowledge. Experienced counsellors, however, are quick and efficient, both of which are skills attained through years of experience and development. Emotionally, novice counsellors experience anxiety around their levels of competence, fear of the unknown, and loss of guidance (loss of supervision). Experienced counsellors are confident, self-accepting and have a sense of authenticity in their practice of counselling (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). “Counseling is a field that lacks a systematic induction process, thus entry-level professionals are assumed to be fully formed when they arrive for the first real day on the job” (Stickel & Trimmer, 1994).

Realistically, it is not an ideal expectation for novice counsellors to be fully ready following graduation, as they are still learning who they are as a counsellor. Their identity is defined by their transition, limit of experience, and their personal and professional change process.

Models of learning. The Lewinian model of action research and laboratory training.

Kolb (1984) highlights Kurt Lewin, an American Social Psychologist, as being one of three founders behind learning theory and the significance of experience. Lewin, along with his colleagues, created a two week training program in which participants engage in group discussion and decision making, which revealed that “learning is best facilitated in an
environment where there is dialectic tension and conflict between immediate, concrete experience and analytic detachment” (p. 9). In other words, the exchange of experiences leads to the challenge and stimulation of ideas and the development of learning (Kolb, 1984). The basis of learning is, according to Lewin (1890-1947), a means of betterment. Learning is a positive change in one’s understanding and ability. Lewin identifies the visible changes which occur during learning. These changes occur in: cognitive structure (knowledge), motivation (likes/dislikes), group belongingness (growing into a culture) (Lewin, 1997).

First, Lewin (1997) describes changes cognitive structure as a process of differentiation, in which a human being gradually learns by taking an experience and breaking it down into smaller components, to understand the differences and ultimately, change their perception. Lewin (1997) provides the example of an individual moving to a new city. From the time of arrival the individual must determine how to get themselves from the station to their lodgings. Although the individual is aware of the general direction in which he must travel, they are unsure of the appropriate path to take. Through a sequence of experiences, the individual is able to establish a route by asking for information to determine their route. Upon arrival at the lodgings, the individual must then come to learn about their most immediate surroundings and gradually learn how to distinguish other parts of the new city. This example highlights the process of differentiation, which leads to changes in cognition resulting in human learning.

Second, motivation, also referred to learning democracy, is an individual’s responsibility to do things for them self as well as “establish certain likes and dislikes, that is, certain valences, values and ideologies” (Lewin, 1997, p. 223). Learning rarely takes place by force, but rather is based on the individual’s needs and interests. A prime example of motivation is the idea of reward and punishment, defined as the association of a positive or negative response to specific
choices or actions. Naturally, the human condition “likes” rewards and “dislikes” punishment. However, likes and dislikes serve more as governing forces in shaping and changing behavior and learning. Lewin (1997) notes that changes in needs and personal meaning can also be an influence on ones likes and dislikes.

Third, Lewin (1997) discusses the human need to belong and the affect it has on personal change and learning. Social influences and personal needs often meet, challenge and eventually affect one another. In the process of learning, this association of experiences presents the battle of social and personal needs, which once determined can affect the changes seen in an individual’s behavior. For example, Lewin (1997) introduces an experiment conducted by Lippitt and White (1984), where the work produced by ten year old children is measured against the physical presence of an authority figure. The studied concluded there is a significant decrease in the work completed by the ten year olds when the authority figure left their presence. However, when the children are offered a choice in the type of work they like to complete and came to an agreement among their peers, the work completed is unaffected by the presence of an authority figure. The social influence of the authority figure and the ten year olds prove the direct effect of social needs on motivation and in turn, learning.

Dewey’s model of learning. Kolb (1984) introduces John Dewey’s model of learning as a process that “transforms the impulses, feelings and desires of concrete experience into high-order purposeful action” (p. 22). Dewey’s model is portrayed as a “dialectic process” in which impulse eventually motivates an action which, in the end, is completed with a purpose. Dewey (1938), himself states that to the learning individual, a purpose is what drives the action of learning. A purpose is specifically defined as “an end-view. That is, it involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting upon impulse” (p. 67). To create a purpose, one’s
impulse must trigger each of the following: the observation of surrounding conditions, knowledge of outcomes under similar conditions, and a judgement of observations and previous knowledge and how they relate to one another. The resulting purpose transforms into an informed action that is fueled by the initial impulse.

**Piaget's model of learning and cognitive development.** Jean Piaget (1896-1980) focused his model of learning and development, like John Dewey and Kurt Lewin, on the interactions of an individual with their environment, which he believed to occur in a cyclical process (Clark, 1995). Kolb (1984) states, “the dimensions of experience and concept, reflection, and action form the basic continua for the development of adult thought” (p. 23). Piaget used the term *assimilation* to emphasize how the “individual takes in a part of reality” and perceives its meaning to them (Clark, 1995, p. 66). Piaget accomplishes the process of assimilation in four stages.

Piaget’s model of development is composed of four states ranging from birth to adolescence. The stages are labeled as follows: sensory motor, representational, concrete operations, and formal operations. In the first stage, which includes an age range from newborns to two years, learning occurs by means of sensory functions such as touch, whereby a stimulus elicits a physical response. The second stage of Piaget’s model, which includes children between the ages of two to six, become more reflective and develops the ability to interpret and relate to their environment. In the third stage of development, children age’s seven to eleven, independence becomes observed and inductive thinking progresses. The final stage of development, which includes adolescence between the ages of twelve and fifteen years of age, is characterized by the development of reflective and abstract thinking, as well as deductive reasoning. Although these stages of development are defined by the early years, Kolb (1984)
insists that Piaget’s stages of development encompass the overall process of learning, which is applicable to adult learning as well.

For the purpose of this study, Piaget’s model of development appears to acknowledge the necessary areas of development that are applicable to the development of novice counsellors. The importance of developing reflective processes is a critical assent in counsellor learning and development. Furthermore, there is a significant need for abstract thinking and deductive reasoning within a clinical environment, which have proven to be crucial skills for novice counsellors. Each stage of Piaget’s model of learning accurately reflects the novice counsellor developmental process.

**Model of identity development: Recycling Identity Formation Process.** Counsellor identity is comprised of multiple aspects including personal and professional experiences, growth edges, theoretical approaches, comfort zones, values, and ethics (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). The list of influencing factors is vast and ever-growing. A professional identity is built upon “attitudes about responsibilities, ethical standards, membership within the profession, and learning styles that support higher levels of cognitive functioning” (Auxier, Huges, & Kline, 2003, p. 25). The development of counsellor identity is a progressive but gradual process that occurs over time and includes multiple stages. Auxier, Hughes and Kline (2003) produce and demonstrate the Recycling Identity Formation Process (RIFP) in a study designed to develop a theory involving both conceptual and experiential learning.

The RIFP’s overall process involves developing counsellors who have, “identified, clarified and re-clarified their self-concepts as counsellors through their learning experiences as counsellors-in-training” (p. 35). Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) reflect on the importance of interpersonal experiences, which occur on a professional (clients, supervisors, professors,
therapists) and personal level (children, parents, spouse, and friends). That said both are equally crucial to the development of counsellors (p. 509). Kolb (1984), through exploration of learning models composed by Dewey, Lewin and Piaget, concluded that experience cannot happen without learning. The RIFP process is a tool used to stem away from staged models and have a more gradual and concentrated focus on experiential development. There is also a strong emphasis on counsellor identity as a process that evolves from a state of dependence to individuation, “an internal structuring of one’s own boundaries, a differentiation from others, and a disengagement from those upon who one has depended intensely” (Loganbill, Hardy & Delworth, 1982, p. 15).

The process of individuation expands over a 20-30 year time period and ignites during the post-training phase of development (graduation and licensing) (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Individuation includes the optimistic view of completion, however that component is accompanied by “professional loneliness” (p. 508). Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) quote a female participant who in her retrospective reflection states, “having less guidance from professors and supervisors was scary” (p. 508).

Developing counsellors begin from engaging in the traditional academic experience to applying learned theories to their experiential learning, to finally being externally evaluated (by supervisors, professors, peers and clients) (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Auxier, Hughes and Kline’s (2003) study is conducted by doctoral students who designed the RIFP process with three components. These components are based on their professional experience of development and the data collected from their participants and include: conceptual learning, experiential learning, and external evaluation.
The first component entails the academic training of novice counsellors. Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) identify the various thoughts, feelings and developmental changes to be observed: enthusiasm, insecurity, urgency to learn, searching for conceptual ideas/techniques, and rigid sense of practice. These experiences are specifically linked to the academic phase of development however they do change as development progresses.

The second component incorporated experiential learning, “learning that occurred during participants’ involvement in counselling techniques classes, practicums, internships, and small group experiences” (Auxier, Hughes & Kline’s, 2003). A developing counsellor is in a progressive, upward transition in their sense of professionalism, confidence, and mastery of skills, while still in a place of uncertainty, imitation. As well, they are still strongly influenced by trainers (professors and supervisors) (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). This moment of development is where theory is applied to reality, which is not only an intimidating step in development, but an empowering one as well. In relation to identity, a counsellor comes into their own after having the chance to experiment using the techniques of others and find their personal best fit. Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1982) state, “just as a child will imitate his or her father, a supervisee will find him or herself imitating his or her supervisor or implementing a theory without real ownership. Through the natural process, the supervisee integrates, assimilates and comes into her or her own unique theoretical identity” (p. 23).

Finally, the counsellor undergoes external evaluation whereby feedback is sought for purposes of validation and confirmation of their therapeutic skills (Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003). Evaluation also includes emotions such as fear of incompetence, anxiety, and self-doubt (Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982). However, it also feeds into the development of self-awareness and professional reflection. Developing counsellors who reflect at a professional and
personal level are “giving time and energy to processing, alone, and with others, significant experiences” (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992, p. 509). Osterman (1990) takes Kolb’s (1984) concept of learning a step further in arguing that learning is not without reflection and with reflection an awareness of self develops to strengthen counsellor identity.

The cyclic nature of this process allows novice counsellors to revisit all areas of development and reapply learned theories to new experiences and/or incorporate new theories with past experiences. Counsellors-in-training may find themselves comparing their external evaluations to their own self perceptions, which at times may reveal inconsistencies between the two (Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003). These inconsistencies create anxiety and concerns that in turn, affect the confidence, competence, and identity development of novice counsellors.

Similar to Auxier et al (2003) RIFP, Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) expand the process of counsellor development into the years of development following graduation from a master’s program. Due to fact that many counsellors-in-training, upon completing their practicum, may join the workforce prior to graduation from their programs, it is crucial to acknowledge the after effects of training on novice counsellors. Ronnestad et al. (2003) state, “there is a continual process of reformulating, a process of ‘shedding and adding’ at the conceptual and behavioural level” (p. 17). Much like the third period of individuation, a novice counsellor undergoes the process of fashioning their identity even after completing the academic component of their development. Novice counsellors begin to determine their identity, “by contrasting present functioning and work role definition with earlier conceptions, the counsellor/therapist can now sense the changes that have taken place” (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003, p. 19). The phases of development extend well past the academic phase and on into the establishment of professional
careers. For that reason, the focus of this thesis is to emphasize the development of identity of the novice counsellor (post-graduate).

Gaps in Current Counsellor Development Research

This section is a review of the strengths and gaps uncovered in the literature, as a means to demonstrate how this study worked to address the gaps in the research. First, this section explores the models of counsellor development. Second, this section addresses the reoccurrence of group supervision as opposed to individual supervision. Third, the need for methodology in qualitative research is identified. Fourth, the significance and importance of a post-graduate perspective is also identified. Fifth, the lack of consistent terminology within counsellor development research is acknowledged. Finally, the need to synthesize concrete theoretical frameworks is explored.

Models of counsellor development. Being an area where the research ranges from traditional, theoretical frameworks to postmodern, conventional theories the literature suggests the transition in research paths is not as smooth as researchers had hoped it to be. Upon reviewing the literature, it appears there are multiple theories used to explain the development of counsellors. For the purpose of this study, Recycling Identity Formation Process (RIFP) is used, though the literature search revealed several theories regarding counsellor development. However, each model is not fully supported by additional research. The occurrence of various models prevents consistency resulting in a lack of validation of the research. For example, Skovholt and Ronnestad (1995) construct the Stages in Helper Development Model consisting of eight stages of development pertaining to the professional development of individuals in the helper profession (Skovholt & Rivers, 2004). Comstock, Duffey, and St. George (2003) introduce A Relational Model of Student Development, which explores development of
counsellors through the “need for gender inclusion in counsellor preparatory programs and the multifaceted challenges this presents to students and educators” (p. 62). The various directions counselling development has taken demands more consistency and the development of a stable and usable model of development. Furthermore, the post-modern approach of implementing the use of creative arts in counsellor development remains a fairly new angle in counsellor development and therefore, requires further exploration as well as grounding in an established theoretical framework; this study works to accomplish this.

**Group supervision.** The literature reveals the reoccurring application of creative arts in group settings within counsellor development. It is suggested on several accounts that “group supervision using expressive art materials can provide opportunities to share and discuss metaphorical representations with peers and supervisors and potentially open up new avenues for discussion” (Shepard & Guenette, 2010). However, this study focuses on the individual reflection process for the purpose of remaining applicable to novice counsellors after graduation. This study emphasizes the significant effect of using creative arts post-graduation or nearing the end of student training, to develop a necessary tool that can be used universally, by all novice counsellors.

**Methodology.** In qualitative research, it is important to acknowledge the theoretical framework from which a study is rooted because it informs the readers of the researcher’s assumptions and inquiries regarding their study. Without a clear statement of the approach to research, it is difficult to determine and understand the core purpose of the study, in addition to the meaning behind the answers that are uncovered. Creswell (2007) states in deciding the theoretical approach to research:
inquirers make certain assumption. These philosophical assumptions consist of a stance toward the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology). (p. 16)

The literature reviewed for this study rarely identifies the specific theoretical approach to qualitative research used in the studies. Although the researchers, on many accounts, did allude to the use of phenomenological approaches, it is hardly acknowledged or clarified in the literature. Take, for example, Shepard et al.’s (2010) study of counsellor education. The researchers address the inquiries they wish to solve through the study; however, they fail to state the specific methodology used in conducting the study. Another example is Wong-Wylie’s (2006) study of storytelling through the use of writing, metaphors and photography, where the methodology used is not clearly identified. As the reader, one must assume the researchers are in search of common struggles in counsellor development that are shared among developing counsellors. A third example within the literature is Upton and Asch (1999) study regarding the need for counsellor reflection. Each of these studies addresses their process of data collection and identifies their population samples within their method sections; however, not one of these three studies establish themselves within a qualitative research approach. A clear statement of methodology acts to orientate the research so that readers can understand the philosophical grounding from which the research stems. Without a theoretical framework, the structure of the study is fragile and it is difficult to perceive the ultimate goal of the research.

**Post-graduate perspective.** Majority of the literature on counsellor development concentrates on tracking the counsellor-in-training experience. Although it is beneficial to explore the counsellor training experience as it occurs, the identity of counsellors-in-training
differs significantly from the identity of a novice counsellor. Gruman and Nelson (2008) state that, “inevitable gaps exist between the graduate school-based training and internship practice, and the personal and professional demands of the ‘real world’ (p. 309), which confirms the differences in their lived experiences. This qualitative study intends to acknowledge the importance of retrospective reflection for novice counsellors. Counselling skills are constantly in need of revisiting and refinement, especially given the ever changing nature of counselling theories and research (as depicted in this study). A retrospective outlook of a counsellor’s personal and professional development is essential to their identity.

**Definitions.** Definitions imbedded in research offer clarity in terms of one’s perception of the overall message of the study. Consistency in definitions among the literature is crucial in that it establishes a standard of knowledge that is understood on a whole and allows each piece of research to reinforce one another. Following the literature search for this study, it is noted that there exist multiple definitions for common terms, all of which consisted of degrees of difference. A standardized definition for these terms is not available. This inconsistency introduced many challenges in understanding the material, which in turn made it difficult for the researcher to establish standard definitions for this study. Consistency in the literature appears to be a reoccurring concern within counsellor development research.

**Theory.** The variety of theoretical frameworks within the literature are established pieces of research, however it appears that researchers in the field assume these historical theories and models still meet the current needs of novice counsellors. Kennedy and Black (2010) state that methods of training used in the 1970’s due have relevance to current practices. However it is clear the times have changed and with these changes, many of these theories appear to be “dated” and “inappropriate” (p. 422).
The gap between historical and postmodern theories is significant and in need of re-evaluation and updating, according to current developments in the field, as well as the social changes of the postmodern era. The best way to measure the social changes experienced by developing counsellors is to ask the source. In a study by McAuliffe (2002), 12 counselling students are interviewed to determine what changes they experienced during their development as counsellors. The three categories of change that are revealed include: increased reflexivity, increased autonomy and valuing dialogue. Increased reflexivity is identified as, “an inclination to consider multiple perspectives within oneself before acting” where the novice counsellor became more reflective of themselves as they progressed in their training (p. 207). Increased autonomy is defined as, “the capacity to distinguish one’s own from others’ perspectives and to act accordingly, as opposed to unquestioningly adhering to social expectations and norm” (p. 208). Finally, valuing dialogue is described as “interest in others’ perspectives, actively listening to others, and the ability to engage in verbal interaction with others so that a synthesis of perspectives is possible” (p. 208). Each of these identified factors exemplifies the changing needs of counsellors over time and illustrates the need for changes in the programs that train them. This study aims to fill this gap by re-evaluating the historical theories to determine if they are applicable to modern counsellors. In this case these theories require modification and need to be explored with new tools and approaches (i.e. Collaging and storytelling).

**Contribution to Counsellor Development Research Literature**

The literature around counsellor development is either deeply situated in the identity development of counsellors-in-training or in what makes an experienced counsellor. There is little research on the experiences and identity development of the novice counsellor, who no longer identifies as a student, but is not yet considered to be an experienced professional. It is
crucial to acknowledge and identify the distinct differences that accompany the process of being a novice counsellor. Etringer, Hillerbrand and Claiborn (1995) identify, “counselor development as a change process that can be understood by a focus on what differentiates counseling experts and counseling novices” (p. 4). This study aims to bridge the gaps in the literature regarding the experiences of novice counsellors, recognizing what it means to be a novice counsellor. The aim is to explore the meaning of being a novice counsellor, the attributes that differentiate them from students and/or the experienced, and the strengths and areas of growth they encounter and they continue to be helpers in the field. Stickel and Trimme (1994) state there is a profound need “to develop strategies to help with the transition from preparation programs to practice” (p. 2). It is impossible to grow from novice to expert without the many steps between each stage, yet there is little information on what the process is like for those in the point of their career. Graduating from a counselling graduate program opens up multiple questions and emotions, which very quickly results in an identity crisis where a novice counsellor is left wondering, what is next.

Summary

This chapter is primarily dedicated to highlighting the founding pillars of counsellor identity development and to acknowledge the areas that require further exploration. Exploring the historical and current views of counsellor identity development is necessary in illustrating the areas of the research that have remained consistent over time, the areas that have evolved, and the areas that are in need of updates, specifically the use of the creative arts in identity development. Methods of self-reflection within counsellor identity development are ever changing, thus requiring solid literature to validate the new and inventive techniques, such as the use of creativity in identity development. Through techniques such as collaging, phototherapy and storytelling (DPS), counsellor identity development can be explored more fully, unearthing
the significance of physical, emotional, and self-revealing aspects of disclosure for the purpose of professional and personal counsellor development. In addition, through exposing the areas of the literature that require further examination, this study aimed to cover all aspects of counsellor identity development making it a focus that is well supported.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter states, describes and defines the pursuit of this study through the context of the qualitative, phenomenological research approach. First this chapter explores the background and definition of phenomenological methodology. Secondly, the principles of phenomenology are explored. Third, this chapter identifies and explains the two types of phenomenology: Hermeneutic and Transcendental phenomenology. Fourth, this section addresses the methodology of phenomenology.

Overview of phenomenology. Background and definition. Phenomenological methodology is a qualitative, theoretical approach which is evolving into a profound philosophical stance utilized vastly within psychological research. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) a German mathematician began the wake of phenomenology which has been adopted and expanded upon by various individuals in the social sciences including: Moustakas (1994), Giorgi (1985), and Polkinghorne (1989) (Creswell, 2007). From a philosophical standpoint, Husserl (1931) states, “Natural knowledge begins with experience...and remains within experience” (p. 51). Experience in and of itself is a phenomena however to study, understand, or perceive experience is a science worth researching.

Meaning. Creswell states, a phenomenological study is defined as the search for “the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 57). This process strived to produce a single essence that is composed of several experiences with a common event or occurrence. In phenomenology, meaning is “an emphasis on how their subjects make sense out of their world, what things mean to them” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 260). “Meaning” is assigned to objects by humans who interact and relate to them in various contexts. To establish meaning is to give an item purpose, significance and influence which is based on
one’s interpretation of the noun (person, place or thing) in question. Human beings are responsible for constructing their own reality and their role within it. As a result they attribute meanings to aspects of their lives to create a reason for being. Meanings can change based on time, influences and people and changes occur regularly (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Starks and Trinidad (2007) indicate it is the role of the phenomenological researcher “to capture the meaning of common features, or essences, of an experience or event. The truth of the event...is subjective and knowable only through embodied perception” (p. 1374). Meanings are an entity believed to be a “mental or conceptual” thing (Sokolowski, 2000 p. 98). It exists as a connecting element between the human mind and physical reality that relates the two to each other. From the philosophical perspective, meanings are conjured as a result of reflection and questioning where the human mind searches for a truth that confirms initial beliefs or proves otherwise (Sokolowski, 2000).

Meanings are communicated amongst individuals most commonly through words. Sokolowski (2000) states, “words are flavored by the style with which we have disclosed the things in question, so they indicate to the reader or listener something about ourselves as well” (p. 158). There is an aspect of identity which accompanies meanings which allows the researcher to capture the raw essence of a human experience. Like words, pictures and symbols depict an item, however the meaning extracted from them is dependent upon a experiences of the individual. The qualitative question is what makes those experiences meaningful, for that is the phenomenon to be discovered.

**Philosophical principles of phenomenology.** Phenomenology is an approach strongly rooted in philosophy therefore, it is essential to reiterate the philosophical principles of phenomenology. Within phenomenology, there exist four principles which are followed to
ensure a study using a phenomenological approach is fully accustomed to the procedure of this methodology.

Firstly, the phenomenological approach is inclusive of both empirical and comprehensive perspectives where by “irreal” objects such as ideas, meanings, dreams, memories or images fall within the spectrum of “real objects” (Giorgi, 2009). Traditionally, phenomenological research relies strictly on an empirical perspective. Data collected from objects that are “real that is in space, time” and are “…regulated by causality” (Giorgi, 2009, p. 67). Creswell (2007) refers to this approach as Scientism. However, in modern research, human experience encompasses several other aspects of existence that contribute significant data that is pertinent to qualitative research.

Creswell (2007) states phenomenology is an approach where presuppositions regarding what is considered to be real are to be withheld until rooted in evidence. This technique is identified as *Epoche*, which will be later discussed. Conversely, Giorgi (2009) who acknowledges Husserl’s (1970, 1983) theoretical basis, contests that modern practice of phenomenology “has not yet been systematically articulated” and therefore is not rooted in certainty. This quandary acknowledges the evolution of phenomenology as well as the need for an objective approach to research.

The third principle of phenomenological research states, phenomenology “considers everything to be studied from the viewpoint of consciousness (which can exist at many levels) or subjectivity (which also has levels)” (Giorgi, 2009, p. 68). Creswell (2007) labels this principle as the “*intentionality of consciousness*” where consciousness is utilized as an instrument to perceive and interpret the subjects and/or objects encountered by an individual. Naturally the human consciousness uses its awareness of what it knows to interpret the event or experiences it
encounters. For example, human consciousness is composed of experiences which has been perceived, interpreted and imbedded into the psyche and act as a filter to new experiences. When new experiences arrive, they pass through the filter of what is already known and the human consciousness takes what is familiar and interprets the new information and adapts it to what they already know.

Finally, “entities do not have to have physical existence to be given in experience, and phenomenology wants to be as open as possible to any object that is experimentally given” (Giorgi, 2009, P. 68). As stated previously an object that is considered “real” is not limited to having a physical presence. However the object in question must be embedded with the meaning of an experience (Creswell, 2007). Researchers who have used phenomenology include items such as dreams, memories or thoughts which do not physically exist however do carry a specific meaning to an individual.

Hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology. Otherwise known as the “Father of Phenomenology”, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was a renowned philosopher working towards establishing a scientifically based phenomenological method that incorporated intentionality and essences to study the lived experience, also known as the life world (Laverty, 2004). Although the overall philosophical structure of phenomenology is understood, it is evident that a distinction between the two different approaches of phenomenology is rarely recognized.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology was established by two prominent historical figures, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (Laverty, 2003). The name Hermeneutic alone originates from Hermes, the Greek god believed to communicate messages amongst gods and humans. However, all forms of communication are prone to the occurrence of misunderstandings. As a result, Hermeneutics was created as a means of interpretation with the
intention to “understand an author as well or even better than he or she understands himself or herself” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 179).

Each philosopher defines hermeneutic phenomenology with different words, however both philosophers concluded that a human being cannot be removed from the essence of the research, rather it is through the “historicality of background” and the tool of “interpretation” that one may “uncover the life world or human experience as it is lived” (Laverty, 2003, p. 11). Heidgger and Gadamer define terms such as pre-understanding, historicality, interpretation, language, and horizon, all of which are used to describe the human consciousness as a filter necessary to decipher the lived experience. Laverty (2003) states according to Heidegger (1927/1962) “every encounter involves an interpretation influenced by an individual’s background or historicality” (p. 9). Hermeneutic phenomenology is composed of both descriptive and interpretive methodology. Van Manen (1990) states the descriptive method allows lived experienced to “speak for themselves” while the interpretive method implies that lived experiences are “meaningfully experienced” and therefore are always subject to interpretation (p. 180).

Husserl’s “pure phenomenology”, also referred to as “Transcendental Phenomenology”, is the revelation of a phenomenon of human experience (Laverty, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). The word “phenomenon” extends from the Greek term *phaenesthai* which means “to flare up, to show itself, to appear” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Trascendental is derived from the Latin root *transcendere* which means to “climb over or go beyond” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 58). Although Husserl often criticized the concept of psychology presented as a science, he believed that a phenomenon can only be adequately examined through human consciousness. Husserl alleged the human consciousness to be “a co-constituted dialogue between person and
the world” (Laverty, 2003, p. 5). Establishing the phenomena in question is the primary step in partaking in phenomenological research which is followed by the process of Intentionality.

An intention, according to Aristotelian philosophy is the “orientation of the mind to its object” (Moustakas, 1994, p.28). Intentionality is an action performed by the human consciousness where regardless of whether the object of the intention is real or imaginary (Ex: Dreams), the directedness of consciousness to the object defines the intention behind the research. The self and the world are required in establishing the intentionality of an object. (Moustakas, 1994). Unlike the common use of the word “intention”, phenomenology defines it in the context of the “conscious relationships we have to an object” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 8). Intentionality consists of two components that explain that which is perceived by human consciousness: Noema and Noesis. In phenomenology, the noema, also referred to as the “perceived meaning”, is a phenomenon that is experienced by human consciousness (Moustakas, 1994, p. 30). Essentially, the noema is the conscious orientation towards the object of intention (Van Manen, 1990; Sokolowski, 2000). The noesis, on the other hand, is considered the “‘perfect self-evidence’” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 30). The noesis is the act of intention towards the object of intention (Van Manen, 1990). Together noema and noesis are terms which characterize phenomenology and provide a foundation for its significance in qualitative research.

Intuition is a fundamental component of phenomenology. It is defined as the innate human ability to produce “‘solid and true judgements concerning everything that presents itself’” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 32). In this form of phenomenology, it is not only strategic but it is vital for a phenomenological researcher to trust his/her pure intuition for the purpose of producing data that has not been influenced or tampered with by the researcher’s experiences. This practice is referred to by Husserl as an intuitive-reflective process. The ability to fully apply oneself to the
understanding and perception of a single experience is necessary for extracting the true essence of an experiential phenomenon. Husserl states, “intuition ‘is the presence to consciousness of an essence, with all that that implies by way of necessity and universal validity’” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). Sokolowski (2000) presents the example of friends intending to watch a live baseball game. The anticipation and “day dreaming” of the game prior to attending are referred to as an empty intention, “an intention that targets something that is not there” (p. 33). The experience of watching the live game is the intuition where the viewer lives through the game in a particular time and space. In this example, the experience of the game is committed to memory with an essence and meaning attached to it.

From the methodological standpoint Husserl, like Heidgger and Gadamer, use historical movements and philosophies however they are used for the purpose of identifying their position in relation to their research. Furthermore, the researcher uses them to bracket themselves out of the interpretation of the results. This procedure is crucial to transcendental phenomenological methodology because it allows the researcher to extract the true essence of the experience in question.

**Rationale for using Phenomenological theory**

A phenomenological philosophical approach is the most appropriate methodology for the focus of this study because its philosophy is dedicated to unveiling the meaning of experience. In addition, this approach solicits the collection of data from multiple participants as opposed to the focus on the study of one individual. A phenomenon is defined by the common experience of many as it is an occurrence specific to only those to live that experience (the novice counsellor experience).
Overview of Phenomenological Methodology

In Husserl’s approach to phenomenology, he integrated philosophy with scientific, psychological criteria as a means to strengthen the practice of phenomenological research (Giorgi, 1931). Giorgi (1931) broke down the overall process into two phases, each of which emphasizes the philosophical grounding within the scientific, psychological method of qualitative research. The phases include: Data collection and Data Analysis. It is within these phases that Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy is applied.

Sensitizing Framework

This researcher chose to use the Transcendental Phenomenological approach as depicted by Moustakas (1994) rather than Husserl’s approach. This decision is primarily a result of the heavy significance and emphasis of the Epoche process in Moustakas (1994) approach. The bracketing process is essential to this study as the researcher too shares the experience of being a novice counsellor, so as a means to remain neutral, the researcher’s experience and connection to the study should be known and understood.

Data Collection

According to Husserl’s philosophy, a Transcendental Phenomenological Attitude is the first and foremost step a researcher must take prior to collecting data. To assume this attitude is “to regard everything from the perspective of consciousness, that is to look at all objects from the perspective of how they are experienced regardless of whether or not they actually are the way they are being experienced” (Giorgi, 1931, p. 87-8). In other words, as a researcher, one must be attune to the human perception of a particular object or event as opposed to the reality of whether or not the object or event exists. The phenomenon is present in a human’s conscious perception of an experience and thus must be received accordingly. For example, regarding the meaning
behind a dream, a phenomenological researcher is not interested in the fact that the dream is not real, but rather the significance of the dream when it is experienced.

Upon accepting this attitude, the *Essence of the Phenomenon* is extracted through *Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction* which, by definition is the act of separating the perceived experience from the positing of characteristics within the experience (Giorgi, 1931). Giorgi (1931) states, “the withholding of the positing leaves us with presences, not existences” (p. 91). Reduction is derived from the Latin root *re-ducere*, which means to withhold or hold back (Sokolowski, 2000). Moustakas (1994) explains reduction as the ability to describe and illustrate the “relationship between phenomenon and self” as experienced by human consciousness (p. 90). The importance of revisiting the textural characteristics of experience is stressed because it is these very characteristics that produce a qualitative image that describes the phenomenon in question. Moustakas (1994) further declares that the process of transcendental phenomenological reduction is composed of pre-reflection, reflection and reduction, each of which lends itself to “listening with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening ourselves to a phenomenon as phenomena” (p. 92).

Husserl (1931) believes that experiences are not only understood by what is understood, but also through what is remembered, relived and what is observed from various angles (Moustakas, 1994). Breaking down the experience into various angles and reflecting on each angle allows one to capture the full essence of the phenomenon. Reflection is a key component within reduction because its repetitive process enables thoroughness and reveals truth. Ultimately the researcher must be able to perceive a participant’s experience of an item as he/she perceives their own experience.
According to Giorgi’s (1931) sequence of events, following the initial level of reduction, *bracketing* (also known as *Epoche*) the researcher’s personal history and knowledge of the experience in question must occur as a means to factor out potential biases that may influence the perception of incoming data. Moustakas (1994) states, “this way of perceiving life calls for looking, noticing, becoming aware, without imposing our prejudgement on what we see, think, imagine, or feel” (p. 86). The term *epoche* originated from Greek skeptics who state individuals need to exercise restraint with their judgements of person, place, experience or thing. The epoche is simply a means of remaining neutral in our understanding of the lived experience. Personal experiences do fuel research, however they also present a potential for bias, in turn affecting the natural experience (Sokolowski, 2000). Unlike Giorgi’s take on the phenomenological approach, Moustakas (1994) argues that the process of epoche should remain the initial step however he does not defend his rationale behind the chosen sequence of events. It seems plausible for a researcher to bracket their past experiences before taking in the perceived experiences of others. This allows the researcher to construct a mental filter that accepts the data that is collected without the influence of personal bias. On these grounds, this research is conducted in the order of bracketing followed by reduction.

*Imaginative variation* is the third stage in the data collection phase. During the segment of imaginative variation, the concept of reality or that which truly exists is no longer considered. Rather, the imagination heavily relies upon intuition to determine and deliver the essence of the experience. Moustakas (1994) states, “in Imaginative Variation the world disappears, existence no longer is central, anything whatever becomes possible” (p. 98). Imaginative variation is the ability to strip an item to the bare components that make it what it is. If any of the components are changed or removed, the item is no longer the same item. In phenomenology, the imagination
breaks down an experience into the elements that are unique to it, allowing a researcher to identify its essence (Sokolowski, 2000). According to Moustakas (1994), imaginative variation is composed of four steps:

1. The revelation of potential structural meanings behind the textural meanings
2. Identifying the founding themes or contexts that make the phenomenon
3. Reflect on the universal structures of the phenomenon that provoke feelings and/or thoughts such as: time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others
4. Search for examples of the phenomenon in question that display the structural and textural meanings, founding themes and contexts, and universal structures and allows for the formation of a phenomenological description.

To find the Essence is the final step of the data collection phase. The word essence stems from both Greek and Latin foundation. The Greek term ousia means “the essential nature of a thing”. The Latin term essential meaning “to be” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 177). Finding the essence of a phenomenon is defined as the “intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas 1994, p. 100). To understand the essence of a phenomenon is to perceive the elements of the phenomenon as it is experienced through the human conscious.

**Data Analysis**

Moustakas (1994) lists and described two methods of data analysis relevant to Husserl’s approach to phenomenological research however for the purpose of this research project, the Van Kaam (1959, 1966) and Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (1971, 1973, and 1975) method is used. The significant difference between the two methods of data analysis is Van Kaam (1959, 1966)
approach is completely dependent on utilizing the data from participants. However Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen’s (1971, 1973, 1975) approach takes the experience of the researcher and situates their participants data within the themes derived from the researcher’s description of the phenomenon. To keep with the consistency of the epoche process of bracketing out the experience of the researcher, this study used the Van Kaam (1959, 1966) method.

Upon transcribing each participant’s interview, each transcription is subject to a seven-step procedure where by the end product produced descriptions of meanings and essences of the phenomenal experience in question. According to Moustakas (1994) the procedure includes:

1. Listing and Preliminary Grouping
2. Reduction and Elimination
3. Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents
4. Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application: Validation
5. Construction of Individual Textural Descriptions
6. Construction of Individual Structural Descriptions
7. Construction of Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions (p. 120-1).

During the first step of the data analyses, each participant’s transcribed interview is examined for descriptive examples that pertain to the phenomenal experience in question. This process is referred to as **Horizontalization**. Each interview is read through three times, each time significant moments which arise for each participant are highlighted and charted.

Secondly, as a means to identify the **Invariant Constituents**, each example is examined to determine if they “contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding” and is able to be abstracted and labelled (Moustakas, 1994, p.
Examples (also referred to as *Horizons*) that did not fit these conditions are removed while the remaining examples are labelled as the invariant constituents.

In the third stage, the invariant constituents are categorized into various themes that become the *Core Themes* of the research (Moustakas, 1994). The themes extracted from the collected data identified the characteristics of the phenomenon. Reflecting on the presented themes allows the researcher to draw the distinction between the thing that is experienced and the meaning behind it (Van Manen, 1990). As a means to validate the core themes, step four subjected each constituent and overlaying theme to three questions that compare them to the participants’ full interview (Moustakas, 1994). The questions include: “(1) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? (2) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? (3) If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the co-researcher’s experience and should be deleted” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). This process validates the constituents and themes by determining if they corresponded to the overall description of the phenomenal experience.

Following the validation process, step five collected quoted examples from each of the participants’ transcriptions to create an *Individual Textural Description* of their experience. Van Manen (1990) refers to this process as the “art of writing and rewriting” where by the researcher initiates the “*bringing to speech* of something” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32). These descriptions illustrate the visual feel of each individual’s experience in relation to the overall phenomenon.

In step six, the researcher creates *Individual Structural Description* which is the creation of a skeleton comprised of the components that make the experience relevant to the phenomenon, for each participant. This step ensures there is evidence in the data that supports the developing themes of the study. This step allows the researcher to include thick and detailed descriptions of the lived experience.
Finally, step seven allows the researcher to collaborate both the textural and structural descriptions to form the *Meaning* and *Essence* behind the phenomenon. This overall description provides a thorough synopsis of the participants experience in relation to the phenomenon in question. This step is completed for each participant and includes all forms of data collected.

Unlike, Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen’s method of data analysis, Van Kaam’s (1959, 1966) approach did not call for a description of the researcher’s personal experience of the phenomenon as a point of reference. However, a description of the researcher’s experience remained necessary for the purpose of epoche (bracketing). For the purpose of this study, this researcher chose to complete the bracketing process to acknowledge the relationship between study and their own experiences. This researcher, being a novice counsellor herself, chose to recognize their personal and professional experiences as a means to remove themselves from the analysis of data. An awareness and acknowledgement of self serves to prevent bias and assumptions and allows this researcher to view the data with a clear conscious.

**Summary**

This chapter provides a theoretical framework and grounding for the philosophical approach of the study, the collection and analysis of data, and the rationale for the methodology used. The importance of this grounding is to provide an understanding of the phenomenological research approach and its overall objective. It is so imperative for the study to explore the phenomenon of novice counsellor experiences and identify the meaning and essence of their identity.

**Research Design**

The following section provides a descriptive account of the data collection and analysis component of the study. The researcher details her approach to data analysis and relates it to the
theoretical frameworks of phenomenological research. Items discussed include sampling, inclusion, criteria and recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis process, methodological rigor and ethical considerations.

**Sampling, inclusion, criteria and recruitment procedures.** The following section describes the criteria which are used for sample selection, size, participant access and recruitment. This section firstly explores the criteria for sample selection. Second, it addresses sample size. Third, this section describes the process of participant access. Finally, sample recruitment is addressed.

**Criteria for sample selection.** In phenomenological research, participants are typically recruited from either a single site or from multiple sites so long as each participant has experienced the phenomenon in question and possess the ability to express the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007; Savard, 2007). It is stated that the more diverse the group of participants the more challenging it is to horizontalize the data. In addition it is difficult to discover the common variant constituents, overall themes and essences of the data. In phenomenological, qualitative research, it is suggested that criterion sampling is essential to ensuring the quality of data. Criterion sampling is a means of selecting participants based on the criteria established by the researcher, in particular to this study, those who share a common experience. A narrow range of participants aims to accurately retrieve the richness of each participant’s phenomenal experience. The sample selection for this study targeted adults with a completed graduate degree in a counselling or helping-related field including and have worked in the field for approximately 1 to 5 years.

Participants selected for this study met the following criteria:

1. Able to speak and write in English
2. Completed a graduate degree in a counselling or helping-related field

3. 1 – 5 years out of their professional training program and working in career related position.

4. Willing to explore and articulate their lived experiences as a novice counsellor

**Sample size.** Essentially in qualitative research, size is reflective of the type of data qualitative research aims to extract. Creswell (2007) states, “the intent in qualitative research is not to generalize the information, but to elucidate the particular, the specific” (p. 126). In qualitative research, sample size is kept to as low as 5 participants and raised to as high as 25 participants (Creswell, 2007). Starks and Trinidad (2007) suggest each participant alone has the potential to produce an overwhelming number of invariant constituents. However quantity of data is not equivalent to quality in this form of research, therefore large samples of participants did not necessarily produce rich data. Starks and Trinidad (2007) state, that sample size is dependent “on the goals and purpose of the study” (p. 1374). In maintaining these guidelines, this study collected 5 participants to allow for quality assurance.

**Participant access.** Participants are recruited from: The University of Manitoba’s Faculty of Education - Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology (Master of Education in Guidance and Counselling) and the University of Winnipeg’s Aurora Family Therapy Centre (Master of Marriage and Family Therapy). These institutes and programs are selected for the reason that both programs offer both academic and practical learning environments. Unfortunately, neither the University of Manitoba program nor the University of Winnipeg degree program is currently accredited under the Canadian Counsellor and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA). However the University of Manitoba Degree program has the capacity to help facilitate students to attain certification through the CCPA. Participants
ranged from the ages of 27 to 40 and are approximately between 1 to 5 years in the counselling field. Three of the five participants are school counsellors while the remaining two are private therapists. Each participant recruited required a signed a letter of consent to participate in this study (Creswell 2007, Savard 2007).

**Sample recruitment.** Participants are recruited through means of advertising (I.e. Posters, E-mail) and verbal recruitment. Participants are asked to engage in two meetings. In the first meeting, participants are presented with the letter of consent and are provided with the opportunity to inquire further about the study and receive feedback regarding their comments, questions or potential concerns about the study. Participants who decided to continue in the study signed the consent form and are provided with the materials necessary for data collection (i.e. journal with reflection questions and disposable camera) and are asked by the researcher to schedule the second meeting at a date, time and place that is convenient for them. In the second meeting, participants engaged in the data collection process which included a collaging activity, storytelling activity and a semi-structured interview. Over all the second meeting took approximately 3 hours (45 minutes for collaging, 60 minutes for storytelling, and 60-75 minutes for the semi-structured interview) to complete and took place in a confidential counselling room at the researcher’s workplace.

**Data collection.** Modern qualitative research promotes the use of “new and creative data collection methods that will encourage readers and editors to examine their studies” (Creswell 2007, p. 129). Specifically in phenomenological research, a heavy emphasis is placed on in-depth interviews and discussion however, the literature stresses the use of external information to reinforce the phenomenon explored. For this reason, each participant is encouraged to complete a phototherapy and collage activity, storytelling session, semi-structured interview, personal
journal, and have an optional debrief session. Throughout the data collection process, this researcher collected and maintained field notes. The following section includes descriptions of the various data collection methods used: phototherapy, collaging, storytelling, interviewing, debrief (optional) and field notes.

**Phototherapy and collages.** Upon the signing of their consent forms, participants are provided with a disposable camera and are given a minimum of one week’s time to take their own photos to be used for their collage. In the photography component of the exercise, participants are instructed to take photos of any item that symbolically represented their experience of what it means to be a counsellor. Participants are not permitted to take pictures of other individuals for confidentiality purposes. Participants are also provided with a journal with reflective questions to aid them in recording their thoughts and feelings pertaining to the photos they took. Photos taken by the novice counsellor are reflective of what they believed to be significant components of their experiences. A novice counsellor can be influenced by multiple factors including his or her “goals, hopes, desired outcomes”, personal circumstances, fears, and relationships (Weiser, 1999, p. 23). As a result, this activity provided the opportunity to capture those moments through photography as opposed to limiting their artistic expression to magazine and newspaper cut-outs. Participants are asked to consider the following questions for each picture that is taken and reflect, in writing, in their journal prior to the second meeting:

1. Why did I choose to take this picture?
2. What do the items in the photograph represent/symbolize?
3. What stage of my development does this picture represent?
4. What were my feelings/emotions behind this experience? How do I feel about it now?
5. If I could give this picture a title, what would it be? Explain.
Participants are provided with disposable cameras which included pre-paid developing of their photos and an additional compact disc for participants to keep their photos from the activity.

During the second meeting between the participant and researcher, participants are asked to “create a collage that ‘represents [their] interpretation of where you are right now as a counsellor-in-training’” (Shepard & Guenette, 2010, p. 298). Participants are given approximately 30 to 40 minutes to create a poster size collage using the photographs they took, various types of magazines and newspapers, scissors and glue. Each participant is requested to sign a letter of consent allowing the researcher to photograph their collages and input them into the data analysis section of the research paper. Following the completion of the collaging process, participants are encouraged to consider the following prior to starting the storytelling component:

1. How did you find this exercise?
2. What feelings/emotions arose from completing this exercise?
3. Would you find it helpful to complete this exercise within your training as a counsellor? What was specifically helpful?
4. Is there anything you would like to add or change about your collage? Explain.
5. If you could give your collage a title, what would it be? Explain

**Storytelling.** Following the creation of the collage, participants are encouraged to actively partake in a storytelling component of data collection. Storytelling, in counselling is an act of disclosure where a client reveals his or her story through the narration of their personal experiences. Therefore participants are asked to share their personal stories as depicted through their collage. At this point in time, participants are offered the opportunity to refer back to their journals to elicit their thoughts and feelings during their photo taking experience and are asked to
fill out Allen and Krebs (2007) story map to help them articulate their story to the researcher. This component of the data collection (story map) is a reflective and therapeutic process that is optional for the participant to share with the researcher in written form. However, the majority of the participants engaged in the process and provided their written remarks to the researcher as additional data.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** As stated earlier, interviewing, in phenomenological research is a key technique in attaining information. It is the researcher’s role, through the interviewing process to help the participant fully describe and express their lived experience of the phenomenon and essentially tell their story (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). For the purpose of this research, the researcher conducted a semi-structured, open-ended interview which, with the consent of the participant, is audio-taped and transcribed by a transcriptionist (Creswell, 2007). Each participant is provided with a copy of the confidentiality agreement signed by the hired by the transcriptionist. Probing questions are used to “encourage the participant to elaborate on the details to achieve clarity and to stay close to the lived experience” (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375). All participants received a copy of their transcribed interviews and are asked to review and offer additional information should they deem it necessary. None of the five participants replied with any additions, comments or concerns regarding their transcribed interviews. Participants are informed and assured of their right to confidentiality and are provided with and asked to sign a consent form explaining the protocol in detail at the start of the data collection. The debrief component of the interview is optional for the participant however none of the five participants found it necessary to debrief following the interview.

**Debrief.** Due to the potential sensitive nature of the material discussed during both the storytelling and interview process, participants are offered the optional opportunity to debrief the
session with the researcher. This stage of data collection also served as an opportunity for member checking for the purpose of maintaining rigor (Guba, 1981). Member checking allows this researcher to summarize and validate the data offered by participants. Information shared during the debrief process is subject to taping and transcription upon the consent of the participants. The debrief process is composed of prompting, open-ended questions that are used to help facilitate participants to reflect on the emotional concepts visited throughout the interview process.

**Field Notes.** Field notes are used as third tool in data collection due to the importance of expression and understanding of an individual’s lived experience in phenomenological research. Field notes are used, “to record the setting, nonverbal cues from participants, any interruptions that occurred, and any thoughts that the researcher had” (Savard, 2007). In encouraging each novice counsellor to feel safe to disclose, it is crucial that all aspects of disclosure are noted because of the importance of fully extracting the essence of the phenomenon. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) suggest that field notes initially take the form of “jottings” which eventually serve as triggers or reminders necessary for a researcher’s self-reflective process. The sole purpose of field notes is for the researcher to produce “a detailed, coherent description of what he or she observed” (p. 1). Starks and Trinidad (2007) state, “observation of how participants live in their environment through time and space provides clues about how they might embody meaning” (p. 1375). From a novice counsellor’s perspective, the importance of listening is essential however the importance of watching is indispensable. To understand behaviour, one must watch for the context from which it emerges from. Field notes serve as a testament to what is observed. Items considered include: physical observations (behavioural patterns and nonverbal
cues), emotional triggers, sources of information, context of experiences, significant and influential factors, interruptions, and personal thoughts.

**Data analysis. Listing and preliminary grouping.** This researcher identified the various experiences which led each participant to becoming a counsellor, personal and/or professional goals, and personal definitions of novice counsellor identity, to name a few areas of significance. These items are listed for each participant and reviewed for commonalities.

**Clustering, thematizing the invariant constituents, reduction and elimination.** The process of identifying the invariant constituents for this study included a horizontalization of reoccurring experiences which appeared to be common amongst all or majority of the participants. In the chart format, each of the constituents is assigned a color and is colored in every participant’s interview each time the experience expressed itself (Refer to Table 4.2). For example, prior volunteer, work or personal experience was coded in green, participant’s initial uncertainty regarding their career paths is coded in yellow, participant overall happiness with career choice is coded in pink, and so on and so forth. A total of twelve invariant constituents are identified by the researcher: past volunteer, work, personal experience, initial uncertainty around career choice, current job experience, happiness with career choice, characteristic of a good day, characteristics of a difficult day, characteristics of a typical day, counsellor-in-training vs. novice counsellor, professional opportunities, definition of novice counsellor identity, novice counsellor identity vs. personal identity, and effect on personal on personal relationships. Items which did not fit or appear appropriate to the reoccurring themes are placed aside to be discussed as differences discovered throughout the analysis.

**Validation of the invariant constituents and themes by application.** This researcher re-examined each of the constituents and began to categorize them into larger themes (the core
themes). The core themes extracted from the data analysis included: Anchoring, Uncertainty, Knowledge Seeking, and Self-awareness. Below is a chart illustrating the groupings of the invariant constituents within each of the core themes.

Table 3.1: Core themes and subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anchoring</th>
<th>Uncertainty</th>
<th>Knowledge Seeking</th>
<th>Self-awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Personal experience</td>
<td>• Career path</td>
<td>• Professional development</td>
<td>• Acceptance of mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work experience</td>
<td>• Unpredictable days</td>
<td>• Comfort with learning</td>
<td>• Understanding relationships and roles within them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fear of incompetence</td>
<td>• “Still learning”</td>
<td>• Happiness with career choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Authenticity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Construction of individual textural descriptions. This researcher combed through each interview and selected quotes to describe and provide evidence for each subtheme. A quote is selected from each of the participants per subtheme identified which amounted to a total of sixty quotes.

 Construction of individual structural descriptions. Of the sixty quotes collected, this researcher carefully selected one quote from each of the five participants, under each subtheme that best represented the essence of the overall theme of transition.

 Construction of individual textural-structural descriptions. The overall essence and meaning of the novice counsellor experience phenomena concluded with, transition. The researcher reflected on each of the core themes (Anchoring, Uncertainty, Knowledge seeking, Self-awareness). Participants often discussed and reflected on the element of change and idea of moving from being a student to a novice counsellor to an expert counsellor. This researcher related the concept of change to professional development where change is on-going. However
the identity of being a novice counsellor placed participants in a process of development that is neither a counsellor-in-training nor an expert. In turn this researcher reflected on a word or phrase which effectively described an “in between” process. This researcher also considered an essence in which each of the core themes corresponded. When in transition, an anchor or a sense of grounding helped many of the participants cope with the stress of change. Transition also elicits uncertainty where participants described feeling doubtful of their skills or unsure of further development. Transition involves on-going learning to move forward in development progress to becoming an experienced counsellor. Finally, self-awareness or a perception of one’s identity as a novice counsellor helped participants to accept where they are in the development process and further their experience as therapists.

**Methodological rigor.** Rigor in phenomenological, qualitative research is essential in validating a researchers’ ability to not only conduct research, but to accurately answer their research question. Creswell (2007) lists his suggestions for appropriately maintaining rigor in a qualitative research study.

Initially Creswell (2007) states that the initial step to ensuring rigor in a study is to collect multiple forms of data as a means to broaden the pool of information as well as strengthen the researcher’s conclusions. The reoccurrence of information from varying sources authenticates the occurrence of a phenomenon. For this reason, this study used three differing methods of data collection: Phototherapy and Collaging, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. In the light of creative measures, photo-therapy, collaging and storytelling are selected as more inventive methods of data collection.

Creswell (2007) states, the “use of a recognized approach to research enhances the rigor and sophistication of the research design” (p. 45). This study is deeply established in Husserl’s
phenomenological approach to research in that it had acknowledged and followed the specific guidelines of Husserl’s pure phenomenology. This researcher orientated their experience in relation to the research using the epoche process. In doing so this study acknowledges the use of Husserl’s approach to phenomenological research.

To ensure rigor in this study, is to ensure validity within data analysis which Creswell (2007) suggests, “validates the accuracy of the account using one or more of the procedures ...such as member checking, triangulating sources of data or using peer or external auditors of the accounts” (p. 46). Member checking is a process whereby the data collected is analyzed, interpreted and is revisited with the participants so as to confirm the validity of the researcher’s work (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). For the purpose of this study, participants are provided with a transcribed copy of their interview and are invited to add or delete information from the as needed. Of the five participants, none wished to make any changes to their interviews. Member checking was not possible for this study due to the difficulty in contacting participants for a follow-up meeting and the amount of time already expected from the study. Member checking with other individuals outside of the original participants for the purpose of determining transferability of the data was also not possible due to sensitivity of the information shared within the data collection process and the signed confidentiality agreement.

Triangulation of data is the use of multiple forms of data to validate one another (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Triangulation occurs over different forms of data or across participants, hence the search for a common phenomenon. For the purpose of this study, triangulation occurs through the collage, storytelling and the interview process as well as across participants’ data to validate the existence of a phenomenon.
Memo writing is another suggested means of attaining rigor of a study. Starks and Trinidad (2007) indicates that memo writing can help audit a study. It allows the researcher to track his or her “thoughts and reactions” in writing so as to note “emerging impressions of what the data means, how they relate to each other, and how engaging with the data shapes her understanding of the initial hypotheses” (p. 1376). The researcher engaged in memo writing in the form of field notes collected around the behavior each participant.


**Credibility.** To attain credibility, one must take on the mentality of a naturalist who accepts the realistic world and works to explain the holistic occurrence of a phenomenon (Guba, 1981). Likewise, in phenomenological research, the researcher must aim to take in the participant’s experience as it is presented, in its most raw form so as to genuinely receive the experience as it is experienced by the participant. For matters such as these, this researcher chose to follow the methodological process of Transcendental Phenomenology which is heavily rooted in the process of epoche (bracketing). Guba (1981) suggests additional means of confirming credibility which include: Prolonged engagement at a site, persistent observation, peer review, triangulation, and collection of referential adequacy materials (documents, films, videotapes, and audio recordings), member checks, establishing structural corroboration or coherence and establishing referential adequacy.

Data saturation is attained by maintaining a strict criterion of sampling (interviewing participants who graduated from master’s level counselling programs, finding participants one to five years of work experience), interviewing five participants to determine the reoccurrence of
data collected, and collecting various forms of data (phototherapy, journaling, collaging, storytelling and semi-structured interviewing). Firstly, interviewing participants based on a strict criterion allowed for the study to reduce variability amongst the data collected. Although participants are selected from two different universities, the reoccurrence found in the data collected confirmed the common phenomena of being a novice counsellor. Secondly, five participants are chosen to participate in the study so as to ensure there is a commonality amongst the data collected. Thirdly, this researcher utilized various forms of data collection as a means to find different approaches to extract the same responses which proved to be successful during data analysis. For example, there is a considerable overlap between the collages created, stories shared by participants and the responses retrieved from the interviews. In addition, participants are also provided with a copy of their transcripts and are asked to confirm or change their responses, provide feedback, or add to their responses. Of the five participants, none responded with need to alter any of their responses.

Transferability. Transferability is a process by which the researcher must proceed through the research without the assumption that the data retrieved is transferable to other experiences. Guba (1981) states “to develop "truth" statements that have general applicability; rather, one must be content with statements descriptive or interpretative of a given context idiographic or context-relevant statements” (p. 86). Methods of preventing transference of research findings include: complete theoretical/ purposive sampling, collect "thick" descriptive data, and develop thick description. Theoretical/purposive sampling is sampling with the intention to “maximize the range of information uncovered” (p. 86). It is for this very reason multiple sources of data are subject to analysis in this study. In conjunction, collecting thick descriptive data and descriptions allowed the researcher to present an adequate amount of
information necessary for readers to formulate their own deductions on the transferability of the research findings. Credibility is ensured in “how vivid and faithful the description is to the experience lived” (Laverty, 2003, p. 23).

Transferability is attained in this study using consistent questioning (semi-structured interviews), reinforcement from various methods of data collection (phototherapy, collaging, storytelling, and semi-structured interviews), and time commitment to data collection (one week for phototherapy and 3 hour follow-up meeting). The questioning used during the semi-structured interview is consistent for all participants so as to ask for the same information across the board. In addition, in using various forms of data collection, common themes become more apparent as they are reinforced by the variety of data. Finally, the overall time commitment to data collection included a half-hour first meeting, one week for the phototherapy component, and a final three hour meeting. The overall time dedicated to collecting data also allowed participants to share their stories without feeling rushed or restrained. The storytelling and collaging components encouraged participants to describe their experiences without being guided by questioning or probes which in turn allowed them to share what they felt is significant to them. The unaltered stories made for rich and thick descriptions of their lived experiences and the interviews allowed the researcher to extract further detail around significant moments or reoccurring themes. The participants interviewed are also chosen from two different academic programs however after working with each participant, there is an apparent occurrence of themes which began to form which allowed this researcher to conclude the lived experience of novice counsellor is transferable regardless of graduate programming.

Dependability. Data is deemed dependable when it is ensures stability, however as Savard (2007) states, variability is a strength of qualitative research because it accentuates the
experience of an individual which is necessary in uncovering a phenomenon. Nevertheless, dependability can be established through an “audit trail” (also referred to as memo writing) where “data [is] collected and analyzed, and interpretations [are] made. The audit trail takes the form of documentation (the actual interview notes taken, for example) and a running account of the process” so as to create a trail of information leading to the dependable source of the data. In this research study, the documentation of the interview process and the use of field notes are specific tools used to ensure dependability.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability invokes the essential goal of “demonstrating that the inquiry was conducted in a matter to ensure the top was accurately identified and described” (Laverty, 2003, p. 23). Visiting data from various angles and correlating the findings is a process of triangulation, a popular tool used to ensure rigor in qualitative research. Confirmability aimed to prove that the findings of the research from the participants are authentic and not based on assumptions made by the researcher (Savard, 2007). The very nature of transcendental phenomenology lends itself well to this area of rigor because of the indispensable need for bracketing. Bracketing is a perfect tool in ensuring the findings remain authentic to the participants who shared their lived experiences.

For the purpose of this study, conformability is achieved through the use of bracketing, field notes, direct quotation, and participant validation. The process of bracketing is used by this researcher for the purpose of describing their experience in connection to the significance of the study. This process is necessary to prevent potential bias and for the reader to acknowledge and understand the consciousness of the researcher in relation to the study. Field notes are a way of marking key themes, non-verbal cues or significant moments identified or displayed by the participants. These field notes are shown to the participants at the end of the interview so as to
allow them to confirm or reject what the researcher observed. In the discussion of the study, the use of direct quotation serves as evidence to the themes extracted by the researcher. Direct quotes provided a context for the themes discussed. Participant validation occurred during the interview process whereby this researcher used specific counselling techniques including active listening, summarizing and paraphrasing to encourage participants to confirm the information perceived by this researcher. These steps are necessary to allow the participants to validate the information shared and empower them to confirm, reject or change their shared experiences.

**Ethical considerations.** Ethical considerations for this study are few but significant and require acknowledgement and a plan of action for the protection of the participants involved. All participants are required to sign three consent forms prior to proceeding with in the study. The first informed consent form provides a detailed description of the study and the data collection process. The form includes the participant selection criteria, number of meetings, time commitment necessary, confidentiality, and the incentive provided to each individual for their participation (Starbucks gift card). Participants are also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion. The second consent form is a confidentiality agreement between both the researcher and the participant. This form includes a written description of the researcher’s responsibility to maintain confidentially prior, throughout and following the research study. The form includes the following conditions:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g. disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than my Adviser and Transcriptionist(s)

2. Full confidentiality is honoured for this study where by names, workplaces, and locations are changed as agreed upon by us
3. Keep all research information in any form or format secure while it is in my possession.

4. Erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable.

The final consent form is optional for participants to sign. Signing the form granted this researcher permission to photograph the collages completed by participants and include them in the final written report. In addition, participants are provided with a copy of the transcriptionist confidentiality agreement for their personal records. No difficulties were encountered during the signing of the consent forms.

Novice counsellor identity development, as previously stated, invokes multiple stressors and challenges throughout its course which in return elicits strong emotional build up or release, depending on the individual. Through the retrospective approach of this study, it is reasonable to believe that revisiting the emotional components of one’s personal and/or professional development as a counsellor may trigger hidden emotions or thoughts. It is for this reason that the debrief session is included within the data collection methodology because it offered participants the opportunity to reflect on the thoughts and emotions that may potentially be provoked.

In addition, the revisiting of novice counsellor identity development may generate potential new thoughts of self-doubt or incompetence if participants have concerns regarding their current abilities as a counsellor. Gruman and Nelson (2008) state, “no matter how many years of experience, counsellors may also encounter new cases or crisis situations that are baffling, ethically challenging and stress provoking”, resulting in counsellors feeling self doubt, unprepared, lacking knowledge or caught off guard (p. 309). In response to the potential offset of the thoughts and emotions listed above, and in addition to the debrief session, this researcher
aims to provide resources for available counselling centres (i.e. University, college and community counselling centres) for participants to access should they find it necessary.

All data collection is conducted at a time and in an environment convenient for each of the participants (Savard, 2007). The initial meeting, in which consent forms are signed, took place at a public venue (i.e. coffee shop). The date, time and place for the second meeting are established in-person during the initial recruitment meeting with each participant. All second meetings took place at the researcher’s workplace in a private and confidential counselling room. All sessions are held after work-hours to ensure the privacy of participants and maintain confidentiality.

Summary

This chapter provided a descriptive account of the research design and the specific steps used to accurately analyse the data collected. The overall phenomenon of novice counsellor experience is broken down to present the core themes of anchoring, uncertainty, knowledge seeking and self-awareness. These themes together formed the overarching phenomenon of transition. The following chapter discusses how the data is analyzed and presents the final findings of the study.
Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

Chapter four provides a thick description of the participants of the study, data collected in this study, and the analysis of the data collected. This chapter identifies and describes the themes and sub-themes identified by novice counsellors and the essence extracted during the data analysis process.

Description of Participants

The participants of this study included five women who are graduates from the University of Manitoba Masters of Education program and the University of Winnipeg Masters of Marriage and Family Therapy program. Four of the participants are 1-2 years outside of their programs and are currently working in counselling positions. Two participants are working in the school system and the other two are working in a private practice along with other related counselling positions (Employee Assistance, community counselling). One participant recently lost her position as a counsellor in the school system and is currently teaching full-time and counselling her students on the side. The age of participants ranged from 27 to 39. Each participant attended two meetings, first of which they are provided the materials necessary for the study (disposable camera, journal). The second meeting is approximately three hours in length and included the collage activity, storytelling, and semi-structured interview. All participants are assigned aliases to honor the confidentiality agreements.
Table 4.1 Participant Description:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Workplace</th>
<th>Number of Years in the Field</th>
<th>Number of Semi-structured Interviews</th>
<th>Length of Interviews (minutes)</th>
<th>Use of DPS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daria</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Private practice/ EAP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Private practice/ Community services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*DPS – Dramatic Psychological Storytelling – Story map

**Essences and Meanings of the experience: “Transition”**

The essence of *Transition* is extracted from an accumulation of several common experiences among the novice counsellor participants. Transition implies movement, change, and a sense of being in between stages. All participants identified changes in their growth and development, and also acknowledged that their development is not complete because there are “still learning”. A participant states, “I am, in the back of my mind, (wondering) ‘How can they incorporate this into the transition from training to therapist?’ ” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012). To express one’s identity as a novice counsellor is to acknowledge their transition into an experienced counsellor.

The lived experience of a novice counsellor is to be in *transition*. The novice counsellor defines themselves as “always learning” and being comfortable with that stage in their development. They also define themselves as being uncertain. Novice counsellors use their experiences (personal and work-related) to anchor themselves to who they are as individuals and
as professionals. As a result they develop an awareness of what makes them a novice therapist. The primary research question of this study is to determine: What is the lived experience of being a novice counsellor? Sub research questions of interest that follow are: what defines a novice counsellor: the importance and effect of personal experiences on their development; and how a novice counsellor is shaped by their development.

**Example of Data Analysis:**

The following is a chart identifying this researcher’s data analysis process. The overall essence of “transition” (column 1) is extracted from the various themes (column 2) collected during analysis. Column 3 identifies the specific experiences described by each participant that relate to the four major themes (anchoring, uncertainty, knowledge seeking, and self-awareness). Column 4 is a collection of specific statements found in each of the participant’s transcriptions to exemplify the experiences that each theme is composed of. Finally, column 5 is a tally of the number of times a participant provided a statement that directly linked each of the experiences found for each theme. For example, Cathy makes two references to her background and one reference to previous job experience throughout her interview. The tally is significant for the reason that it provides a sense of importance to the participant based on the frequency in which they address the experience.
Table 4.2 Essence: "Transition"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essence</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Components of Experience</th>
<th>In Vivo Statements</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Anchoring</td>
<td>1. Background</td>
<td>1. Rebecca referenced her close connections with family and her rural upbringing.</td>
<td>Cathy: 2 1 0; Rebecca: 2 1 0; Daria: 1 1 0; Jessica: 3 1 0; Carly: 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Job experience</td>
<td>2. Carly disclosed multiple areas of work experience including: Klinic, Marymound, Youth Mobile Crisis teams, Osborne House, and Macdonald Youth Services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>1. Initial career path</td>
<td>1. Jessica reported she began her career as a nurse’s aide and was pursuing a career in nursing but knew it was not the right fit for her career. She transition into a degree in psychology and began pursuing a career in counselling.</td>
<td>Cathy: 1 1 1; Rebecca: 1 1 1; Daria: 1 1 1; Jessica: 1 1 3; Carly: 1 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Unpredictability of each day</td>
<td>2. Cathy reported a day in the life of a counsellor often does not go as planned due to the multiple aspects of the job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Fear of incompetence</td>
<td>3. Daria expressed her fear of incompetence when she stated she did not “want to seem like I did not know what I was doing”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Knowledge seeking</td>
<td>1. Professional development</td>
<td>1. Rebecca stated “Professional developmental opportunities in this school division are amazing. I have $800 a year for professional development”.</td>
<td>Cathy: 1 2 1; Rebecca: 1 1 1; Daria: 1 1 1; Jessica: 1 2 1; Carly: 1 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Still learning – identity</td>
<td>2. Daria stated, “We are always going to learn and be open to learning experiences”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Comfortable with learning</td>
<td>3. Cathy reported, “…there is still a lot more that I need to learn and a lot more that I need to be comfortable with”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Self-</td>
<td>1. Acceptance of</td>
<td>1. Daria discussed her</td>
<td>Cathy: 1 2 3 4; Rebecca: 1 2 3 4; Daria: 1 2 3 4; Jessica: 1 2 3 4; Carly: 1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual Participant Structural Descriptions of their Experiences

**Cathy.** Cathy is a graduate from a master’s program in guidance and counselling, approximately 2 years out of the program and is currently working as a high school counsellor and services students from grade 9 to 12. Cathy’s collage shared many personal experiences leading up to her choice to become a counsellor, her time as a counsellor-in-training and her present life as novice therapist.

Cathy reveals her motivation to become a counsellor was fueled by her father’s suicide after the loss of his career. She reports her father’s suicide occurred during her early high school years. Her collage began with a photo of her father’s jacket and the hospital he was taken to. She
uses the phrases “depression” and “the real story” alongside a suicide poster to signify her struggle after her loss. She went on to reveal that her grief led her down a troubled path which resulted in an abortion in her grade 12 year. Her collage uses the phrase “In Crisis” and “Murder” to identify the intense feelings she lived through as an adolescent. Cathy declares both of these experiences continue to be an on-going struggle for her, especially in the present. She states, “…to this day, I would not say is something that is resolved for me. The fact that it happened, I feel let down by myself” (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012). Cathy identifies her school guidance counsellor as important support during this period in her life. Shortly after both losses, Cathy spoke about her trip to Japan as her way of coping. In her description of her healing process she states, “I just needed to grow away from that point” (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012). During her storytelling process, emotional triggers observed include the re-telling of her father’s death, the abortion she underwent, her trip to Japan and her discussion around forgiveness.

Cathy reports she attended university to complete her undergraduate degree in Education however it was not her intention to be a teacher. Her uncertainty regarding counselling led her to volunteer at for a 24 hour crisis help line where she states “… I learned as much there about counselling as I did in any of the education courses I took…That gave me the inner strength to say I can make this move into this field of work” (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012). Her aspiration to be a counsellor led her to a master’s program for further training. It is there she made a strong effort to attain career counselling training in memory of her father’s primary struggle.

Cathy’s story often visits the theme of forgiveness, discovering self and learning. Her collage includes a picture of a vent which she chose to symbolize her ability to filter her thoughts
and feelings and to move forward in her development as a novice therapist. Cathy appears to be very methodical and focused individual in the collaging and storytelling activity. She often makes reference to the busy nature of her current position as a high school counsellor. Although she feels fulfilled in her decision to become a counsellor she does admit to feeling “exhausted” and “unfinished” (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012).

Cathy is recently married and views her partner as significant foundation in her life. She went on to describe her relationships with family and friends as “supportive” and indicates they have “…fallen back into place…” since becoming a novice counsellor (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012). In her collage, Cathy uses the phrase “celebrate family” to reinforce the importance of her support systems in her life.

Cathy’s final moral of her story is “You’ve only got one life” and choosing life is her path to follow. Her parting words to future novice counsellors is to remember self-care and “…really dedicating time to yourself” (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012).

Researcher field note entry and reflections on the meaning of “transition” for Cathy. Cathy appears calm and very methodical during the second meeting. Cathy appears to be fully focused on her cognitive process and at time speaks aloud to vocalize her thought process. Topics which notably triggers emotional responses (teary eyes) for Cathy include her father’s suicide due to loss of his career, abortion, trip to Japan, the meaning of forgiveness (of self) and her uncertainty around who she wanted to be. Both her story and collage appears organized (chronological and aligned) and reflective of her past and present experiences. Cathy’s use of various stories from her past displays a sense of knowing where she is coming from (anchoring). Cathy appears to be in transition based on her acknowledgement of her current on-going learning.
and continuous change. This researcher took this as a clear indication of her transition as a novice counsellor. She frequently recognizes her need for additional experience as a means to overcome her fears and solidify her practice as a therapist.

Figure 4.1 – Cathy’s Collage

Rebecca. Rebecca is a graduate from a master’s program in guidance and counselling, approximately 2 years out of the program and is currently working as an elementary school counsellor and services students from Kindergarten to grade 8. Rebecca’s collage illustrates the many aspects of her life that have contributed to her development as a novice counsellor.

Rebecca reports her job experience over time is very diverse and quite significant in discovering her career path. Her job positions include family support worker, special needs
support worker, and resident services facilitation. Within her job experience, Rebecca recounts she completed her undergraduate degree in Education, but did not apply for jobs in that field. She states, “When I graduated I did not know if I wanted to be a teacher and I didn’t feel like I had really been prepared to know if that was something I wanted, so I continued to work” (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012). Following her additional job experience, Rebecca states she returned to school and completed two diploma programs, one in Special Education and the other in counselling. The counselling diploma eventually led to the completing of a counselling master’s degree.

Rebecca describes her home life growing up in a rural area with her nuclear family. She indicates she had come from community of full families where divorce or blended families are an “anomaly”. This upbringing is strongly represented in her collage where she chose to display pictures that represented the outdoors, family, relationships and love. Rebecca chooses phrases such as “Love”, “live the life you love”, “Nature’s beauty” and “who cares” to describe her approach to life. Rebecca describes herself as an individual who prefers to take life as it comes. She states, “I kind of go with the flow and live in the moment and eat chocolate” (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012).

Rebecca portrays her passion for running, shoes, Halloween, healthy eating, music and life with various photos in her collages. Along with her passions, she presents as very energetic, methodical and “random” which seemed to be represented in the format of her collages. Her collage did not have a specific structure or format however it came together with the utmost cohesion.
Rebecca identifies her many roles and the importance of each one. She identifies as a mother, a wife and overall a novice counsellor. Amongst her various roles, her children are her most important priority however she also comes to recognize how that roles transfer into her role as a novice counsellor, where her clients at her job are her priority.

Rebecca appears to be a strong advocate for embracing life and taking time to do that more frequently. In her storytelling, she states the moral of her story is to “Be true to you, love yourself and know what matters in life. Live life – love well” (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012). Likewise, she advises future novice counsellors to continue learning about themselves and “…make the change you need to live a true life” (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012).

**Researcher field note entry and reflections on the meaning of “transition” for Rebecca.**

Rebecca spends a significant amount of time speaking about her family roots and the importance of love, relationships and support in her life. This is exemplified in her concern with including a representation of her son in her collage. Her moments of self-reflection during the collaging and storytelling components of the study suggest she has a complete awareness of the life experiences which have grounded her and reinforced her current career path. She brought in plenty of her own materials to add to her collage (personal photos, magazine cut outs of pictures and phrases) which indicates she had a pre-contemplated sense of what she wanted her collage to look like. Rebecca’s comfort and acceptance of change is the prime indicator of her process of transition. Rebecca appears quite focused on her self-development and repeatedly acknowledges she is always learning and changing. These observations lent themselves to the theme of transition because although she is firmly rooted in where she came from, she has yet a ways to go in her career meaning change and learning is still occurring.
Daria. Daria is a graduate from a master’s program in guidance and counselling, approximately 2 years out of the program and is working as a junior high school counsellor and services students from grade 7 to 9. Unfortunately, due to the loss of the counselling position, Daria is currently working as a grade 4 and 5 teacher, teaching all subjects. Although she does not carry the title of counsellor, Daria indicates she continues to incorporate counselling into her teaching regime. She chooses to extract from her previous experience as a full time counsellor as well as her current practices.

Daria reports she was not entirely certain of the career path she wanted to follow, which resulted in her taking a few years off after high school. She reports she chose to use the time off to reflect on her experiences to determine if there was something to guide her. She states, “I was always part of natural helpers or conflict mediation when I was in school and I was always really close with the guidance counsellors…so I thought definitely I want to go and be a guidance
counsellor” (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012). Daria’s reflective process allows her map out her path which included a B.A. degree, education degree, a diploma program and finally her master’s degree. Daria refers to it as a “ten-year process” and felt that “…it kept a lot of doors open” for her (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012). Daria states she did consider pursuing a Ph.D. program but indicates, “The thought of it made me sick so I knew it was time to stop” (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012).

Daria’s collage is focused on her means of helping her students. Books are a reoccurring theme along with her personal representation of herself. Her selected phrases include “patience”, “a day without laughter is a day wasted”, “problems solved”, “keep kids safe”, and “take a moment to remember”. Each of these phrases is situated around photos of the books she uses with her students while counselling them. Some of the books she includes are: Trouble talk, Enemy Pie, Colorful World, Hair, There and Everywhere, and Making Friends Is an Art! The focal point of her collage is the center where she placed a photo of her chair and fire place in her home. She labels this section as “interior” and allows the words “take a moment to remember” to circle around. Daria references this section as her self-reflective process which her to feel “…like I know myself a lot more than some other people may know themselves, that I am very aware of my own feelings and my thoughts” (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012).

Daria indicates her partner is a strong support in her development as a novice counsellor. She indicates they were both students while she was a counsellor-in-training which allows them to understand each other’s stressors. Daria also mentions her partner is her sole support due to a lack of understanding from her friends. In her collage, Daria represents her partner with a photo of a guitar which she placed in the centre with the photo of her home interior. Daria mentions her partner and her share a love for music which is a piece of their lives that brings them together.
Daria appears to be confident in her role as a teacher and counsellor and is comfortable with her current career direction. She goes on to offer her words of wisdom to future novice counsellors and states, “I think it is knowing yourself and knowing your boundaries and your limits” and “having those supports around me was helpful” (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012).

Researcher field note entry and reflections on the meaning of “transition” for Daria. It is notable that Daria’s entire reflective process is more strongly representative of aspects of her career with little emphasis on herself. Daria’s collage had a strong emphasis on books which she informs this researcher is a tool she often uses when counselling. The main observation for Daria is she appears reserved. During the storytelling component of the meeting, Daria did not provide many specific details or examples about herself. Daria’s answers are succinct and “to the point” and it appears she is refraining from disclosing more than is necessary. Daria does not display any significant changes in emotion while delivering her story but is again clear and concise in her delivery. The essence of Daria’s “transition” is extracted from each of the themes which displayed her comfort and awareness of her process of change and development. Her acknowledgement of her own change process, especially with the ambiguity around her current job status (recent loss of counselling position), places her (in the eyes of the researcher) in a state of transition.
Jessica. Jessica is a graduate from a master’s program in marriage and family therapy, approximately 1 year out of the program and is currently developing a private practice and working as an Employee Assistance counsellor. Jessica’s collage represents a “before and after” feel where she illustrates her internal transition as a novice counsellor.

Jessica describes her path to counselling as far from “typical”. Jessica states she began her undergraduate schooling in the faculty of nursing where she spent two years while working as a health care aid. Jessica identifies her struggle and frustration in deciding her future career path. She states, “…at the end of that second year, I was just about ready to quit university because it was like ‘I do not know if am in a place where I am ready to do this yet’” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012). She also began to notice her academic strength was in the one psychology course she took which caused her to say, “It ended up I totally fell in love with
psychology” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012). To continue her pursuit into the
counselling field, Jessica reports joining a 24 hour crisis help line in a sexual assault program.
Through her training on the help line along with her academic course-load, Jessica indicates she
planned to complete a psychology honors degree, a master’s and a PhD. Jessica states she was
accepted into a master’s program at the age of twenty-three.

Jessica describes her home life growing up in a rural area with her nuclear family and extended family. She indicates she was raised in a Mennonite background which to her meant
“You have to be productive” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012). She states she
moved into the city at the start of her undergrad degree and found it was a “hard adjustment” and a “huge transition” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012).

Jessica reports her current life includes moving back to a rural area with her partner of four years which she references on the right half of her collage with photos of their new home, garden. Jessica also uses phrases such as “at last”, “inside their new home”, “Living a Dream”, “Celebrate”. As a means to represent her partner in her collage, she placed a photo of his truck at the centre of the right half of the collage and places the phrase “true match” and “simple” just below it. On the left half of her collage, Jessica uses photos from her current life as a novice therapist. She uses pictures of her work space during her training with the word “community” in quotations to portray the environment which nurtured her growth into a novice therapist. The collage transitions into another photo of a dark hallway with a faint light towards the ends. Jessica included the notation “and…” next to it to exemplify her feeling of wonder around her next step in her career. A photo of a blank wall, her cat and bookshelf filled with counselling-related books follow next. The blank wall photo is accompanied with the phrase “day after day” which Jessica describes her days as “It is just never ending” (Jessica, personal communication,
June, 2012). Her photo of her bookshelf is accompanied with the word “Hungry” which she addresses in saying, “I am always going to be learning. I do not ever want to stop learning. If I am an opportunity junkie, I am also a learning junkie” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012). Jessica’s picture of her cat looking up at her includes the word “Desperate” which she described as an accurate feeling she has encountered in her transition into a novice counsellor.

Jessica’s collage is divided with a photo of a closed door with the word “close” which she explained as her ability to work and live a life outside of being a novice counsellor. She identifies this transition as her “awareness of the need to balance things” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012).

Jessica closes off her story by sharing with future novice therapists the importance of perseverance. She states, “Do not feel defeated by that sense of struggling or that sense of incompetence” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012). Therefore her moral of her story is “even if you are walking in circles, you are always going somewhere” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012).

Researcher field note entry and reflections on the meaning of “transition” for Jessica.

Jessica is a very vocal participant. During the collage process, Jessica verbalizes her process out loud. It is interesting to hear her verbal conceptualization of the collage activity. Jessica has noteworthy flow and organization to her collage which she chose to display on two, connected, pieces of paper (11 by 17). Her collage reads like a book and could be “read” left to right. Jessica’s collage displayed a notable sign of transition whereby she strategically placed a photo of a door at the centre of the collage. She proceeds to comment on her process of walking through the door to a new part of her life and the fear and anxiety she had regarding that process.
She states the door represents her change and movement into other areas of her personal and professional life. Jodie did not display any changes in emotion during the storytelling or semi-structured interview however she appeared to be very comfortable and relaxed while self-disclosing. Jessica readily acknowledges her process of change which again spoke to the essence of transition.

Figure 4.4 – Jessica’s Collage

**Carly.** Carly is a graduate from a master’s program in marriage and family therapy, approximately 4-5 months out of her program and is currently developing a private practice and working with as a therapist with a brief therapy team. Carly’s collage is the amalgamation of current aspects of her life that currently identify her as a novice counsellor.

Carly reports she began her undergraduate degree in psychology straight out of high school and was aware of the type of degree she wanted to complete. In her time through school, Carly indicates she maintained several jobs, all of which were in a helping-related field. She reports she began volunteering for a 24 hour crisis help-line and transitioned to being a reproductive health counsellor for teens within the same organization. Shortly after, Carly states she took on a different job working casually at a community shelter where she worked with
women from abusive relationships. Carly refers to this work as “…extremely difficult because there is so much going back and relapsing…majority of the times, they are going to go back to their abusive partners, they are going to use drugs again so I found that really difficult” (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012). She went on to take on another job working as a counsellor for a mobile crisis team where she went into the home of teens and completed mental status examinations. She indicates all of her work revolved around short term counselling with clients. Carly reflects on her job experience and states that after work she had done in the field she “had always in the back of my head wanted to go back to school but I did not know what for” (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012). After deciding on a master’s degree, Carly found a program which she believed offered her a “holistic” training and welcomed individuals from all walks of life which she felt was important to her learning. Carly states, “we are all doing the same job, we just come from different places right?” and “I liked that there were such diversity” (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012).

Carly’s collage offers a wide array of elements from her life however in her story, she begins with the support of her partner. Carly use a photo of a Football sweatshirt to represent her partner who coaches a college team. Below the photo she includes a phrase reading “snuggle with someone you love” which she used to elaborate on the importance of her partner in her life. To the left of the phrase she placed a photo of her dog. Carly explains her dog is a constant support in her life, especially throughout her school and various jobs and is a part of her life that keeps her grounded. She went on to mention her dog “does not like men” which at times affected her dating life, however her dog only ever took to her current partner (her husband), which made her decision simple. Carly then addresses a photo of trees along the side of a road which she felt reflected nature and the “calmness” and “serenity” it brings to her. Below the photo she uses the
phrase “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” which she feels is an accurate reflection of her struggles and the path she takes to gain strength and “once again calmness”.

Self-care is another theme in Carly’s collage. She uses phrases such as “real life” and “Namaste” along with photos of a painting given to her by a friend, a chip bag, and a statue in a yoga stance. Carly states “Yeah, like my collage and the things we are talking, I do not think I ever was aware of my triggers or my, or how to take care of myself. I think I just, I think I went through life without taking the time to reflect” which she feels has now changed (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012). Carly appears to be very aware of her current mental health status when she states, “Right now, not feeling like I am as balanced as I need to be, I do not do it as much, which again tells me I need to be taking care of myself” (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012). Carly as well expresses her comfort with her status as a novice counsellor. She addresses this with the words “evolving”, “just ask”, “building a business” she used in her collage. In her story, she states “I am still learning. There is lots that I do not know and I will ask a lot of questions” which is I put on there just ask because I never used to do that” (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012).

Carly shares she is an expecting mother which is another aspect of her life she displays in her collage with a photo of a statue her mother gave to her. Beside this photo she includes the word “Bride”. Carly identifies both as newer roles she has taken on in addition to her role as a novice counsellor, all of which make her who she is today. Carly states “And so all those experiences have allowed me to drop all those expectations and to just embrace who I am and the strengths that I do have. So that is probably the biggest change that I think I have made” (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012). In closing her story, Carly passes on her thoughts to future novice counsellors by saying:
…people need to be gentle on themselves and take care of themselves and not burn out. You are not going to be able to help anyone if you are not doing stuff for yourself. Throughout being a therapist in training, throughout being a novice therapist, the theme is making sure that you do not lose sight of what refuels you and what keeps you going because you want to enjoy what you are doing. (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012).

Carly encourages future, novice counsellors to embrace self-care techniques as a means to provide better care to their clients and prolong their ability to be a helper in the field.

*Researcher field note entry and reflections on the meaning of “transition” for Carly.*

Carly is articulate and concise in her delivery based on this researchers observation however she often referred to herself as “babbling”. Carly is open in her self-disclosure and appears calm and comfortable throughout the meeting. During the collage process, Carly identifies her love of nature, love for family and the importance of relationships as being influential pieces of her life and often referred to them in her storytelling. Her collage appears in-line, symmetrical, and her selected images portray her as a well-rounded individual.

During the storytelling component, Carly reacted to two subjects, which triggers a tearful response: changes in her relationship with her father and brother. She appears to have been self-reflecting during those sentimental moments which portrayed her as a methodical individual. She also verbally acknowledges her triggers and addresses them with the researcher during the storytelling component and states there are issues she is not aware of that still affects her. For Carly, the essence of transition is also related to the change she is encountering along her path of development. She reports her changes are occurring on a professional (gaining experience as a therapist) and personal level (becoming a mother) and these changes will not stop in the near
future. Although Carly indicates she is working towards finding “stability” in her career where she will be comfortable with her identity as an experienced counsellor, she insists that her comfort with change now is pertinent to her growth.

Figure 4.5 – Carly’s Collage

**Researcher Epoche Process**

As the researcher and in also being a novice counsellor, I found myself in agreement of the participant’s recounts of their lived experience. My experiences do not differ much from theirs however how my ability to move forward as a novice counsellor has certainly been altered for the better. I intend to embrace my transition.

I am aware of my anchoring. The experiences which led me to be a counsellor are experiences that confirm my ability, aspiration, and need to be a therapist. The process of being a novice counsellor is often overwhelming for reasons specific to this stage of development.
Knowing and reflecting on my personal and professional experience in my future process will allow me to remind myself “why I am here”. In being in transition and feel I am neither here nor there. I am not a student and I am not experienced. I have experienced how easily a novice counsellor can become derailed with those thoughts in mind, which can lead to lost focus on where I am now. Having experiences to ground my development and affirm my reasons for being a therapist will help me continue on my path to being a confident and seasoned counsellor.

There is much I continue to be uncertain about in my development as a therapist. My career is currently unpredictable in that I am not yet working as a counsellor. My position in providing services to clients over the phone also carries the element of uncertainty because my clientele is always changing and I rarely speak to the same person twice. The solution focused approach of the job also prevents me from attaining closure with the clients I speak to. In addition, I continue to question my abilities and my level of competence as do future employers who struggle with my lack of work experience. However, in my acceptance of transition, I feel more secure in the notion that I will get to where I need to be.

I am learning. I often seek professional development where I can, and I am comfortable with the fact that I am still learning. My identity develops as I embrace where I am. I am secure with my transition therefore I will continue to learn.

I intend to accept who I am as a person and as a novice therapist. My development continues to change my ability as a therapist but at the end of the day, I am a novice counsellor, I do not have all the answers, but I am aware of my ability as a counsellor.
Themes: Composite Textural Descriptions

**Anchoring.** Anchoring is the first of four themes identified in the data analysis. This theme includes two relevant sub-themes: personal experience and work related experience. When participants were asked “What brought you to enroll in a helper-related program”, each novice counsellor responded with a personal and a work-related example of experience that led them into counselling. Each sub-theme contributes to a novice counsellor’s need to be grounded or anchored. The participants acknowledged the relevance in identifying where they came from and the experiences which shape them.

Each novice counsellor comes from various walks of life and each brings their own experiences to the job they do. It is stated, “we are all doing the same job, we just come from different places right?” (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012). Participants share stories around the aspects of their lives which they felt impacted their choice to become counsellors and in turn their identity as novice counsellors. Experiences range from family upbringing to traumatic experiences, which led them to see the need for counsellors for themselves and in turn for others. For example, Rebecca states:

I grew up in a family where I had two parents that were married throughout their whole life until my dad had passed away and I grew up in a rural area where that was the norm like a nuclear family. There weren’t any blended families…it was kind of an anomaly…I got to see and challenge my ideas about family and what that looks like and it also really opened up my world into seeing the crisis that people deal with around addictions and mental health and chronic and terminal illness because that was something that I hadn’t really been exposed to much earlier. (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012)
Rebecca shares her experiences from her childhood and the dynamic in which she was raised to illustrate how her career exposed her and helped her learn about the many other aspects of counselling.

Rebecca addresses her upbringing as a means of providing perspective to the need for counsellors and the importance of their role. Experiences play a significant role in providing her with a necessary foundation to keep her anchored in her counselling practice.

Similarly, participants also use more distressing experiences towards the same outcome. For example, Cathy states:

I got into counselling ultimately because of my dad’s suicide when I was in high school. Now in my counselling position at the high school, even though a lot of it is personal counselling, I try to put on as much career counselling as possible because I think that is somewhere where my dad was let down, when he lost his job. There was not enough career counselling combined with personal counselling, which I think led him into his depression. I try to do as much with that as I can with students and parents. (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012)

Cathy describes the motivation she found, to pursue counselling, through her father’s suicide as a result of career stress. Her example is a demonstration of how personal experience fuels one’s passion for counselling.

Cathy allows her past experience to guide her current practice of counselling. Experiences can either lead an individual towards or away from a path; however Cathy’s experience is a contributing factor in her decision to be a counsellor. Participants also address religious backgrounds, family relationships and dynamics, and personal expectations as significant experiences that led them into the field of counselling.
For some participants, work related experience is quite extensive and for others it is minimal, but all identify those experiences relevant to their decision to enter the counselling field. Every novice counsellor shares the various counselling related positions they worked in prior to entering a master’s level counselling program. In addition, each of them shares how their work experience inspires and triggers their ambition to become a counsellor. For example:

I also started volunteering at (name). I was on the (name) crisis lines for a little while and then I started volunteering with team clinic, so doing reproductive health counselling with teenagers which is where I first started enjoying working with teenagers….I knew that I needed to have something different than everybody else who was graduating and I wanted to do a little bit of work, just knowing what was out there to see if this really what I wanted to do …I started working at (name), again with teenagers, high-risk teenage girls that are on the streets, into drugs and prostituting and really, really tough girls. I worked there as well as I got a job working on the (name) Crisis team…I also worked at (name) as a casual counsellor which was great but difficult work. I did not enjoy the work actually as much…I worked on the mobile crisis team for eight years as a clinician, so I did a lot of mental status exams and mental health stuff with teenagers but again, all crisis work. (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012)

Carly shares her extensive work experience specifically with teens and crisis intervention and spoke to how her work experience led her to pursue a career in counselling.

Carly is a therapist with diverse work experience, all of which she feels is relevant to her current position. Carly is able to identify the populations of clients she did and did not enjoy working with, as well as the clinical issues she is comfortable counselling. On the other hand,
Daria’s work experience is not as diverse however she is able to come to the same conclusion regarding her choice to be a counsellor.

I thought back on the things I like to do. I was always part of natural helpers or conflict mediation when I was in school …so I thought definitely I want to go and be a guidance counsellor in a school. That’s what sparked everything. (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012)

Daria shares her experience as a “natural helper” which is an event in her life which provides her with insight into the role of being a counsellor, in turn motivating her future career choice.

**Uncertainty.** The second theme addressed in the analysis is *Uncertainty* which broke further into three sub-themes including: initial career path, unpredictability, and fear of incompetence. In the interview process, novice counsellors allude to the feeling of uncertainty in various areas of their experience such as their choice to become counsellors, their daily lives and their performance as therapists respectively.

The first area of uncertainty is revealed when the novice counsellors are asked to identify what led them to become counsellors. Each participant describes their need to explore their personal experience and work in related positions before confirming their desire to become therapists. Three of five participants indicate that due to their uncertainty around a career in counselling they entered different undergraduate programs right out of high school until realizing it was not the appropriate path for them. Of these three, two completed education degrees while one entered nursing for two years but did not complete the program.

I actually started my undergrad when I was doing Nursing. I did two full years of the Nursing program. At the end of the second year, I was incredibly frustrated…I was like “Something is different between me and them, but I do not know what it is.” The only
class I did well in that I felt really good about my mark was psychology…It ended up I totally fell in love with psychology. I could not imagine myself taking any other classes…One day I followed one of my Profs at a class and I said “How do you know if this is the field for you? I feel like I really like these classes but I do not know if this is the kind of work I want to do and I do not really know anything about it.” She said, “The best thing I can recommend for you would be for you to go to (name) with a K and take the training for crisis lines…I volunteered with (name) for, I do not even know how many years…During that time I continued taking psych classes. I decided I definitely did want to go into this field and for a long period of time… (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012)

Jessica expresses her uncertainty through sharing the difficulty she faced when choosing a career path. Jessica reports after 2 years of nursing she felt her career path lay elsewhere which led to transition into the field of psychology.

The remaining two of the five novice counsellors identify they were in need to time off following high school and their undergraduate degree to determine their career paths.

Right out of high school, I took a couple of years off because I was not sure that I was going to do. Then I thought back on the things I like to do…I found out what I had to do for school so I did my arts degree and I knew I had to do my Master’s in counselling. I knew it was a ten-year process. (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012)

Daria illustrates her uncertainty by explaining the need to take time off after high school to explore her options and reflect on her likes and passions before determining her career path.
The second area of uncertainty is extracted when the novice counsellors are asked to describe what “a typical day is like for a novice counsellor”. Three of the five novice counsellors (all of which work in the school system) describe their difficulty with having “unpredictable”, “unexpected”, and “unplanned” work days. It is noted that as a result, workloads tend to spill over into following days.

*Rebecca:* …those unexpected and unplanned moments happen very frequently throughout the day.

*Interviewer:* Sounds like a day is not very typical, there's always kind of something that gets thrown from a corner that you don't necessarily accept.

*Rebecca:* Honestly, as sad as it is to say. I've almost come to accept it. So the unexpected has almost become typical. That's been a very difficult experience for me when other kids with needs get shelved because of someone else's agenda. (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012)

Rebecca describes the uncertainty in the day of novice, school counsellor’s life and shares the difficulty faced when a day agenda cannot be followed.

The other two novice counsellors address the “craziness” or the feeling of being “too busy” which also results in the carry-over of work and the feeling of falling behind.

I think that it is a place of still craziness that it feels like there is always something to be done especially for me right now trying to get private practice off the ground… this balancing act… As soon as the to-do list starts shortening, it gets longer again because of the things that you put on the back burner move to the front burner, and then other things
build up and then everything get moved to the back burner again…It is just never ending.

(Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012)

Jessica

The third area of uncertainty is the doubt in one’s ability, also known as the fear of incompetence. All five participant responses are in agreement that the identity of a novice counsellor is accompanied by feelings of insecurity and uneasiness regarding one’s ability as a therapist.

I think that they do not see the uncertainty that I have. That oftentimes I do feel like an impostor…. I think they do not see the internal struggle. If I were just to put it as like one broad theme, it will be like they do not see the uncertainty amidst all that. What they see on the outside which is what I have to put out there because that is the only way I can function. If I sat curled up in a ball in my room, like a wad of uncertainty, then how would I do anything? I do not think that they see that internal turmoil is a good word for that. (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012)

Jessica shares her internal feelings of uncertainty and spoke to the inconsistency between how other perceive her and the way she feels about herself.

**Knowledge Seeking.** The third theme resulting from the data analysis is *learning*. Within this theme, three sub-themes are identified: professional development, novice counsellor identity is defined by the notion of learning, and comfort in learning. The novice counsellors state learning as being a reoccurring premise that defines their lived experience.

The first occurrence of “learning” is found in the unanimous topic of professional development. When the novice counsellors are asked to identify the opportunities they have encountered thus far, professional development workshops or seminars are described as being
easily accessible and available for further learning and advancement. Four of five participants indicate their current positions encourage access to professional development and also include a financial budget offered by their employers to access the workshops.

Professional developmental opportunities in this school division are amazing. I have $800 a year for professional development plus $1500 for out of town PD every two years which I think could be typical in other school divisions as well where I think our school division exceeds is the amount of divisional professional development they offer that is free to us. (Rebecca, personal communication, June, 2012)

Rebecca shares her enthusiasm around the opportunities she received for professional development. Her comment speaks to her desire to excel and her thirst for new information.

One of the five novice counsellors indicates the opportunity for professional development is accessible and available, however she does not have a budget to partake due to being self-employed at present.

When I was still at (counselling centre) and preparing to graduate, one of our professional associations held a workshop on starting a private practice which I attended and found pretty useful. I also receive regular notices on workshops, seminars, and the like from my professional/educational networks. However I have to say that I have had minimal interest in attending anything recently. I think it is partly due to the fact that I am feeling sort of broke and do not want to outlay the money for the workshop or whatever. (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012)

Jessica speaks to the restrictions for professional development from a financial standpoint, however states it remains an area of interest for her.
The theme of learning is found when the participants are asked to describe their identity as novice counsellors. They are specifically asked to “define” what a novice counsellor and how it differs from being a counsellor-in-training. Responses indicate novice counsellors felt to be in this current stage of development is to identify their need to learn. Each novice counsellor uses various words to describe how they feel about learning. Two of five participants report feeling “excited” while one describes herself as being “eager”.

I feel a lot more subtle than I did a couple of years ago but also excited about learning more and being able to put more programming in place. That is a big part for me right now as a novice counsellor. (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012)

Cathy shares her “excitement” to continue learning as a means to do more as a counsellor.

The final two participants state they are “still learning” and that is a process which will be on-going for them.

I think I will always feel like I am learning, that we are always going to learn and be open to learning experiences. I feel I have experiences that I have learned from and being in school, and you are still learning about different things like group counselling. Until you have experienced it, you do not know what to expect. I think that is the one thing from being a novice counsellor to being a counsellor/student. (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012)

Daria expresses her need for on-going learning and how it defines her as a novice counsellor.

The third category identified under the theme of learning is the feeling of comfort with the on-going learning process in being a novice counsellor. Participants declare their acceptance of their learning process and believe it to be a positive and strengthening aspect of their novice counsellor identity. Participants describe themselves as being “comfortable”, “confident” and
“self-assure” with their learning continuum. As a result, it is stated this acceptance allows novice counsellors to practice therapy with a higher level of confidence in their ability.

And same with the, in my interview to, for this position as a therapist, in the interview, I was not sure how they were going to take me because I did not come across as confident because I straight out said "I am not an expert. I have so much to learn.” It made me feel more comfortable that I was presenting myself accurately to say, “I am just going to put it out there. I am still learning. There is lots that I do not know and I will ask a lot of questions” which is I put on there just ask because I never used to do that. (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012)

Carly expresses the importance of remaining genuine and accepting the process of learning in relation to the stage she is in, in her career. It makes her feel more self-accepting to acknowledge what she does and does not know, but be aware that she can learn.

**Self-awareness.** The fourth theme uncovered in the data analysis is the significance of self-awareness. Self-awareness is a theme which is broken down into four sub-themes which consist of: acceptance imperfections, stronger understanding of relationships and personal roles within them, authenticity, and happiness to be a counsellor. Self-awareness is a theme derived from various questions all of which asks novice counsellors to reflect on their identities as novice therapists in relation to other roles in their lives.

The first sub-theme acknowledges the acceptance of mistakes as a novice therapist. Participants are asked to compare their identities as novice counsellors in reference to how they saw themselves as counsellors-in-training. Two of five novice counsellors recognize their ability to accept the occurrence of mistakes.
I think I’ve relaxed a lot more. I’ve come to know some things that have made me relax and part of that is just developing as a human. You can do what you can do, you have to forgive yourself when you make mistakes, and it's just a technique. (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012)

Rebecca speaks to her ability to accept herself, her abilities and her mistakes and how it allows her to feel more relaxed with who she is.

Another two novice counsellors state they are working towards embracing their imperfections however they are aware of the pressure they place on themselves to be “perfect”.

I used to want to be perfect...It is not fun to be like that all the time. And it does not serve me well at all so I do not know, I do not know how...And so all those experiences have allowed me to drop all those expectations and to just embrace who I am and the strengths that I do have. So that is probably the biggest change that I think I have made, totally different than in high school and what I, literally, I thought that I needed to be perfect at everything and now I do not care. (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012)

Carly reports her need to be “perfect” however with time she learned that accepting herself and not worrying about everything is an important lesson learned in her development.

The fifth participant does not explicitly acknowledge self-awareness or acceptance, however through her interview; she often refers to rhetorical questions she asks herself which are indicative of self-reflective practices.

The second sub-theme is the strong understanding of relationships and a novice counsellor’s personal roles within them. This theme is a result of the question, “How has being a novice counsellor affected your relationships with others”. The participants address relationships with partners, family member and colleagues, however the overall the consensus is that
relationships grew stronger since becoming a novice counsellors. Three of five novice counsellors attribute the growth in their relationships to confidence and better understanding of self.

…but I think it's definitely strengthened all of my relationships and my interactions and I’m not always in that mode thankfully because I don’t think I should be with those people, I think I should be who I am, but I think I listen to people and I think I’m really just more sensitive and more understanding to their needs because I guess part of the training is that you work as a counselor or the development is to listen for the unspoken.

(Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012)

Rebecca notes her training as a counsellor allowed her to be more “sensitive” and “understanding” both as a counsellor but as well in the rest of her interpersonal relationships.

One novice counsellor indicates her partner and family have recognized the change in her ability to communicate more effectively.

I think with my husband, it has been something that has been ongoing since we have been together I have been at some level in training as a counsellor. I started dating him when I started at Klinic so he is probably seeing more growth than I have seen with myself in terms of what I do and how I talk, whatever the outcome is. I think that is a consistent. I think how we communicate with each other has changed. Probably my family has seen that as well. (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012)

Cathy provides the example of her relationship with her spouse and described the positive transition she notices in her and her ability to communicate more effectively with him. Cathy also reflects on how this change also affects her other interpersonal relationships.
The final novice counsellor attributes the growth in her relationships to her ability to understand relationship dynamics.

Yes absolutely. I think that a lot of my training has informed me on the dynamics of these relationships. Like I have said before, I have certainly lost friends in the course of my training… I feel better about them because I have more of a capacity to frame what is going on. It is not like just me getting sucked into this dynamic. It is like this is what we are doing again. That does not mean that I do not get sucked in. It just means that I can actually recognize what is happening. (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012)

Jessica shares the effects of her training on her interpersonal relationships and allows her to reflect on the dynamics of her relationships.

The third sub-theme is the importance of being authentic. Participants are asked to reflect on how their identities as novice counsellors compared to their personal identities. All novice counsellors declare the two identities shared significant overlap. The novice counsellors collectively stress the importance of “being yourself” and being “real” because only in doing so you are able to connect to clients on a genuine level. Three of the five novice counsellors did capitalize on the importance of boundaries and professional attitude, but followed up with their need for clients to see them as themselves and as human beings.

I personally, like you can easily run into clients anywhere in the city right? I just, I would not want somebody, not that this is what drives me to just being who I am in the room and outside of the room, but if somebody was to see me outside of the room, I would want them to feel like it is still me. Not like "Who is that person, completely different than who I know as my therapist." I just think that when I can be myself I can do the best work… Of course you have to protect yourself. I am not saying that you do
not take care of yourself in those situations but keeping all of those things in mind and still having boundaries, I am, as much as I say I still want to be myself I am still very good with boundaries. I do not want it to seem like I am going to become best friends with my clients… I like to connect with people. I think it is important to be who you are in and out. (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012)

Carly expresses how important it is to her to be genuine both within and outside the counselling relationship. She shares the importance of setting boundaries but spoke to the significance of human connection.

Two of the five novice counsellors state their identities both professional and personal are one-in-the-same.

I would say that they are very similar. I have just learned to accept that it is okay to be many different people and to have many different roles whereas when you are a student, you are trying to be a different person in each of them. Now, I feel I can just be myself in all situations. I do not have to wear these different hats. I would not say I have fully accomplished it but being aware that it is okay to be yourself, as a teacher, as a counsellor, even just being yourself. (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012)

Daria states her personality as a counsellor and as an individual is reflective on one another. She shares how important is it is to her to remain true to herself.

The final sub-theme is novice counsellors overall happiness in their choice to be counsellors. This theme surfaces as a result of a direct question, “Are you happy with your decision to become a counsellor”. The response to this question is unanimous amongst all novice counsellors. All novice counsellors agree they were happy in their decision to become therapists. Three of five novice therapists state they are quite content with where they are as therapists.
Yes, absolutely. It is funny; actually this week is just all about reflecting on this stuff. Just yesterday a totally random opportunity came up at the school for me to be interviewed by the (newspaper) to talk about (the counselling centre) and the program, and what my experiences have been like as a student and now as a grad. The same question came up, “Do you feel this is the right fit for you? Have you gotten what you came for basically?” Yes, 100%. (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012)

Jessica shares her content with her choice to become a counsellor and feels her career choice is the best fit for her.

However two indicate although they are happy, they are exhausted. Both of these novice counsellors indicate earlier in the study they are newly married and in the process of starting families which may be contributing factors to the exhaustion they are experiencing.

I am… It is just how you are helping… It has been a mentally exhausting year with the amount of mental issues we have had at our school… ultimately, yes, I am happy I am a counsellor… At the end of the day, I still like my position. When I am actually doing that work, when I am with a student and really connecting with them, I love it. (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012)

Carly speaks to her happiness with becoming a counsellor, however also expresses her feelings of exhaustion as a novice therapist.

**Differences**

Of the categories which are explored during data collection, four present with data that held little to no significant correlation amongst the participants. The categories include: individual goals, challenges of being a novice counsellor, “words of wisdom”, and self-care. The data presents very little overlap in these areas.
In the category of goals, the participant’s answers range from professional/academic goals (Master’s, PhD) to goals around personal development (Example. “learn more about self”, gain understanding of being a counsellor, gain life experience).

The second category is challenges where novice counsellors describe a wide array of obstacles they have faced thus far. Two of five novice counsellors identify young age as a challenge, however one of which also includes gender as being problematic. Two other novice counsellors discuss their difficulty in saying “no” as one of her personal challenges. It is sufficient to conclude that although novice counsellors are often confronted by challenges during their process, there is insignificant evidence that all novice counsellors endure similar challenges.

The third category with presenting differences is “words of wisdom”. When asked to share the advice they felt is important to pass on to counsellors-in-training who were becoming novice counsellors, the participants recommend: self-care, establishing boundaries, take risks, learn about self, persevere through challenges, and be gentle with self. Although their “advice” did appear to be reflective of their personalities and individual struggles, the data collected in this category is negligible.

The final category with differences is self-care. This is a category that not all participants explicitly answered or shared their thoughts on its importance. Although the interview did not have a specific question attributed to collecting this information, it is the researcher’s intention to determine if participants bring it up of their own accord. For this category, that is not the case.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to organize the data into the relevant themes from the research data. As a result the identified themes include: Anchoring, Uncertainty, Always learning, and Self-awareness. From those themes, the researcher extracts the essence of
Transition which describes the stage novice counsellors identify themselves in. The essence of transition is defined and described in relation to each of the themes.

Differences identified based on the data analysis consisted of: Individual Goals, Challenges of Being a Novice Counsellor, “Words of Wisdom”, and Self-care. It is noted subject areas carried very little overlap and relevance to the core themes found in the research.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Summary of Results

Introduction

This chapter is directed towards proving descriptions of the results in relation to the research objectives of the study and the relevant, supportive literature. The chapter will begin with an outline of the research question and objectives and proceed into the examination of the themes extracted from the data analysis. The themes are categorized under the appropriate research objectives and the meanings of each theme are explained. The implications of counselling practice, future application, and the researcher is discussed. Finally the chapter outlines the strengths and limitations of the research findings.

The research questions that are focused on in this qualitative study is: What is your experience of being a novice counsellor?

The primary research objectives of this qualitative study are:

1. Identify what defines a novice counsellor.
2. Identify the importance and effect of personal experiences (earlier influences) on a novice counsellor’s professional development.
3. Identify how a novice counsellor is shaped by their development.

Distinguishing Themes in Connection to Literature review

The bi-product of transition (essence) is the development of a strong counsellor identity. What is needed for a novice counsellor to have a strong identity and why is it important? Five novice counsellors underwent a phototherapy exercise, collaging exercise, storytelling and a semi-structured interview to identify the major aspects of their novice counsellor identity development. The results of data analysis revealed four main themes which they acknowledged
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF NOVICE COUNSELLORS

as important aspects of being novice therapists. The findings of this study led to the extraction of “transition” as the true essence of the phenomenon of novice counsellor identity. The following is a breakdown of the themes and sub-themes which further support the meaning and significance of transition in novice counsellor identity.

Anchoring. Naturally in counsellor development, personal and work related experiences establish an individual’s personal “ideology” which includes their values and theoretical perspectives (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). These are experiences which occur prior to any process of development of novice counsellor identity but are still a significant component. The need for an anchor is to incorporate the experiences which have led to the choice of being a counsellor then using them to maintain a secure sense of self when in the field. In a study conducted to illustrate the importance of personal experience in a counsellor development, Jensen (2007) indicates that reflection of private and personal experiences provides a therapist with a grounding and in turn an understanding which allows the development of stronger therapeutic skills. The study provides the example of a therapist with a background of alcohol abuse working with a couple also struggling with alcohol concerns. They state, “The therapist’s personal and private situation also gives her a particular understanding of this couple’s situation and that may give her a special capacity to connect with them” (p. 383). A novice counsellor’s understanding of their personal experience leading up to their training is significant to their career choice to pursue a counselling career.

Wong-Wylie (2007) an advocate of self-reflective practices in counsellor development, touches on the importance of reflecting on personal experiences. The study testifies to the prominence of personal experience in the shaping of a professional and the notion that practical knowledge alone is not sufficient in counsellor development. In DiCaccavo’s (2002) study of
the motivations behind pursuing counselling training, the concept of the “wounded healer” is explored. The notion behind the wounded healer is those who have been harmed or experience emotional pain in the past are influenced by the “desire to rework the hurts and disappointments of their own early lives” (p. 464-5). For this reason their aim resides in the need to change their perspectives and re-story their experiences.

The participants in this study readily declare their personal experience played a significant role in their choice to become therapists. “I got into counselling ultimately because of my dad’s suicide when I was in high school” (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012). As a result, Cathy chose to specialize in career counselling due to the struggle her father faced in his own career. She is privy to the detrimental effects of job loss and worked to prevent it reoccurrence. There is an insatiable need for a novice counsellor to identify and understand where they came from to believe they have a natural skill set which is critical in becoming a therapist.

Personal experiences allow for the discovery of raw skills. Work experiences, on the other hand, is the ability to apply and practice those skills to counselling related jobs. Rak et. al. (2003) states, “Learning counselling skills qualifies as an experience of extensive and repetitive practice to develop automatic processes” (p. 136). Work-related experiences are a successful means for acquiring opportunities to practice and perfect their raw skills. The personal and professional connection is necessary in making a choice. Davidson and Gilbert (1993) state, “Typically careers are identified by a particular constellation of skills, education, and training that one prepares for in advance or by themes that emerge retrospectively from the collage of one's work and life” (p. 2).
Uncertainty. The feeling of uncertainty is synonymous with the development of a novice counsellor’s identity. It is a reoccurring subject of discussion and presents itself in the beginning, middle and end of development. Uncertainty is also experienced in various forms. Issues of uncertainty were discovered in the form of doubt regarding initial career paths, the unpredictable nature of a counsellor’s life, and the fear of incompetence.

The start of identity development begins at the decision to become a counsellor. The participants of this study identified their uncertainty in their initial decision to become a counsellor. Now, as a novice counsellor reflecting retrospectively on their process of development and the experiences that made them novice counsellors, they report their uncertainty in choosing the path of counselling.

I graduated with working with mobile crisis team, and had always in the back of my head wanted to go back to school but I did not know what for. I took probably six years I think to figure that out. I explored different programs, social work, occupational therapy, all the different things and when I read the information for (name) for Marriage and Family Therapy, it just connected with me. (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012)

Carly shares the various work experiences that helped her resolved the uncertainty she encountered when deciding her future career path.

In this example, Carly’s uncertainty around becoming a counsellor led her to the natural approach to explore all options. According to Gati (1990), this is a natural approach to career decision making. He states, “…when considering graduate schools with programs in counseling psychology, one can apply simultaneously to several universities…In this type of decision, the applicant can delay the decision until the uncertainty has vanished” (p. 277). Carly indicates her
uncertainty “vanished” when she felt she could connect to her choice to be a counsellor. This occurrence is the direct result of a connection made between personal experience and career choice.

A second example extracted from this study is Jessica’s ambivalence in her career decision making. Jessica remarks in her story her initial career choice entailed nursing. At the time of her undergrad, she worked part time as a nurse’s aide while working towards acceptance in the faculty of nursing. Jessica states in her interview, “at the end of that second year, I was just about ready to quit university because it was like ‘I do not know if I am in a place where I am ready to do this yet.’ I observed students around me who are super dedicated to their work and I was barely passing my exams” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012).

The novice counsellors of this study identified the “unpredictable” nature of their jobs and therapists. In a study conducted by Shepard and Guenette (2010), novice counsellors, through the process of collaging express their discomfort with uncertainty and ambiguity by using a metaphor of “‘a machine gone wild with all the gears and cogs which are supposed to work in a certain way but for some reason they won’t work for me’” (p. 303). The metaphor is used to describe a day in the life of a novice counsellor. There is little literature that explains why a counsellor’s position is considered unpredictable or unplanned, but the significance of this type of uncertainty is the stress it causes and its effect on novice counsellors. Skovholt, Gier and Hanson (2001) state that the stress of the counselling job which often influences the performance of counsellors stems from a counsellors desire to help, the need to tolerate ambiguity of the job and the goal to attain self-actualization. The study further discusses the occurrence of uncertainty when counsellor face unsolvable problems, dealing with clients who do not help themselves, dealing with a clients who are or are not motivated to change, and the difficulty with saying
“no”. These stressors are few of the many frequently encountered by counsellors on the job which amplifies the need for counsellors care for themselves while on the job. The participants of this study described their days as a “balancing act” which caused them to feel they are constantly falling behind. Lee, Reissing, and Dobson (2009) speak to the work-life balance for early career therapists and the deficiency of literature surrounded this topic. Balance is defined as the “capacity to be meaningfully involved in multiple roles” (p. 75). Unfortunately not all workplaces in the counselling field promote the importance creating and maintaining balance on the job however there is a strong emphasis on the importance of self-care due to how quickly the onset of burnout occurs. The reoccurring theme around uncertainty in every aspect of being a novice counsellor is the causality of stress, feelings of being overwhelmed and eventually burnout (Theriault et al., 2009).

Fear of incompetence is a popular occurrence in the literature and as well in novice counsellor experiences. The result of this study accurately reflected novice counsellor’s insecurities, self-doubt and uncertainty in their ability as therapists. The literature suggests fear of incompetence results in both positive and negative effects for a novice therapist. In Theriault and Gazzola’s (2010) study of incompetence, novice counsellors report feeling stressed and overwhelmed due uncertainty in themselves and their abilities. This occurrence is said to be significant and exclusive to the identity of a novice counsellor due to the strong correlation between fear of incompetence and years of experience (Theriault & Gazzola, 2010). FOI occurs in the form of anxiety or fear of the unknown however counsellors do have a means of countering the negative effects. Naturally, increased experience is a sure way of dealing with fear but novice counsellors require a more immediate technique. A learned acceptance and awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses is a more immediate approach to reducing the negative effects.
of FOI (McWhirter, 1998). It is human nature to incline towards a focus on what one cannot do when there is a lack of confidence or awareness of self. It is for this reason that self-reflective practices are implemented in counsellor training as a means of raising one’s consciousness and awareness of the strengths they do bring to the field (du Preez & Roos, 2008).

The participants of this study state as novice counsellors they are aware of their weaknesses which they continue to overcome. Yet they are also conscious of the fact they are still learning which bring them to place of comfort and self-acceptance because they have removed the internal pressure they place on themselves (Sawatzky, Jevne, & Clark, 1994).

**Knowledge seeking.** Knowledge seeking is a vehicle for on-going learning. Seeking information is a way of facilitating learning and filling the gaps in one’s knowledge base. Learning is in fact a process where as many developmental theories refer to it as a stage-model. However, if learning is on-going, then is best referred to as process as it does not come to an end (Kolb, 1984). Learning is as well experiential whereby personal and professional experiences facilitate the process of learning (Zorga, 2002; Barnett, 2007). The participants of this study specifically identified a novice counsellor as one who is the process of on-going learning. Participants detailed their identity as on-going learners with their search for professional development opportunities and their comfort with the notion they are still learning.

Professional development is a specific example that arose from the question of what opportunities they felt are presented them as novice counsellors. The literature relates the search for professional development to the occurrence fear of incompetence; however it is described as one of the positive effects of feeling uncertain. Theriault et al. (2009) states, “Counsellors also expressed a zest for training workshops that hinted at their belief that true confidence is only a
workshop away” (p. 110). Novice counsellor’s seek knowledge and continue to learn as a way to increase their training and experiences and in turn increase their self-confidence. The more one knows, they less they focus on what they do not know. Knowledge seeking is a way of bridging the gaps in personal and professional knowledge. In addition, learning from new experiences (both good and bad) also facilitates learning (Zorga, 2002).

The literature insists that the ability to accept personal growth and the learning process provided novice counsellors with “inner peace” (Theriault et al., 2009). Acceptance is a result of increased self-awareness. Again, the literature is sparse in addressing the concept of acceptance specifically, however it is stated that acceptance is a result of a developed self-awareness (King, 2007). Participants from this study felt their comfort with their continuing learning is what defines them as novice counsellors. This hunger for knowledge is embraced to the point where they can confidently say, “…I am still in a learning process and I plan to stay there for quite some time. That part I do not want to ever be over” (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012).

**Self-awareness.** Self-awareness, in the modern development of counsellors is essential to their development. An awareness of personal experiences, changes and development provides a stronger understanding of other aspects of life (Example. relationships or theoretical frameworks) which in turn lends itself to a secure sense of self (Wong-Wylie, 2006). The development of multicultural counsellors is one area of literature that truly capitalizes on the importance of self-awareness and the affects it can have on the identity of a developing counsellor. “Without awareness, the trainee cannot see the relevance or importance of that information or how he or she could apply skills to use the information…programs overemphasize the importance skill objective without regard for the foundations of awareness
and knowledge” (Pederson, 2002, p. 8). Pederson (2002) goes on to reinforce that personal awareness is the very first step in the training of multicultural counsellors (p. 9). Self-awareness, as reported by the participants in this study, is a process that helps individual’s accept their mistakes, increases their understanding of relationships and their roles within them, promotes the need to be authentic and encourages their satisfaction with career choice.

Acceptance of self is a difficult process to achieve. Many novice counsellors report their difficulty in accepting their mistakes because it makes them feel incompetent (Theriault & Gazzola, 2010). Acceptance is an instrument of empowerment encouraged for those who internalize and eventually hinder themselves because of their areas of growth or mistakes. Acknowledging that mistakes are inevitable and are a process of learning allows for the decrease of the expectation of perfection (McWhirter, 1998). Shepard and Guenette (2010) quote a participant’s process of acceptance and development of competence as they state, “there is no such thing as doing it perfectly, no such thing as a perfect session or counsellor...I am having the realization that there will never be a right way to do this” (p. 303). In time, novice counsellors begin to acknowledge their strengths with their weaknesses, equally. Participants acknowledged the importance of accepting their mistakes and how it helped them to relax. For example, Rebecca states, “I think I’ve relaxed a lot more. I’ve come to know some things that have made me relax…that is just developing as a human. You can do what you can do, you have to forgive yourself when you make mistakes, and it's just a technique” (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012). Theriault et al. (2009) confirms this effect in stating, “Counsellors recounted being relieved when they were able to admit to mistakes and limitations, both internally and interpersonally” (p. 113).
Novice counsellors all agree they currently have a stronger understanding of relationships and their personal roles within them. It is stated, “I think it's definitely strengthened all of my relationships and my interactions I think I’m really just more sensitive and more understanding to their needs because I guess part of the training is that you work as a counselor or the development is to listen for the unspoken” (Rebecca, personal communication, February, 2012). They believe it is a result of having a stronger understanding of self and their personal change process which allows them understand roles. Although the literature does not specifically identify the effect on personal relationships Pederson (2002) reflects how self-awareness in counselling relationships contributes to: ability to recognize communication styles, sensitivity to nonverbal cues, concern for welfare of persons, ability to establish empathic rapport, and finding common ground with others (p. 9-11). Although the context in which Pederson (2002) relates these abilities is professional, they are relevant and applicable to personal relationships as well. Kennedy and Black (2010) address the effect of being a novice counsellor on their personal relationships and states there is a reported improvement in communication, a stronger interpersonal relationship, a greater self-awareness, a better understanding of family and values, increased acceptance of others, and a richer life. It is stated that an increase in self-awareness led to a better understanding of self which transferred over into their personal relationships. This development resulted in counsellors having a clearer perception of their family and friends.

The novice counsellors also report having an authentic relationship with their clients occurred when they felt they were able to be true to themselves. In other words, when novice counsellor’s felt their personal self and professional self were one in the same, they were able to be genuine and perform to their best ability. Theriault et al. (2009) study supports this occurrence in reporting novice counsellors were more at ease when they could be upfront with
clients about their level of experience and indicate it is effective in maintaining a true and honest therapeutic relationship (p. 113). Davidson and Gilbert (1993) reinforces this concept in his study where he declares that one’s personal identity is synonymous with their career identity. This promotes the importance of having a secure identity because only then can an individual be secure with who they are. Kennedy and Black (2010) state developing counsellors found they were able to “trust themselves more, felt more comfortable with themselves, felt more whole and felt more like their true selves” (p. 427).

As a final result, the novice counsellors all identified themselves as happy in their choices to be therapists. Although there are many stressful challenges in being a novice counsellor, the literature shows that regardless of uncertainty, learning or the need for self-awareness, novice counsellors remained dedicated to the practice of therapy. Theriault et al. (2009) states, “While stress levels were uncomfortable for counsellors, none of the counsellors in our study report becoming incapacitated…” (p. 116). The novice counsellors persevere using the practice of self-reflection to increase awareness and acceptance of self. Jessica reports in her interview she chose not be defeated by the sense of struggle or incompetence, she intends to push through.

**The Essence of the Experience in relation to Research Questions**

This section aims to relate each theme to the objective of the study and in turn the essence of *Transition*. Transition is a stage between stages where changes and development are observed. In being a novice counsellor, one is no longer a counsellor-in-training however they also lack ample practice to be acknowledged as an experienced or seasoned therapist. The experience of a novice counsellor can be related to the cocoon stage of caterpillar’s life.
The first objective of this study is to identify what defines a novice counsellor. The themes identified through the data analysis which participants felt defined them as novice counsellors were uncertainty and learning.

The theme of uncertainty is discussed on various levels related career decisions, unpredictable nature of a novice counselling position, and fear of incompetence. Uncertainty is generally a common trait experienced by anyone experiencing a transition. As described by the novice counsellor themselves, they are viewed as professionals in the field, yet lack the years of practice to feel fully confident in their knowledge and ability. Being novice counsellor illustrates a sense of development and a need for more learning.

The theme of learning is also described by novice counsellors as a defining characteristic. The concept of “still learning” implied there is more to know about the practice of therapy. The participants attribute a solid knowledge base as a characteristic of an experienced counsellor. They share:

Now I actually completely appreciate people who can say "I do not know at all." I like that way better than somebody who is going to give me some answer that they are just making something up at that moment because they do not want to say "I do not know."

So yes, I am still figuring it all out. (Carly, personal communication, November, 2012)

Carly states it is important to accept that no one knows it all, but as time progresses they will know more. Uncertainty and notion of learning are the characteristics novice counsellors believe define who they are.

The second research objective of this study is to identify the importance and effect of personal experiences (earlier influences) on a novice counsellor’s professional development. To be in transition is to also have a sense of where you began. Anchoring, in essence is the ability to
remain grounded in what you know. Novice counsellors identify they do feel some confidence in reaching this stage of their development:

I have moved forward in a really positive way from being a counsellor-in-training where I feel confident with what I am doing, knowing that I need to learn more still but I feel confident where I am. (Cathy, personal communication, February, 2012)

Cathy speaks to the confidence she has in being a novice counsellor regardless of challenges she faces. The importance of experiences in the essence of transition is to move forward, one must understand why they are there. Experiences shape identity and provide roots they can eventually grow and develop.

The third research objective aims to identify how a novice counsellor is shaped by their development. Self-awareness is attained through reflective practice which is a learned tool. A novice counsellor’s development can only shape who they are as professionals when they acknowledge the changes they experience. If they do not recognize their process of change then they are not aware of their development. In transition changes and development are constantly occurring and a heightened sense of self-awareness allows the novice counsellor to reflect on their development:

I remember thinking through Master's degree and through education because it is the start of lots of reflection: “Why are we doing this?” It seemed so repetitive. There were times you get tired of writing your reflections and your processes but after all of it, I feel like I know myself a lot more than some other people may know themselves, that I am very aware of my own feelings and my thoughts. (Daria, personal communication, March, 2012)
Daria describes her reflective process as a counsellor-in-training and its significance in her development of a stronger awareness of self.

**Implications for Practice**

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the lived experience of a novice counsellor and identify what they need to develop stronger identities. As a result, it has been identified that novice counsellors are in a stage of transition and in turn are seeking ways to transition more easily. Therefore one can imply the information from this study is applicable in three ways. It will allow novice counsellors to: identify and accept that being a novice counsellor is to be in transition, develop trust and confidence in the skills they take into the field, and have a positive and realistic perspective of what it means to be a novice counsellor.

Usually you are just done. There is no course, there is no nothing that prepares you for what life is going to be like when you are done. That is so needed, it is a huge part of it.

(Carly, personal communication, November, 2012)

A novice counsellor’s ability to identify and accept the essence of transition will aid them in accepting their growth. Novice counsellors enter the field with hopes to excel however after completing the honeymoon phase of graduation and the release from academia, the reality of the counselling field is often more intimidating than expected. The acceptance of transition allows a new therapist to accept they are new, they will not have all of the answers but there is time and space to learn. As well, being a novice counsellor does not mean they enter the field empty handed. The reflecting piece of transition will allow novice therapists to identify and reaffirm the skills they take with them into the field of therapy.
The development of trust and confidence in personal and professional skill set is often overlooked. After graduation, a novice counsellor spends the majority of their time and energy focusing on what they do not have or cannot offer as opposed to what they do and can offer. This study helps promote the importance of positive self-reflection which novice counsellors can take with them into the field.

Finally, having a positive *and* realistic view of being a novice counsellor is crucial for further development. A clear understanding between what a novice counsellor knows and what must be learned ultimately provides a mental balance of confidence and a positive sense of growth and development.

**Implications for Theory**

This study provides a summary of various theoretical frameworks ranging from models of learning, self-disclosure, creative practices, and identity development. The greatest criticism of the literature is the lack of a core theory or model that pertains to counsellor development. The use of too many models has a negative effect on counsellor training programs. Every counsellor-in-training is educated using various models which results in them entering the field at different stages of development. This study acknowledged each of the theoretical frameworks related to counsellor development in the hopes to identify the model most applicable for the future training of counsellors. In addition it addresses the theories in relation to the results of the study.

The theory of learning in relation to Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) is the primary basis of learning for this study. However, other models of learning which were identified and explored included Lewin (1890-1947), Dewy (1938), and Piaget (1896-1980). Of these models, the model which best fit the ideals and importance of identity development is Piaget’s model of learning. Although the other models did incorporate the essence of experiential learning
and the significance of experiences, Piaget’s model most accurately addressed the developmental process of counsellors. His model is applicable to all ages of human development, nevertheless its emphasis reflective practices in learning is the key factor that makes it essential to novice counsellor development.

The theory of self-disclosure is crucial to this study because it is a valuable method of self-reflection which in turn promotes self-awareness. This study identified Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor’s Social penetration model, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham’s Johari Window model, and Allen and Kreb’s Dramatic Psychological Storytelling model. Each model exemplified the significance of self-disclosure however the social penetration and Johari Window model share an emphasis on self-disclosure within interpersonal relationships. The DPS model addresses self-disclosure through creative means as well as addresses it in interpersonal relationships and on an individual level. For the identity development of a novice counsellor, self-disclosure needs to occur on a personal (self-awareness) and professional (supervision, group work) level during training. It is for this reason that this study opted to focus on the DPS model.

The use of creative practices is a new and upcoming tool for the development for counsellor identity. This study addresses the use of phototherapy, collaging, storytelling techniques to help facilitate self-reflection, disclosure as a means to promote self-awareness. Each of the models identified did not specifically pertain to counsellor development. However this study took those models and applied them to counsellor development so as to provide a new process of self-reflective practices that novice counsellors find helpful and fulfilling during training and after entering the field.
Understanding how to promote strong identity development amongst novice counsellor is a central objective of this study. For this reason, the use of the Recycling Identity Formation Process provided an understanding of how experiences shape the individual (individuation) and their perception of who they are as individuals and professionals (self-awareness). The RIFP model does not have a great deal of supporting literature yet its well-rounded methodology is easily incorporated to the selected models of learning and the use of creative practices. In addition, the cyclical approach of the RIF process (identify, clarify and re-clarify) is suitable to the process of development in that there is no termination. The process cycles over as many times as needed for the process of development and any new items of learning.

The major themes extracted from the data analysis included anchoring, uncertainty, knowledge seeking and self-awareness. Each of these themes lent themselves to an overall essence of transition. The theories identified for this study do acknowledge and speak to the themes of knowledge seeking (learning), uncertainty (self-doubt, fear of incompetence) and self-awareness. Conversely the theories did not specifically address the theme of anchoring or the overall essence of transition. This gap between theory and results acknowledges the need for further investigation of the theories around counsellor identity development.

Implications of Future Directions

Following the interview process of this study, a participant offered her reflection of the data collection process:

I am, in the back of my mind, “How can they incorporate this into the transition from training to therapist?”...It might be interesting for you to add to your repertoire. It is like how can we make that transition better? I think having opportunities like this to process it, because you made me aware of things that I did not realize. It is like doing an exit or
doing a closing session with a client. You are asking all these questions to review the work that has been done to crystallize it and leave them with that sense of “Yeah, I did really work hard and things really have changed.” I feel like this has been a really nice opportunity for me to get that. I feel really good now. (Jessica, personal communication, June, 2012)

Jessica expressed the importance for novice counsellor to have an outlet for reflection following their degree. She reflects on the effect the study had on her and how it allowed her to process her feelings as novice counsellor. She also spoke to her heightened awareness of self as a result of the study.

Jessica’s reflection provided insight in to the future direction of this research. Identifying the essence of transition and the qualities attributed to being a novice counsellor (anchoring, uncertainty, knowledge seeking, self-awareness) occurred in hopes to aid the development of a stronger novice counsellor identity. For this reason, the findings of this study give way to a future pilot project which may be referred to as “The Exit Slip”. Such a project provides counsellors-in-training with the opportunity to reflect on their development and identify the strengths and skills to take into the field of counselling. Novice counsellors will also have the ability to identify their areas of growth and determine how they can prepare to handle approaching challenges, fears and expectations. The future implication of counsellor training programming is to make the process of transition smoother, less stressful and less intimidating.

It is evident that there is a need for modification of theories and models of identity development. More important, the findings of this study open opportunities for it to be used as a teaching tool and/or a program evaluation tool. In one-on-one supervision models, creative, self-reflective practices may prove to be a necessary tool that can be used universally by all novice
counsellors in the near future. In Shepard and Guenette (2010) study, participants of the study state feeling that this new and inventive means of self expression provided for them an avenue to be open and aware of themselves. “The art work allowed me to be transparent with myself” (p. 304). In addition, the unique retrospective approach to this study opens up the opportunity for evaluating practicum programs. Using this approach, counsellors-in-training, through creative, reflective practices (collaging and storytelling), can acknowledge the effect of their practicum experience on their current view of their abilities, as well as the areas they feel require more development. Novice counsellors may also use the findings of this study to illustrate their personal and professional growth as a means of establishing personal confidence in their abilities as helpers.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study

Limitations. The qualitative research, there are various limitations that affect the process and outcome of the study. Limitations include: accuracy of self-reports (retrospective accounts), potential biased interpretations, limited number of participants, and gender limitation. Firstly, participants were asked to recount their experiences through a retrospective analysis. Due to the nature of “remembering” experience, the presenting risk is the loss of accuracy in the narration. In qualitative research, this is a necessary forgo due to the desire to attain first perspective, descriptive accounts of a novice counsellors lived experience. Secondly, due to the nature of qualitative research and the significance of interpreting themes and essences, human error naturally presents a margin for bias. As well this researcher also identifies as a novice counsellor which may have affected the analysis of data. The results of this study are simply a means to a better understanding of novice counsellor development. The results are not concrete conclusions, however they are implications based on the shared experiences of novice counsellors.
Two limitations with regards to the participants included number of participants and gender. The limited number of participants is a direct result of the restrictive criteria used to choose participants. The specificity in the type of participant needed for this study is necessary in attaining significant and applicable data. As well, there is a difficulty in attaining participants who had established a job shortly after graduation which resulted in a limited sample size. All participants for this study were female as the area of counselling is found to be a female dominated career. This presents a limiting factor in that experiences shared and collected may potentially be specific to the female gender. This prevents the results of this study from being more broadly applied to all novice counsellors.

**Strengths.** Qualitative research is a strengthening form of research. Strengths of this study include: bridging gaps in the literature, unique methods of data collection, multiple method of data collection (collaging, storytelling, and semi-structured interview) and a first person account.

The research literature describes the theoretical frameworks of novice counsellor identity development however it lacks in its ability to identify what novice counsellors require to develop stronger identities. This study bridges the topics of novice counsellor identity development and the personal and professional needs through the use of creative data collection methods. This study utilizes unique methods of data collection including phototherapy, collaging, and storytelling. These exclusive forms of data collection provide an opportunity for participants to extract information using non-verbal activities. Artistic means of data collection supplements verbal communication (semi-structured interviews). This provides participants with an additional means of communication and self-reflection.
Multiple forms of data collection provides rigor to the study and a means of confirmation. When the same data presents itself in various forms it produces stronger themes in the data analysis. As well, in the phenomenological approach of qualitative research, a first person account of experience is the most accurate extraction of truth a researcher can attain.

Summary

The primary aim of this chapter is to extract the core themes from the data analysis and relate the findings of the research to the supportive literary works around novice counsellor identity development. In addition, the identified themes were used to answer the research objectives in relation to the essence of “transition” for novice counsellors. The topic of novice counsellors is an area in need of more attention. With that in mind, this study provides insight into what novice counsellors require to accept their transition and develop a stronger identity. In addition, future programming can be modified, to facilitate smoother transition into the novice counsellor stage.

A novice counsellor’s collage is an illustration of their experiences, and their story is their collection of meaning. Meaning gives an individual purpose, a goal, and a reason to pursue their vocation. To be a skilled helper, one must develop a full identity where they are aware of who they are and the forces that have shaped them. As a result, a novice counsellor becomes a helper with a desire to capitalize on his or her strengths and excel in the counselling field.
References


Appendix A: Story Map

(Allen & Krebs, 2007, p. 36-7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Succinctly describe your story.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Who is in the story? When is it happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is going on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How will you start your story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What will your first sentence be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where is it happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What will the setting look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What worlds will you use to describe the setting and how can you help paint a mind picture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating Event</strong></td>
<td>What specific event inspired you to create this story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complication</strong></td>
<td>What challenge(s) does the main character need to overcome?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sequence of Events</strong></td>
<td>What events happen first, next, last?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does the main character do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does he/she act and react in a believable way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolution</strong></td>
<td>How will things work out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What issues need to be confronted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How will your story end?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coda</strong></td>
<td>The message or moral of the story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Research Objectives

Research objectives of this qualitative study:

1. Identify what novice counsellors bring to their work
2. Identify the impact of personal experiences on a novice counsellor’s professional development.
3. Identify how a novice counsellor is shaped by their training

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

(Modified from Woodgate, 2010)

1. Could you please first tell me a little bit about yourself?  
(Warm-up question)

2. Could you please tell me what brought you to enroll in a helper-related program?  
Probes:
- When did you first enter your program?
- Could you please tell me why you decided to become a counsellor?
- What/who influenced your decision to go to enter your program?
- What do you hope to achieve?
- Are you happy with your decision to become a counsellor?
- What is the primary reason you decided to continue in becoming a counsellor?
- If you did not enter your program what would you be doing?

3. Could you please describe to me what a typical day is like for a novice counsellor?  
Probes:
- Walk me through a typical day?
- Please describe what a good day was like for you?
- Please describe what a bad day was like for you?
- Could you tell me what type(s) of training you participated in?
- How did your practicum training impact your daily life, outside of your practicum?
- Could you please describe the effects of these impacts?

4. How different is your life today as a novice counsellor compared to when you were a counsellor-in-training?  
Probes:
- Has your life changed since completing your training? If yes, please explain?
• How has being a novice counsellor influenced the way that you deal with daily life?
• What changes did you make in your life since being a counsellor-in-training?
• (Probe re: work life, home life, financial, personal)
• What would you say has been the biggest change for you since completing your counsellor training?
• Do you deal with things differently now that you are a novice counsellor? Please explain.

5. Could you please tell me about the types of challenges you experienced since becoming a novice counsellor?
Probes:
• How did you cope with the challenges associated with being a novice counsellor?
• Do you deal with challenges differently now upon completing your counsellor training? Please explain.

6. Could you please tell me about the type of opportunities you have experienced since becoming novice counsellor?
Probes:
• How did you deal with the opportunities presented to you?
• Do you deal with opportunities differently now that you have completed your practicum training? Please explain.

7. What identifies you as a novice counsellor?
Probes:
• How would you define a “novice counsellor”?
• How is being a novice counsellor different from being a counsellor-in-training?
• How is being a novice counsellor different from being a helper in general?
• How is being a novice counsellor different from being yourself?
• How much of your identity is dependent on your role as “novice counsellor”?
• What memories-events represent to you what it means to be a novice counsellor?

8. How has being a novice counsellor affected you relationships with others?
Probes:
• What would your friends and family say about your practicum training?
• What would you say has been the biggest change your friends and family have noticed in you upon completing your training?
• What kind of support did you receive from your friends and family?
• What kind of support would have preferred from your friends and family?
• On a scale of 1-10, 1 being ‘very little’ and 10 being ‘great’, what kind of impact being a novice counsellor have on your family/partner? Please explain.
• How do you create a balance between being a helper and caring for yourself?

9. Overall, how would you say being a novice counsellor has affected you personally?
Probes:
• What impact has it had on you as a person? …mother (depending on who the participant is)…. daughter, wife…? Etc…?
• Overall, how would you say becoming a novice counsellor has affected you personally?
• What changes have you noticed?
• How do you view these changes? (Positive/Negative) Please explain?
• If you could change one thing about yourself what would it be?

10. Overall, how would you having been a novice counsellor has affected your daily life?
Probes:
• How is life better… worse… the same…since completing your training?
• On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 be the highest), do you still consider yourself a novice counsellor… why or why not? How so?

11. What do you wish others to know about what it is like to be a novice counsellor?
Probes:
• What do you want others to know about your wishes/goals?
Appendix C: Debrief

DEBRIEF:

1. Is there anything else you would like to talk about that we did not discuss here today?
2. How do you feel right now about the process of this interview?
3. Did you feel any emotional triggers throughout the interview?
   a. If so, would you like to speak about them?
   b. What types of emotions were triggered?
Appendix D: Field Notes

FIELD NOTES:

Setting:

Physical Observations (Behavioural patterns and nonverbal cues):

Emotional Triggers:

Sources of Information:

Context of Experiences:

Significant and Influential Factors:

Interruptions:

Personal Thoughts:
Appendix E: Informed Consent Forms

Research Project Title:
The Lived Experience of Novice Counsellors: A Qualitative Phenomenological Approach

Researcher(s):
Cyndi Sanjana Kirupakaran, Faculty of Education

Please contact me if you have questions: Email: cyndi_s_kay@yahoo.ca; Phone: 996-9708; Regular mail: 139 Bernfield Bay, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 5T9

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this research is to understand and describe the lived experience of novice counsellors to better grasp its effect on helpers on a professional as well as a personal level. Specifically, I want to:

1. Identify what counsellors bring to their work.
2. Identify the impact of personal experiences on a counsellor’s professional development.
3. Identify how a counsellor is shaped by their training.

Participants selected for this study must meet the following conditions:

1. Must be able to speak and write in English
2. Must have completed a graduate degree in counselling
3. Have worked as a counsellor for 1 – 5 years
4. Are willing to explore and articulate their lived experiences as a novice counsellor

You are being asked to participate in my research. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in two one-on-one meetings. The both meetings will be held at a place and time at your convenience. The activities in the 2 meeting are as follows:

Meeting 1 (Approximately 1 hour):
- Explanation and signing of the participant consent form, photography consent/release form, transcriptionist confidentiality agreement and the researcher confidentiality agreement.
• Explanation of the photography activity and presentation of activity materials (disposable camera, reflection questions, journal).
• Explanation of 2nd meeting exercises (Collage activity, Storytelling activity – story map, semi-structured interview, and debrief).

Meeting 2 (Approximately 3 hours):
• Collage activity (30 – 45 minutes)
• Storytelling activity – story map (45 – 60 minutes)
• Semi-structured interview (90 minutes)
• Optional: Debrief

In the first meeting, we will go through this consent form, a confidentiality agreement, researcher confidentiality agreement and a photography consent/release form. You reserve the right to withhold the use of your photos and collages in my study. Full confidentiality will be honored for this assignment where by names, workplaces, and locations will be coded and changed as agreed upon by us. Also note that all tape recordings will be transcribed by a hired transcriptionist who will be expected to sign a confidentiality agreement. Copies will be made for you to keep for your personal records. The original consent form will be kept by me along with the confidentiality agreement and photography consent/release forms. You will be provided with a copy of all signed and original documents. The final paper and results will be available for viewing following the study.

Upon the signing of the consent forms, you will be provided with a disposable camera and will be given a minimum of a week’s time to take your own photo’s to be used for a collage activity (2nd meeting). In this photography exercise, you will be instructed to take photos of any item that symbolically represents your experience of what it means to be a counsellor. You will not be permitted to take pictures of other individuals. The photos that you take should capture the aspects of your life that influence you, such as your goals, hopes, desired outcomes, personal circumstances, fears, and relationships. You will then be provided with a journal and a list of reflection questions to respond to for each picture that you take. Prior to the second meeting, please be sure to develop your photos and keep you receipts. I will reimburse you in our second meeting.

The second meeting will also take place at a time and location that is convenient for you, preferably no more than a week after the initial meet. During our second meeting I will ask you to create a collage that illustrates where you feel you are as a novice counsellor. You will be given approximately 30 to 40 minutes to create a poster size collage using the photographs you took, various types of magazines and newspapers, scissors and glue (provided by me). Please feel free to bring any additional magazines, old pictures or newspapers that you find throughout the week, but be sure to reflect on these images in your journal.

Following the creation of your collage, you will be asked to partake in the storytelling component of data collection which will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. In this activity you will be asked to share your personal stories as depicted through your collage. At this point in time, you are welcome to refer back to your journals to elicit your thoughts and feelings during the photo taking experience. I will provide you with a
story map to fill out during this process. The story map is a reflective and therapeutic process that you do not have to share with me if you do not wish to.

The final exercise will be a semi-structured, open-ended interview which, with your consent, will be audio-taped and transcribed. The interview will span to a maximum of one and a half hour where by the interview will be recorded. A basic tape recording device shall be used. Following the second meeting, the recording will be transcribed to paper by a transcriptionist. Once the transcribed interview is affirmed, you will receive, via e-mail, a copy of the transcribed interview approximately 2 – 3 weeks after the interview. You will be given the opportunity to add to or adjust your responses. Once the changes have been made, the final transcription with new responses and additions will be completed by the researcher and sent to you for your personal records.

This project may bring up challenging experiences or thoughts from past experiences. Should this occur throughout the project an optional debrief session will be included as well as additional resources will be provided to you should you need it.

Your interview responses, responses gathered during the debrief, and all field notes I make will be coded and kept confidential. Only I, my adviser and my transcriptionist will have access to the collages, the audio-recording from the interview, transcriptions of the interview and debrief, and the field notes taken during the meetings. Please note that direct quotations from your transcribed interviews may be used in the written research but your identity will remain coded and anonymous and no personal identifying information will be used. This research will lead to the creation of my M.Ed. thesis and a technical report. In order to preserve your anonymity, only aggregate data will be used in these documents. I will keep all of the collages, interview audio-recordings, transcriptions, and hand-written field notes in a locked cabinet in my house. This material will be destroyed on or before December 31, 2012.

Your time is valuable. If you participate in this research you will receive a $10 gift card from Starbucks. A copy of this consent form will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher. If you wish to receive a summary of the study results, please provide your mailing or email address:

______________________________________________________________________________


If you wish to receive a copy of your interview transcript, please provide your mailing or email address:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Your name (please print)
Your email address (this address will not be distributed and is only used for emailing you a link to the survey questionnaire, and notifying you about the summary presentation).

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have concerns about this research project, please contact:

Margaret (Maggie) Bowman  
Coordinator - Human Ethics  
CTC Building  
University of Manitoba  
208 - 194 Dafoe Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2  
(204) 474.7122  
(204) 269.7173 (fax)
**Researcher Confidentiality Agreement**

This study, *The Lived Experience of Novice Counsellors: A Qualitative Phenomenological Approach* is being undertaken by Cyndi Kirupakaran at the University of Manitoba.

The study has 3 objectives:

1. Identify what counsellors bring to their work.
2. Identify the impact of personal experiences on a counsellor’s professional development.
3. Identify how a counsellor is shaped by their training.

Data from this study will be used to understand and describe the lived experience of Novice Counsellors to better grasp its effect on helpers on a professional as well as a personal level.

I, Cyndi Sanjana Kirupakaran, agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g. disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than my Adviser and Transcriptionist(s);
2. Full confidentiality will be honoured for this study where by names, workplaces, and locations will be changed as agreed upon by us;
3. Keep all research information in any form or format secure while it is in my possession;
4. Erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable.

Principal Researcher:

________________________        __________________________   ________________
(print name)                                         (signature)                                   (date)

Participant:

________________________        __________________________   ________________
(print name)                                         (signature)                                   (date)

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Margaret (Maggie) Bowman  
Coordinator - Human Ethics  
CTC Building  
University of Manitoba  
208 - 194 Dafoe Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2  
(204) 474.7122  
(204) 269.7173 (fax)

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba.
Confidentiality Agreement
Transcription Services

I, ________________________, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Cyndi Kirupkaran related to her Master's Thesis study on The Lived Experience a Novice Counsellor. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Cyndi Kirupakaran;

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;

4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Cyndi Kirupakaran in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber’s name (printed) ________________________________________________

Transcriber’s signature _____________________________________________________

Date _________________________________________________________________
PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT / RELEASE FORM

I, (print name) _____________________________________, hereby grant permission to Miss. Cyndi Sanjana Kirupakaran, M.Ed. Graduate Student to take and use: photographs and/or digital images of my collage for use in her educational materials. I am aware that the materials in which images of my collage may appear include printed or electronic publications (i.e. research thesis), presentations/publications, Web sites or other electronic communications. I further agree that my name and identity will be coded and my original information will not be revealed in descriptive text and commentary in connection with the image(s). I authorize the use of these images without compensation to me. I also understand that I will be instructed to take photos of any item that symbolically represents my experience of what it means to be a counsellor but will not be permitted to take pictures of other individuals.

In addition, I understand that I reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time I deem necessary.

______________________________________________  
(Date)

______________________________________________  
(Signature of adult subject)