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A MODEL FOR INTEGRATING COLLABORATIVE LIFE-STORY  
WRITING INTO COUNSELOR TRAINING PROGRAMS

BY

JENNIFER SCHROEDER ANDREWS

Bachelor of Arts, University of New Hampshire, 2002

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Counseling

December, 2008

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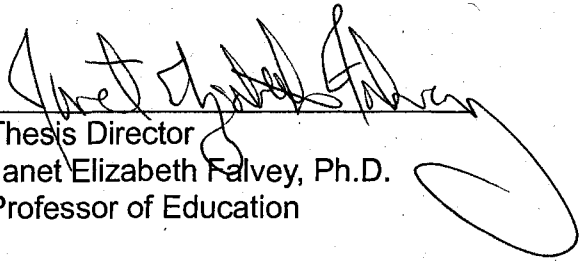
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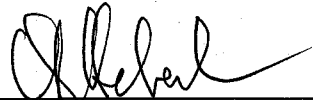
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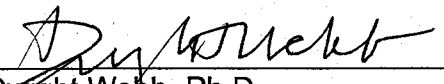
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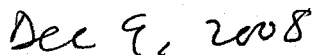
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## ABSTRACT

### A MODEL FOR INTEGRATING COLLABORATIVE LIFE-STORY WRITING INTO COUNSELOR TRAINING PROGRAMS

by

Jennifer Schroeder Andrews

University of New Hampshire, December, 2008

Given the fundamental role of narrative deconstruction and reconstruction of client stories within the counseling profession, this thesis proposes creation of an elective course for counselor trainees based upon activities constructing personal experience narratives collaboratively in student dyads and in groups. The course was developed to facilitate three elements of professional and personal development: increased application of knowledge—specifically, knowledge of core counseling theories and tenets, social constructivism and narrative construction; interpersonal and relational skills; and judgment and maturity.

A review of the literature related to existing standards and precedents in counselor training, and the relationship to and use of collaborative narrative in counseling, directed the development of the proposed model. It includes a course syllabus, readings, descriptions of class exercises and methods for student evaluation. In order to determine the efficacy of the course, empirical means of evaluation including content analysis and pre-and post course assessments are suggested.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

I came to the counseling profession as the result of an experience in my final year as an undergraduate helping to facilitate an “intergenerational, growth-oriented writing workshop.” The program, called “Journey With Me,” provided a powerful, though inadvertent, encounter with what counseling is about: understanding ourselves and each other through stories—and using that understanding to create a connection that fosters acceptance, growth and healing. As I believe my story here will show, the potential for using a model similar to that employed in the Journey With Me workshop, to help counselor trainees develop skills and apply relevant concepts, could be powerful.

In the fall of 2001, I was training rather halfheartedly to be a journalist—this seeming the most pragmatic choice of careers for someone whose primary preoccupation since toddlerhood had been reading, and as an extension, writing. I learned from a professor about a potential internship working with someone named Fran, who had organized a program of ongoing writing workshops in nursing homes and retirement communities. Since she believed in the value of allowing younger and older generations to learn from each other, Fran always recruited one or two college students to help facilitate the workshops. Since I believed in the value of storytelling at any age, I signed on.

Fran had held such workshops thrice previously, at two different locations. That fall, she was offering the program in a new, assisted-living location, which presented an interesting challenge as the participants were more impaired than had been the writers in her previous sessions. As it turned out, five of the eight residents who participated were in early stages of a progression into dementia, and none of the eight were able to write their own contributions from week to week without assistance. This meant that both the structure of the workshops, and the facilitators' roles in the group, had to be substantially changed. Instead of merely typing up others' handwritten stories, making copies of the manuscripts, and "workshopping" them with the group, I became the amanuensis for three of the participants—with Fran and another volunteer filling the same role for the others. I would spend 30-45 minutes with each of "my" three each week, sitting down with both tape recorder and notepad, documenting a story for each.

While theoretically these could be fiction or non-fiction stories, in every case what my group members related were personal experience narratives. These were fascinating oral histories. Initially I was content simply taking them down more-or-less verbatim, perhaps asking a clarifying question or two. I would transcribe these tales, committing them to paper and bringing them back the next week so that each person could, first off, read over the transcribed tale with me to make sure I had got it "right"—and if I had, read aloud their story to the group in the workshop (which became primarily a chance to share, rather than a space for critique.)

While this might sound simple or even mundane, it turned out to be profound, on several levels. First, the experience of writing these down in the first person gave me an odd but undeniable sense of ownership, which was only amplified by the circumstance that more than once I was asked by the person whose story it really was to read it aloud, written as it was in first person, on their behalf to the group. Being called upon to be the narrator made it come alive to me in ways it sometimes hadn't as I was listening to the initial telling. In order to create a realistic depth of tone, I had to "put myself in it"—without, however, substituting my own feelings, attitudes or reactions for theirs, since these were very personal, even defining, stories. I needed to *emotionally* understand the story as another, while *intellectually* understanding and crafting the story, myself. This was a very hands-on exercise in empathic listening.

Second, it was not always the case that they would remember who I was from week to week, much less remember what we had talked about. In fact, two of "my" people forgot our talks more often than they remembered; when I would ask them to share a story, they might go back to the exact same one they had told me last week—frequently using identical language, rhythms, expressions. Sometimes these repeat stories would feature just one added, or perhaps altered, detail, and these deviations provided great opportunities to begin to delve more deeply, ask clarifying questions, test explanations or understandings that perhaps had been left implicit. This challenge of accurately reflecting, not just what these people were saying but what they meant—about their experiences, and the lessons they learned or explanations they constructed in

response—was huge. The reward in getting it right was equally huge, watching people recognize themselves and feel re-connected to their own identities and core narratives, at a time when for several of our participants it seemed as if these were inevitably slipping away.

Third, as the project progressed it became increasingly possible to see common narrative threads, as key characters, explanations, and even plot lines would re-emerge from one week's tale to the next. As an inveterate reader and a fundamentally analytical person, it was fascinating to think about what these themes, primary characters, or recurring metaphors meant to each individual, how they added up to and informed an understanding of one's identity, sense of self-worth and ultimate evaluation of the overall quality of one's life.

Fourth, it was amazing to see what happened as these stories of experiences were shared with the group. As much as the recognition of themselves in their own written stories was powerful, the validation and sense of identity that resulted from the sharing of these stories in the group was even more so. We did very little "workshopping" in the traditional sense, since most of our participants were beyond much interest in the technicalities of narrative construction. Yet the stories themselves were hubs of animated discussion; they so much enjoyed talking about themselves, hearing about each other, and identifying many common experiences, opinions and ideas.

Finally, as part of the internship I was doing a great deal of outside reading relevant to the experience, and in the course of that reading came across Erik Erickson's eight life stages, which included as a final stage, for "older

adults,” that of “integrity vs despair.” The work we were doing seemed directly related; it felt as if it was our role to bear witness to, and support, our group members as they faced the developmentally-appropriate task of understanding and making peace with the accomplishments and experiences of their lives, from the disadvantageous standpoint of confusion and disconnection wrought by illness. Supporting others in this endeavor felt good, and offered implicit challenge to pay attention to my own developmental journey. Hearing and writing others’ stories made me consider my own—and hearing others validated and accepted through the sharing of their stories helped me think more kindly and optimistically about my own experiences and core narratives.

When the workshop ended, I knew this was the kind of work I wanted to do, but it did not, in practical terms, seem a credible way to make a living. However, its day-to-day elements and rewards seemed in many ways parallel to counseling, with its focus on listening, reflecting, supporting others in their emotional or psychological development. This experience was a bridge, for me, to pursuit of counselor training. It afforded me an engrossing, deeply personal introduction to many of the concepts and skills which would indeed prove central in my Masters program. However, while throughout that program we often considered our own stories, and listened to pieces of our peers’, we never did so literally, together, in writing. Having had such an experience with Journey With Me, I believe something similar could have been used to good effect in the counselor training program. This thesis, then, attempts to translate the power of the Journey With Me workshop into the context of a counselor training Masters

curriculum, by offering a proposed course model based explicitly on the Journey With Me program.

### **Purpose**

The proposed course, to be offered as an elective in accredited, Masters-level counseling programs, will ask counselors-in-training to deliberately engage in collaborative narrative by sharing, writing and co-editing each others' life stories. This will allow trainees to experience, and practice, formation of a therapeutic alliance as they co-create these narratives in dyads and "workshop" them in groups. It will facilitate a better grasp of case conceptualization, and application of counseling theory, by asking students to apply tenets of both to analysis of these stories. Throughout the dyad and group work, the model will also encourage students to work with and through the discoveries regarding values, needs and identity that their individual stories, and broader life narratives, pose—and to experience the vulnerability created by sharing their stories in a safe way that nevertheless challenges them to build their empathic capacities.

Creation of the suggested syllabus will be grounded in an examination of the goals, methods and standards of counselor training as outlined in the professional and research literature, the theoretical foundations of counseling, and the relevant theories of narrative's therapeutic value—especially that of life-narratives, biographical and autobiographical storytelling. An outline of criteria and methods that could be used in evaluating the training effectiveness and relevance of such a course, should it be offered, will likewise follow, as will,

ultimately, an exploration of conclusions made and questions raised by this attempt to re-create a formative experience for one counselor trainee.

### **Rationale for creating a training model based on collaborative narrative**

The “Journey With Me” experience effectively highlighted the primal, and the therapeutic, nature of what could fairly be called “collaborative narrative.” One does not have to venture far into the realm of psychology to find explanations and arguments for the power of stories—or for the potential of healing in sharing them. Positing that stories are a vital and unique part of human experience, psychologists Gary Kenyon and William Randall write categorically, “As human beings, we think, perceive, feel, decide and act on the basis of stories” (Kenyon & Randall, 1997, 8). Other theorists have hypothesized that the primary task of the human mind is to “narrativize” experience, that stories are the crux of psychological experience and processing (Howard, 1989; Sarbin, 1986).

If stories are at the core of humans’ psyches and experiences, they are also at the heart of counseling. We as counselors ply our trade by asking clients to share their stories, their “personal experience narratives” (Ferrara, 1994, 52). We then assimilate and re-create those narratives with our clients in their sessions, as we push together at the limits of what is “true” or “real” or necessary or desirable. Out of session, in the broader context of our work, we *also* co-create our client’s stories; we co-create them as *DSM* diagnoses, as case histories, and even as research data.



From this perspective, without the storied text on which to work together, there is no counseling—which suggests that to be effective, clinicians *must* become deft in the process of respectful co-construction of life narrative. Partly, this means developing specific skills and attributes, many of which are identified in much of the theoretical and research literature that is seminal to the field—skills like active listening, empathy, reflection, interpretation and reframing (Torres-Rivera, Wilbur, Maddux, Smaby, Phan, & Roberts-Wilbur, 2002). It also, as my Journey With Me experience suggested, means developing the maturity and ego strength to be a good collaborator, to be able to contribute to a client's story without commandeering or internalizing it (e.g., through unmanaged countertransference) (Grant, 2006).

Given that integral role of collaborative narrative in the counseling profession, the experiences that the model proposed in this thesis affords counselors-in-training—sharing, recording and co-editing each others' life narratives—could truly play an important role in helping trainees gain familiarity and adeptness with narrative conventions used implicitly and explicitly in the counseling profession, focus on relevant skill sets, and work toward their own personal growth and development.

Consider a “typical” counseling session, which translates to a scene like this one: counselor(s) and client(s) sit in a room, together. They think about why they're there, what should happen, or what *is* happening, together. A client, perhaps after some small talk or succinct prompting, offers some narrative communication – some story about “what happened” in the day, week, last year,

in childhood, or perhaps in that first 30 seconds of the session. The counselor listens. The narrative begins as the client's, but as the counselor listens, she/he begins to take an active role in co-creating this narrative. She/he starts to (verbally and non-verbally) reflect, to clarify, to interpret, even to re-frame. Together, counselors and clients work over the offered narrative: exploring it, expanding it by filling in details or broadening its contextual scope, and, often, revising its plot – in essence, effecting change.

Researchers have for decades investigated the effectiveness of various counseling theories, styles and specific interventions, trying to determine *what* exactly happens in counseling to account for its contribution to human growth, development and emotional healing (Asay & Lambert, 1999). The research consensus seems to suggest that it is primarily the quality and strength of that collaboration, the therapeutic relationship, that heals (Fall, Holden & Marquis, 2004; Lambert & Cattani-Thompson, 1996). To a lesser extent, selection and implementation of specific techniques or interventions in therapy play a role in therapeutic outcome (Asay & Lambert, 1999); however, research has shown the use of one type of "intervention" over another seems to be secondary in impact to the skill of the therapist or the quality of the therapeutic relationship (Wampold, 2001, 219). Research has also shown that the specific choice of theoretical framework to which a counselor subscribes has a comparatively minor impact (Castonguay & Goldfried, 1994) – but that developing such a framework is essential for counselor trainees as a foundation for learning and practice (Spruill & Benshoff, 2000), especially to the extent that it allows a counselor to build

confidence and a sense of self-efficacy, which has been linked to positive counseling outcomes (Beutler, Machado, & Neufeldt, 1994).

Would-be counselors learn and practice these competencies in counselor training programs. In such programs:

Counselor education students learn to interact with clients while monitoring their own cognitive and emotional processes; relate to clients in a nonjudgmental, open, and caring manner; and maintain appropriate boundaries. In addition, these graduate students are expected to learn and grow while producing results appropriate to specific academic, professional, and ethical standards. Counseling programs endeavor to develop in students concrete and measurable knowledge of psychopathology, and mastery of skills, necessary to apply diagnostic criteria to clients (Hubbs & Brand, 2005, 61).

In other words, in training, counselors need to learn *what* actions can be taken to help clients (*i.e.*, “concrete and measurable knowledge...”), they need to understand *how* to take those actions (*i.e.*, “relate to clients...,” and “mastery of skill”), and they need to develop the personal *capacity* to do so (*i.e.*, “monitoring their own cognitive and emotional processes”).

Hubbs and Brand’s (2005) “concrete and measurable knowledge of psychopathology” (61) is generally conveyed through the study and application of counseling theory, diagnosis and case conceptualization. The relationship between theory and narrative is tightly woven indeed, since counseling theories are essentially stories of how and why humans behave, feel, act—and change (Fall *et al*, 2004). As for diagnosis, case conceptualization and treatment planning, they are derived from synthesis and interpretation of a client’s life narrative—its internal, subjective presentation of characters, themes, language and plot (Berman, 1997; Corey, 2005).

Not only are narrative conventions implicitly used in developing an understanding of the “what” of human psychology and individual clients’ situations; they are, as sociolinguist and counseling researcher Kathleen Warden Ferrara (1994) points out, integral to the “how” of counseling, its actual practice in individual or group sessions: “narratives are a principal component of each and every therapy session. Clients tell from one to many stories in a given hour’s session” (p. 52). Ferrara (1994) also notes the collaborative nature of the counseling process, especially counseling based (as most is) in dialogue:

Discourse is more complex than the simple concatenation of monologues into conversation.... People create meaning for each other. Reality is jointly constructed as bits and pieces of one’s own and others talk are interwoven in dream interpretation, jointly created extended metaphors, and even jointly produced sentences. (pg. 5-6).

This type of collaboration is the foundation of the counseling relationship – and as noted, learning to “relate to clients” is a primary goal for counselor trainees.

In order to be able to collaborate, to relate, in this fashion, counselors need to have worked through their own stories to some degree. A focus on strengthening counseling trainees’ character and emotional capacity relates to the notion of “fitness—suitability for being a professional counselor,” put forth by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) in their 2009 standards: “Fitness implies psychological health, including the following variables: self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-knowledge, self-confidence, courage, resilience, purpose in life, balance, moderation, and emotional stability” (64). Achievement and maintenance of such qualities has been encouraged in counselor education programs through

reflective self-examination of one's beliefs, values, and identity, through practices which include journaling, biography and autobiography, and self-analysis papers (Green & Saeger, 1982; Hubbs & Brand, 2005; Lawson & Gaushell, 1988)—all of which offer opportunities for narrative exploration, often done collaboratively.

In summary, this author's experience, coupled with the literature of counseling and psychological theory, suggest that a model that asks counselor trainees share their own stories, and accurately co-narrate, in writing, their peers' stories, has the potential to help said trainees develop crucial skills and learn important concepts; what's more, the elements of the proposed model—writing life stories, working in dyads, working in groups—all have firm foundations in existing standards and precedents for counselor trainee programs. The next chapter will explore the required skill and knowledge base, and the connection or potential applicability of collaborative narrative to each; survey existing training models, again focusing in particular on those that connect to the narrative elements of the model, as well as its triad and group components; and delve into ethical considerations relevant to such pedagogical tactics.

### Definitions

For purposes of this model, a distinction will be made between “stories” and “narratives” or “life narratives,” following a convention adopted by narrative therapist Alphons Richert in a 2003 article: *Stories* will refer to vignettes about a discrete and particular time, place, and/or event in a person's life. (These are what will be shared in the work with triads.) *Narrative*, or *life narrative*, will refer to a cohesive, organized aggregation of the individual stories each participant

shares, which should tell the over-arching story (in the general sense of the word) of that person's history and identity. "Both [stories/vignettes and narratives/life narratives] are thought of as conforming to narrative structure and as being generated by the same thought process" (Richert, 2003, p. 206)

Another word/concept at the foundation of this study is *collaborative*: A collaborative relationship is one in which each party is equally invested in a common goal, has equal power to influence the relationship and its outcomes, and is actively participating (Richert, 2003).

### Assumptions

This investigation adopts several core premises as starting points. Though said assumptions have been and/or will be critically examined, explicated or expounded upon in the body of this text through the lenses of existing social science research, counseling theory and clinical research data, they are to varying degrees philosophical in nature and are beyond the realm of quantitative "proof." The first and most fundamental such assumption is that collaborative narrative, the co-creation of stories, is an integral part of the therapeutic experience.

Also assumed: that making the collaborative construction of narrative explicit and tangible through the use of the proposed experiential writing program will allow for counselor trainees to be exposed to the process elements of therapy, to practice necessary skills; and to achieve personal growth and development—and that these three (counseling process, skills and personal development) are an integral part of counselor training.

Finally, this thesis assumes that it is inherently worthwhile to suggest structured alternatives to teaching techniques currently available, regardless of whether existing techniques can individually or together meet the instructional goals laid out for this model. That is, this is not meant to be the *only* tool for teaching counseling process, skills, and necessary personal attributes; nor are its elements suggested to be completely unique. But insofar as it combines accepted teaching methods and activities differently, and presents a way of *integrating* differing instructional aims, it is worthy of consideration.

### Limitations

This thesis suggests a tool of potential relevance in a counselor-training program, pulling from the existing body of theoretical and clinical literature to justify integrating certain instructional activities into one structured and cohesive semester-long course or laboratory exercise. It does, not however, provide any real data on the potential outcome or effectiveness of such a training program, since it does not undertake implementation or evaluation of the same.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The value and relevance of any proposed new model for counselor education and training, including this one featuring structured story co-creation as a framework, must be derived from, and situated within, the context of existing research and current scientific understanding of the profession, as well as existing pedagogical goals, standards, and methods. The following review first considers the question of counselor training broadly, surveying current accreditation standards as well as the theoretical knowledge, skills, competencies and capacities that counselor training programs seek to impart in order to empower developing counselors to achieve therapeutic outcomes. It then explores the relevance of narrative co-creation or re-creation to the development of individual theory, skill and overall fitness for counselor trainees, building a case for mastery of collaborative narrative processes as a precursor to therapeutic outcomes. Finally, it explores the current use of the training elements suggested in the model: co-creation of reflective, biographical and autobiographical narrative; experiential training in dyads or triads; and group counseling simulations. As part of this exploration, a review of ethical considerations in designing experiential training models that require student self-disclosure, particularly with peers, is offered.



## Counselor Training Overview

### Standards and Best Practices

Professional counselors are trained in graduate degree programs, which, given the highly personal and influential nature of the work their students will undertake, “have an ethical obligation to examine students’ personal and professional competencies in order to ensure the quality of graduates’ professional service” (Hensley, Smith & Thompson, 2003). These training programs can apply for accreditation to the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The mission of CACREP, adopted by their Board in 1993 and re-affirmed in 2002 and 2008, is “to promote the professional competence of counseling and related practitioners through the development of preparation standards; encouragement of excellence in program development; accreditation of professional preparation programs” (<http://www.cacrep.org/>). Among many other standards, CACREP outlines “core areas” of “curricular experiences and demonstrated knowledge” for counseling training programs: Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice; Social and Cultural Diversity; Human Growth and Development; Career Development; Helping Relationships; Group Work; Assessment; Research and Program Evaluation (CACREP, 2009, II.G).

In a thorough and insightful review of the professional literature related to counselor training techniques, frameworks and standards, Nelson and Neufeldt (1998) identified eight areas of counselor education regarding which published research was available in any significant quantity – in other words, eight areas

upon which professional counselor education seems to focus: interpersonal skills, case conceptualization and (separate but closely related) cognitive skills, group practice, ethics, counseling theory, research, and consultation. They noted that the majority of published research in nearly all of these areas consisted of proposed training models, saying “our field appreciates the heuristic value of models in teaching skills” (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998, p. 73). These authors argue for a more “constructivist,” less “pedagogical” approach to counselor training, one which has been advocated by proponents of family, feminist, and other fairly modern theoretical approaches. Such theorists emphasize the primacy of individual truths and realities—in contrast to more traditional frameworks which tend to be grounded in more authoritarian, hierarchal and patriarchal, didactic perspective—and these more relativist views have been a big force for change in the field of counseling over the past four-five decades (Corey, 2005).

Advocates of constructivism in the field of counseling and counselor training argue for allowing students to struggle with problems and questions as part of their training, and rely more on their own intuition, wisdom and experience, instead of seeing instructors as omniscient authority figures who have all of the information that they (students) need (Freire, 1993). Referencing this perspective, Nelson and Neufeldt (1998) cite Schon (1983), who suggested a need to train “reflective practitioners;” they then point to studies by Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992a, 1992b) which evaluated the careers of 100 professional therapists across their lifespans and found that “continuous professional

reflection” was reported as the most important element of total counselor development. Based on their review, Nelson and Neufeldt (1998) suggest:

[E]ducating reflective practitioners involves providing the space to reflect, the permission and encouragement to reflect, the knowledge of how to inform one's reflective process, and a safe relational environment in which to consider one's personal and interpersonal experience. They can change both how they respond to the problem or dilemma presented initially (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1997) and, at a deeper level, how they understand themselves as counselors and as people (p. 81).

This goal of developing a collaborative narrative training model that will give participants “permission and encouragement” to talk and write about their “personal and interpersonal experience” seems quite well-aligned with this focus in the literature on training “reflective practitioners,” and the Journey With Me experience certainly did, as noted previously, provide encouragement and space within which to do such reflection. Of clear importance will be the need to provide, as the above authors identify it, “a safe relational environment.”

#### Counseling Knowledge and Theory

The literature that emphasizes self-discovery and reflective practice in counselor training consistently notes an implicit or embedded need for “the knowledge of how to inform one's reflective process” (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998, p. 81) – in other words, a theoretical grounding. In order to help clients, counselors first need to have a deep and well-grounded understanding of why people come to counseling and how counseling might provide a therapeutic outcome (Corey, 2005). In describing what exactly a counseling theory is and what it is meant to accomplish or provide, authors Fall, Holden and Marquis (2004) suggest, “In essence, a counseling theory is a *story of a person*. It is a

theorist's story of each human being's life..." (p. 2). In other words, theory provides insight into the question of "why" – why the client behaves, thinks and feels the way she/he does; why she/he is in counseling; and why the counselor can be helpful.

The need for this theoretical understanding is codified in the aforementioned CACREP core areas; it is included in the requirements for such areas as "human growth and development," "helping relationships," and "social and cultural diversity" (CACREP, 2009, II.G). The need to familiarize students with the most widely accepted existing theories of counseling, and to help them integrate one or more of these models into their own work, has been a sustained theme in the realm of counselor education for decades (Corey, 2005; Sharf, 1996). Counselors trainees need to go beyond basic knowledge of counseling theory, toward application and integration, in order to "begin to adopt a personal model of counseling" (CACREP, 2009, II.G.5.d). One such model has been offered by Spruill and Benschhoff (2000), who note that introduction to theoretical models and the opportunity to begin to apply and integrate theory should happen early on:

Integrating a framework for theory building into counseling education curricula from the beginning of a student's program has the potential to intentionally move him or her toward creating a strong personal theoretical foundation on which to build relationships and interventions with clients. From a training perspective, we need to develop and share a much bigger "menu" of ideas, strategies and techniques for incorporating theory building into different courses and cocurricular experiences in ways that are appropriate to students' developmental levels (p. 76).

Spruill & Benschhoff's model for teaching counselors to integrate theoretical knowledge into their work suggests three phases of development: The first, "personal beliefs," includes activities such as small group discussions, introspective activities, and exercises identifying beliefs and orientations of other students; the second, "counseling theories," involves selecting and defending theories and beginning to intellectually combine personal beliefs with existing theories; and the third, "personal theory of counseling," involves a true integration and application of personal experience and theory (Spruill & Benschhoff, 2000).

The clear emphasis on the imperative to internalize a well-defined, operational theory of counseling begs the question of how a course grounded in collaborative narrative can help trainees toward this goal. The Spruill and Benschhoff (2000) model suggests that an important initial task involves clarifying one's own beliefs, and that might be one obvious function of such a course. To the extent that it asks trainees to think analytically about their experiences and identities in the context of their professional knowledge base, it seems possible that such a course could indeed go further, to help facilitate the next two steps—the abstract and applied integration of beliefs with knowledge.

Thinking about how the proposed course intersects with training and application of counseling theory might present an additional, equally important question: that of what counseling theories or models inform *it*. A course using collaborative narrative as an instructional vehicle, even in the broad terms it has so far been conceived of and described in, does seem intrinsically more aligned with some counseling theories (e.g., person-centered, relational, family,

psychodynamic, narrative) than others (e.g., behavioral or strictly cognitive.) If one goal of such a course was truly to help students further develop and apply their own personal counseling theories, special care would probably need to be taken to “make space” for such theoretical perspectives that are at an implicit remove, philosophically speaking, from a training model based in collaborative narrative.

### “Helping Skills” and Interventions

In a review of existing quantitative research on therapeutic outcomes, Asay and Lambert (1999) conclude that fifteen percent of the effect of counseling or therapy can be attributed to the specific techniques a clinician uses. Making a case for the importance of gaining a much clearer understanding of the effectiveness of skills-focused counselor training, Hill and Lent (2006) undertook to review the literature and provide meta-analyses on two related topics: the effectiveness of three different skills training models (selected because these are the models that nearly all others are based upon), and the efficacy of the actual training methods applied in each of those models. Their analysis examined existing narrative reviews and meta-analyses of training models (11 studies); it also combined data from 21 quantitative studies determined to meet basic methodological criteria (e.g. presence of no-training control group), on the effectiveness of the training *methods* used within the helping-skills training models. As part of the rationale for their research, the authors noted that after a great deal of interest and work on “helping skills” training starting in the sixties, it has fallen out of focus over the past two decades, in favor of more emphasis on

the supervisory relationship, the practicum, and ways to develop the “person” of the would-therapist.

The three models examined in Hill and Lent’s (2006) analysis were Human Relations Training, which teaches trainees to progress through three stages with clients—self-exploration, understanding, and action—and focuses on different sets of skills in each (Carkhuff, 1972); microcounseling, which organizes skills from least to most complex within a pyramid framework, and uses instruction and modeling, practice and feedback to help students learn specific helping skills in an interview setting (Ivey, 1971); and Interpersonal Process Recall, in which trainees are asked to reflect on their feelings and reactions to an interview immediately after it has happened, with the aid of an “inquirer,” to help them understand and get past their performance anxiety and better access the helping skills they inherently possess (Kagan, 1984). The narrative and quantitative meta-analyses both suggested some degree of positive outcomes from the microcounseling and Human Relations Training, less so for the Interpersonal Process Recall—although the researchers noted the difficulty of drawing *any* very strong conclusions, due to a host of methodological and inconsistencies in the existing research base weaknesses (e.g. small sample sizes; lack of ability to factor out the impact that individual trainers may have had, independent of the models or methods), as well as the dated nature of many of the studies.

Hill and Lent also offered conclusions related to the effectiveness of the varied teaching methods used within those models. Instruction, modeling, and

feedback were all teaching methods found to advance the acquisition of skills. “Practicing” was noted as an element common to each training model that, while it has intuitive merit and a strong basis in both learning and counseling theory (Bandura, 1997), was not factored into this meta-analysis since the researchers could only find one study comparing the skill acquisition gained through “practice” against a no-training control group (Hill & Lent, 2006).

The authors suggest some important considerations for further research on this topic; notably, whether it might be more effective to focus on basic self-awareness before teaching some of these skills, since some of them require a certain level of maturity and emotional self-regulation. Also noted is a lack of general agreement and concrete, consistent definitions for *what* essential helping skills are. Certain counseling theories do rely on certain techniques, though many interventions and skills are common to more than one theory. Some of the skills included in the models analyzed by Hill and Lent (2006) are non-verbal attending, open-ended questions, restating/reflecting, reframing, concreteness, immediacy, interpretation, confrontation, self-disclosure. These are also found in the Skilled Group Counselor Training Model (SCTM; Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, & Zimmick, 1999) and Skilled Counselor Training Model (SCTM; Urbani, Smith, Maddux, Smaby, Torres-Rivera, & Crews, 2002), which offer a hybrid approach to skills training combining elements of Human Relations Training, microcounseling, and Interpersonal Process Recall.

The Journey With Me experience, as previously noted, provided regular opportunities to practice empathic listening, reflecting, interpreting, and



empathizing—among others. The skills identified in these training models (as noted above, from Hill and Lent [2006]: non-verbal attending, open-ended questions, restating/reflecting, reframing, concreteness, immediacy, interpretation, confrontation, self-disclosure) would all be integral components of a training model based on that experience, featuring collaborative narrative exercises in dyads and groups; in order to be good co-narrators, students would need to practice all of these skills. Since the role of “practice” as an instructional technique has been less conclusively rated by researchers than techniques like modeling, feedback and instruction, it would seem important to ensure that the model course would be designed to allow students to benefit from these where possible. For example, they might get feedback from their peer observers or their professors, and they might see these skills modeled by their peers in the dyad story creation or group workshopping as well.

#### Beyond Technique—Counselor Attributes and Abilities

Grant (2006), summarizing the findings of Wampold (2001), notes “...there is far greater variance between practitioners delivering the same intervention than there is between different interventions” (219). This suggests that, while an understanding of what to do (theory) and how to do it (technique) is an important foundation for effective counseling, it is not in itself sufficient. “Training counselors to deal with the emotional roller coaster of both their clients’ feelings and their own feelings while engaging effectively in therapy is a multifaceted educational task” (Grant, 2006). CACREP 2009 standards note that doctoral-level counseling programs are responsible for considering “psychological health”

when admitting trainees, noting that this would include such attributes as “self-awareness, self-acceptance... and emotional stability” (64). Nelson and Neufeldt (1998) have stated that “students must develop not only skills but their very humanness in the process of becoming competent counselors” (p.77).

Procidano, Busch-Rossnagel, Reznikoff, and Geisinger (1995), who assessed the frequency of professional deficiencies and the presence of procedures to address them in their national survey of 71 doctoral training programs, and found a high incidence (89%) of limited clinical skills and emotional problems, likewise emphasized personal growth and development, suggesting, “a therapist’s emotional well-being at least moderately facilitates both effective treatment process and outcomes” (p. 426)

In their evaluation of “core competencies” for counselors in training, Hensley, Smith and Thompson (2003) note a lack of specific agreement on what traits are essential, saying “we found a variety of professional skills or traits used to predict a student’s readiness for professional practice (e.g. empathy, maturity, openness, flexibility, awareness of impact on others, counseling skills, ability to accept personal responsibility), yet specific definitions are needed to clarify these concepts and terms” (p.225). While there may not be a comprehensive and exact list of discrete traits or attributes, the research does suggest that two competencies – the ability to *create* a therapeutic alliance with a client and the ability to manage transference and countertransference in such a way as to *maintain* that therapeutic alliance – are among the strongest predictors of positive therapeutic outcome (Gelso, Latts, Gomez, & Fassinger, 2002; Grant,

2006; Hayes, Riker, & Ingram, 1997). Indeed, one meta-analysis of quantitative evaluations of therapy outcomes estimated that the quality of the therapeutic alliance is responsible for thirty percent of therapy's effectiveness (Asay & Lambert, 1999).

The interpersonal skills that allow for the creation for therapeutic alliance may—as noted previously—to some degree be taught as techniques, but many are more emotional attributes or character traits than skills (Miller, 1989; Rogers, 1982). Empathy is often identified as one such characteristic; empathic listening has often been lauded as one essential key to creating a strong therapeutic alliance, regardless of what theoretical perspective from which a counselor is working (Frank, 1982; Grencavage & Norcross, 1991). Empathy is defined as a process of relating and caring in a nonattached way to another's being and experience, generated through sharing, deep listening and emotional openness (Murphy & Dillon, 2003); in other words, it requires an ability to experience feelings, to understand them as well as possible, and to respond to another person based on the feelings (Hackney, 1978). Certainly, any model that even remotely captures the essence of the Journey With Me experience will provide ample practice in this skill.

Beyond the quality of empathy, there are many additional emotional skills or attributes that have been identified as important to counselors' personal development. Scott Bedwell (2002) created the Emotional Judgment Inventory (EJI), a survey with 83 statements to which respondents rate their level of agreement/disagreement on a seven point scale, to measure counselors' and

counselor trainees' possession of some of these traits. The EJI has seven subscales, named and defined as follows:

"Being Aware of Emotions" - measures the extent to which one devotes mental resources to awareness of one's own and others' emotions, both verbally and nonverbally.

"Identifying Own Emotions" - examines the degree to which one can identify, with clarity, how he/she feels at any given moment.

"Identifying Others' Emotions" - measures one's confidence in his/her own assessments of the feelings of others around one.

"Managing Own Emotions" - examines the extent to which one has strategies to adjust how she/he feels and to deliberately maintain a mood for extended periods of time.

"Managing Others' Emotions" - assesses one's skills in using verbal and nonverbal cues to regulate others' feelings and moods.

"Using Emotions in Problem Solving" - measures the degree to which one incorporates emotional information into everyday tasks that involve planning, interpersonal interactions, motivation, decision making, and problem solving; high scorers recognize how emotional experiences influence their performance and try to create moods that facilitate task performance (Bedwell, 2002).

"Expressing Emotions Adaptively" - looks at one's ability to adaptively communicate one's feelings—including negative reactions to others' behaviors—to facilitate a desired outcome on a regular basis.

In a study that drew upon the work of Bedwell, to examine the relevance of counselors' emotional development to their work, Martin, Easton, Wilson, Takemoto and Sullivan (2004) note, "having the ability to identify one's own emotions and the ability to manage one's emotions are significant factors in recognizing and managing the frequent occurrence of transference and counter-transference in the therapeutic relationship" (p. 18). They group these characteristics under the umbrella of "emotional intelligence," and compare their importance for effective counseling to that of visualization ability for an architect or physical coordination for an athlete – that is, essential to success. Their study, which found "[high scores for the aforementioned] emotional intelligence factors successfully predicted counseling self-efficacy of both students and practicing counselors" (p. 30), involved a sample of 140 participants, 47% of whom were counseling students and 53% were counseling professionals. It evaluated both groups using the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE; Larson, Suzuki, Gillespie, Potenza, Bechtel, & Toulouse, 1992) to measure self-efficacy, a survey found in validity estimates to be positively correlated to self-esteem, self-evaluation, positive affect, and outcome expectations but minimally correlated with defensiveness, aptitude, achievement, age, and personality type (Larson *et al.*, 1992), and the Emotional Judgment Inventory (EJI). These researchers ran two 2 x 2 analyses of variance to rule out age, gender and ethnographic background as influencing factors. In a finding that varied from their original hypothesis, the study by Martin et al. uncovered a statistically significant difference between trainees and professional counselors in their

overall levels of emotional intelligence, which led the researchers to suggest that emotional intelligence may be a developmental marker and/or influenced by teaching, practice or intervention, and to suggest it should perhaps be an area of greater emphasis in counselor training programs (Martin et al., 2004). The sort of awareness and ability to set boundaries is one that became very important in the Journey With Me workshops; as noted, because of the temptation to “own” the stories that working in the first person to reflect accurately entailed, it was imperative to be clear on what had actually been said, what could logically or intuitively be interpreted—and where the co-narrator’s (i.e., my) personal experience might unduly color an understanding of the stories being related. Practice at making such distinctions even while working deeply at an emotional and intuitive level would be an important element of a Journey With Me-inspired model.

One widely-recognized challenge in creating and maintaining the therapeutic alliance that such skills practice might help trainees address is that of countertransference. Gelso and Hayes (2001), examining ten studies from over the past forty years (six quantitative and four qualitative) regarding the effects of countertransference in therapy, noted the following:

Common to all definitions of [countertransference] is the notion that it involves the therapist's feeling-based reactions to the patient. A key distinction is whether this reaction represents an internal experience or reflects the therapist's actual verbal or nonverbal behavior. Ordinarily, when CT is conceived of as an internal reaction, it is thought of as potentially helpful. Helpfulness depends on what the therapist does with this internal experience. If the experience is effectively understood and used to understand the patient, it is likely beneficial. However, the therapist's internal experience may also be acted out in the treatment, and this is usually seen as harmful. In such cases, the therapist is taking

care of his or her own needs, enacting his or her own defenses, and not attending to the patient's issues and needs (p. 418).

In the same article, Gelso and Hays provided a narrative review of seven empirical studies that examined variables related to effective countertransference management, and they identified five key attributes: therapist self-insight, self-integration, anxiety management, empathy, and conceptualizing skills. The first four are closely tied to the characteristics discussed in relation to the EJI; the fifth, case conceptualizing skills, relates primarily to the aforementioned need for therapists to be able to integrate a theoretical basis into their work (Gelso & Hays, 2001).

One final aspect of personal-professional development that has increasingly been identified as having prime importance in counselor training is *cross-cultural competence*. Counselor self-awareness – including awareness of identity-forming experiences, cultural background, biases, attitudes, beliefs, and limits - is a fundamental attribute of a (multi)culturally competent counselor (Brinson, 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Engaging in explorations of personal experiences with privilege and oppression can be difficult, with the potential to engender initially negative emotions or defensiveness, but ultimately such exploration is vital to increasing self-awareness, reducing defensiveness, and helping clarify social identity for students in the helping professions. (Garcia & Van Soest, 1997; Kiselica, 1998).

Clearly, there is a substantial focus on the maturity, sophistication and “emotional management” of counselors and counselors in training. The value of self-awareness is a resounding theme in the literature, as is the importance of

identifying, expressing and managing the needs and emotions of oneself and one's clients. A program rooted in collaborative narrative has the potential to aid the pursuit of these goals in (at least) two ways: First, by virtue of the fact that it might ask participants to explore, and move closer to acceptance of, important aspects of their stories or experiences that might prove to be emotional "triggers" or "hotspots" otherwise. Second, such a model, if it focuses explicitly on the narrative element of "characters" in one's own story, and the stories of others, might tease out some common reasons why transference or countertransference could occur—in the recognition or perceived recognition of common "characters." Working with the feelings that identifying with (or against) certain characters engender could provide important opportunities for learning how to recognize and manage these transference/countertransference phenomena.

### **Collaborative Narrative in Counseling and Counselor Training**

#### **Narrative Elements of the Counseling Process**

It has been suggested that stories are at the root of human understanding and identity (Howard, 1989; Sarbin, 1986). Stories are created both for internal and external audiences. Internal narratives become frameworks for identity, personality and experience – the "self as story" (Richert, 2003). External or shared narratives – such as those that occur within counseling sessions - are relational objects; they take shape under the direction not just of their teller but of their audience. Studies examining moment-by-moment listener responses to oral narratives reveal that all verbal storytelling is on some level collaborative, because stories are shaped by reactions and cues of a person on the receiving



end of the narrative (Bavelas, 2000). This involves a reciprocal process of co-creation (with listener serving as “editor”) which draws upon mutual human responses and pulls people together naturally in the process of telling and listening to stories (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995).

Narrative elements such as character, plot, language and metaphor, often collaboratively constructed, are at the heart of counseling. For example, Fall, Holdren and Marquis (2004) suggest the idea of “character” is directly related to the function of theoretical frameworks in counseling, and counselor training:

Like any good piece of literature, a good counseling theory provides good character development. In the case of counseling theory, this means an explanation of how each person developed: how one became who one is today. Good theory also provides an explanation for problems people face and develop in life and how someone comes to seek further development through counseling. Within this storyline of change a new character emerges: the counselor (p. 2).

As noted in the previous section, the narrative element of “character” might also be connected to occurrences of transference or countertransference, when traits or attributes of either counselor or client elicit perceived “recognition” by the other of a dominant person, or character, in their own life, causing them to react as they would to that character rather than to the actual person in the counseling relationship with them.

Plot is the narrative element relating to “what happens.” It is the skeleton around which case histories are constructed, and upon which the notion of “change” hangs. McLeod (1999) posits, “The telling of the story always contains within it some notion of why the story is ‘worth telling’; it communicates the teller’s sense of what Bruner has called ‘departures from the ordinary.’ And, as it

opens up this tension, a story will also attempt to resolve it: each story is an exercise in problem-solving” (113). Seeing story as an “exercise in problem solving” suggests an appreciation for one’s ability to see one’s circumstances as a plot that can be changed, rather than immutable reality. Since fifteen percent of therapy’s effectiveness has been linked to the client’s expectation that things can change (Asay & Lambert, 1999), being able to offer clients the perspective of a “changeable plot” might be beneficial.

Language is another narrative element with an important role to play in counseling. McNamee and Gergen (1993) suggest, “The process of questions generated from the position of ‘not knowing’ results in the development of locally (dialogically) constructed understanding and a local (dialogic) vocabulary” (p. 197). This notion of a dialogic vocabulary relates to the writings of James Bugental (1992), who explored the notion of “paralleling” in *The Art of the Psychotherapist*. He wrote:

I am using the term ‘paralleling’ to refer to how much or how little one speaker – therapist or patient – phrases the content of what he says in the same general way as has the previous speaker in a conversation. When they are talking about the same things we may say they are ‘in parallel’ or ‘paralleling each other’.... [P]aralleling is not a generally desirable or undesirable attribute of therapeutic interviews; it is simply a dimension which may be examined to deepen an appreciation of the way two participants are carrying out their work. At some points, it may be useful for the therapist chiefly to keep in parallel—for example, early in the work when she seeks to intrude as little as possible on the patient’s own way of seeing and presenting his concerns. At other points, the therapist may want to depart markedly from being in parallel—as when a patient is caught in ruminative and resistant circling and needs help to break out. Clearly, different conversational purposes call for different degrees of similarity, but equally clearly, it is important for the therapist to know how much she and her partner are together and how well that degree of paralleling is serving their purpose (p. 99-100).

Clearly in Bugental's view, attention to, and skillful use of, language can be a key factor in the quality of the therapeutic alliance and the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship (1992). The Journey With Me model, because it explicitly requires the co-narrator to work with the language of the primary narrator, often verbatim and always in first person, provides opportunities to practice "paralleling" specifically, and language choice generally, in a conscious, explicit fashion.

Metaphor is another narrative element central to counseling, regarding which much has been written. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note, "In therapy, much of self-understanding involves consciously recognizing previously unconscious metaphors and how we live by them" (p. 233). In light of metaphor's ubiquity in therapy, it is imperative for therapists to learn to be attuned to their clients' conceptual metaphors, to be able to make them explicit and examine them when appropriate—and occasionally to offer alternate metaphors as well. "This use of metaphor, created by the counselor, does not change a client's problems; rather, it changes perception of the problem and allows for solutions as yet unconsidered" (Wickman, Daniels, White & Fesmire, 1999, p. 390). Explicit "metaphor therapy" was first brought to prominence by Milton Erickson, a pioneer in the fields of clinical hypnosis, family therapy and neuro-linguistic programming, and has since been used with a variety of populations and presenting symptoms (Kopp, 1971). Psychologist George Burns has written extensively about the use of metaphor (and story generally) in

therapy, and suggests particular strategies for using stories – both life stories and fictional ones – as metaphors to be used for therapeutic gains (Burns, 2001).

Given the clear relevance of narrative elements such as character, plot, language, and metaphor to various aspects of counseling, outlined above, it seems potentially telling to delineate and work with each of these explicitly—something which is not typically done in counselor training. Exploring each of these elements overtly and in-depth, and exploring them as narrative elements that can be worked with discretely, provides an opportunity to integrate disparate but important elements of counseling by developing a level of narrative sophistication that “master counselors” have, but counselors-in-training are often expected to develop through trial and error.

#### Narrative Co-creation Used in Counseling Theories and Interventions

While this section will not provide a fully comprehensive accounting of the range of counseling theories—currently estimated to number greater than 130 (Corey, 2005)—it does review several of the major theoretical camps. What will become clear from this brief exploration is that many theoretical approaches incorporate, whether implicitly or explicitly, work with stories and life narratives, both as process and content of therapy.

Psychoanalysis is the oldest formal theoretical framework for counseling (Corey, 2005; Fall, Holden, & Marquis, 2004). Psychodynamic theories, based on the foundation provided by psychoanalytic theory, occupy four different schools of thought: self-psychology, drive theory, ego psychology and object relations. (Fall et al., 2004) In describing and differentiating these four, Ursano,

Sonnenberg and Lazar (1998) introduce the concept of “psychodynamic listening,” essentially describing what aspects of life-story content are most relevant to counselors working from these perspectives. Self-psychology seeks to understand the client’s view of him/herself, especially the existence or lack of positive attributes in the self-view, and focuses on how the client responds to blows to his or her self-esteem. Object relations inquires into clients’ narratives regarding significant people throughout developmental stages and looks for apparent alignment in thought, feeling or behavior with significant others. Ego psychologists explore what defenses the client typically relies upon and how he or she generally goes about fulfilling needs or drives. Drive theory focuses more narrowly on what the client wants and whether those desires are developmentally appropriate (Ursano, Sonnenberg & Lazar, 1998). For all of these psychodynamic theories, an exploration of the client’s history (i.e. life-story) is a part of the therapeutic process, and the role of the counselor is to make interpretations of current content (e.g. presenting issues, transference episodes) grounded in understandings and connections gained through exploration of the client’s history, developmental experiences, and significant previous relationships (Fall et al., 2004.)

Individual psychology, associated primarily with Alfred Adler, emphasizes a “creative power of life, which expresses itself in the desire to develop, to strive, to achieve, and even to compensate for defeats in one direction by striving for success in another” (Adler, 1956, p. 92). Individual psychology asks the counselor or therapist to act as an “educator, collaborator, and encourager” (Fall,

p.129). Adler charged counselors to first, see things from a client's perspective; second, to understand the client's actions and the motivations behind them; and third, to make those connections for and with the client, to "illuminate the style of life" (Fall et al., p. 129). Adlerian therapy involves learning about early family constellations (especially birth order and perceptions of parental units), mining early recollections, analyzing dreams, and asking clients how their situations (subjective experiences and objective circumstances) would change if they acted, thought or felt differently (Fall et al., 2004). In its emphasis on "recollection" over "report," Adlerian therapy works directly with clients' life stories, and with its use of "the question" (i.e. "what would be different?"), it asks clients to imagine changing the plot and potentially also the characters of their life-narratives (Eckstein, Baruth, & Mahrer, 1992).

Existential counseling emphasizes the need for courage and individual responsibility in facing the basic realities of life. Existential counseling relies less on analysis of history, motivation or personal development; it focuses instead on the relationship between the counselor and client as a mechanism for helping clients to explore and face their basic anxieties regarding four universal human themes: death, isolation, freedom and meaninglessness (May, 1965). The counselor's role is to support clients in becoming more "authentic" – helping them choose and apply their own goals and values by which they wish to define their lives (Corey, 2005). The job of the existential counselor is two-fold; to maintain a "continuous searching attitude" focusing on a client's uniqueness and

individuality, and to seek and express “resonance” with the client’s experience (Fall et al., 2004, 168).

Person-centered, or humanistic, counseling sees the incongruence between an individual’s self-concept and organismic experience as being at the core of human suffering, and sees the therapeutic relationship as an opportunity to create more congruence between self-concept and experience (Gendlin, 1992; Mahoney, 1991). Like existential approaches, humanistic therapies strongly emphasize the therapist’s role as empathic, respectful (“unconditional positive regard” in Roger’s, 1951, terms), and genuine (or “present”). They also emphasize the collaborative nature of the relationship – where “collaborative” is understood to indicate counselor’s and client’s equal investment in a common goal, equal power to influence the relationship, equally active participation, and equally valued experience of the relationship (Richert, 2003). Also like existential approaches, humanistic theories tend to emphasize the “mutative” power of the therapeutic alliance, grounded as they are in a social constructivist philosophy which holds that “meanings are not generated in individual minds but only in social interaction” (Richert, citing the work of Gergen, 1985; Goolishian & Anderson, 1987; Harre & Gillett, 1994, p. 189). Built on a framework of relationship-as-meaning-maker, person-centered therapy sees the therapeutic relationship between a given counselor and client as its own particular story—a story with its own meaning, and plot, which has the power to change the life narratives of both of its main characters: counselor and client (Rogers, 1951).

Two offshoots of person-centered therapy—considered approaches rather than counseling theories *per se* (Lewis & Osborn, 2004)—are solution-focused brief therapy, and motivational interviewing. These two therapeutic tactics come from different “sectors” of the counseling field, but have gotten increasing attention over the past couple of decades. Both are rooted in social constructivism, and see meaning as dependent upon language, mutual perception and understanding. Solution-focused work positions the client as the expert (Walter & Peller, 1992), and emphasizes client strengths and successes. Motivational interviewing, similarly, is a very collaborative approach often used in substance abuse treatment that depends upon much respect for the client, a focus on strengths, and a great deal of empathy (DeJong & Berg, 1998).

Narrative therapy is, as its name suggests, the theory that most explicitly uses the concept of “storying” experience in working with clients. Narrative therapies, generally modeled after the pioneering work done by Epston and White at Dulwich Therapy Center in Australia, take the stance that “the person is not the problem, the problem is the problem” (White & Epston, 1990). The initial focus of narrative therapy is to externalize client problems, helping them be seen not as intrinsic or inevitable, but basically as plot twists occurring as the result of the application of distorting “dominant stories”—originating outside the client (i.e. society, family, other systems in which the client is a part)—to the client’s thoughts, feelings or actions (Guterman & Rudes, 2005). To the extent that it focuses on the power of these “dominant stories” to shape thoughts and thus feelings and actions, narrative therapy is rooted in cognitive-behavioral traditions



(Richert, 2003). The acknowledgement of cultural power dynamics implicit in the concept of “dominant stories” also ties narrative therapy in nicely with systemic approaches (e.g. family, feminist, multi-cultural) to counseling (Richert, 2003). Narrative therapy does not stop with acknowledging the role of “dominant stories” in shaping existing thoughts, feelings or behaviors; nor with externalizing the client’s problem by situating it contextually as a natural result of these dominant stories’ application. Having done these things, it then invites the counselor and client to work collaboratively to create alternate stories upon which to base subsequent understanding, feeling or action. This “restorying” process is, from a narrative therapy perspective, at the heart of creating “preferred outcomes” (White, 2007; White & Epston, 1990)—i.e., change. The idea is that clients’ overarching life narratives are changed by first changing the “dominant stories” within which they are characters.

Whether dealing with counseling theories that are explicitly post-modern and rooted in the social-constructivist tradition of language as meaning-maker, or those that are more psychological in nature, it is clear that there is utility in knowing how to work skillfully and collaboratively with clients as they share their stories. In some cases, the content of the stories provides important fodder for diagnosis and treatment planning; in others, the simple process of being asked to participate in the re-creation of a client’s story is an integral part of the counseling process. Building a model that allows students to practice doing either, or both, seems as though it could be important and useful.

### Narrative Co-creation as an Element of Core Counseling Competencies

Not only are narrative elements and practices intimately bound up in many counseling theories; they are also implicit in the development of some previously identified core counseling competencies. For example, empathy has previously been defined as a process of relating and caring in a nonattached way to another's being and experience, generated through sharing, deep listening and emotional openness (Murphy & Dillon, 2003). Narrative allows a teller to be known by another, and a listener to recognize the experience and being of another (McLeod, 1999). In other words, shared (and thus co-created) narrative is the experience at the foundation of empathy – which, as previously noted, has been implicated as a key component of a strong therapeutic alliance (Frank, 1982; Grenavage & Norcross, 1991), which has in turn been identified as a major factor in therapeutic outcomes (Asay & Lambert, 1999).

Assessment, case conceptualization and treatment planning are another crucial set of counseling skills that rely on adeptness in narrative co-construction. In order to assess, diagnose and plan treatment, it is imperative, as previously noted, that counselors adopt and integrate their own personal theoretical counseling framework (Spruill & Benshoff, 2000). A diagnosis is essentially a story of what should or could change for a client in order for a client to feel or function better, based on a theoretical understanding about what *generally* makes people hurt and what *generally* makes them heal – and that story in turn is based on the story or stories that the counselor and client have explored together about past or current experiences (Berman, 1997). Particularly when

case conceptualization is based on an historical or developmental perspective, thematic or metaphorical perspectives, or an “assumption-based” perspective tied directly to tenets of specific counseling theories, it is imperative to have a well-developed client narrative from which to draw (Berman, 1997). What’s more, it is essential for counselors in training to practice *writing* collaboratively constructed narratives, since developing an effective personal writing style is an important facility in case conceptualization and treatment planning (Berman, 1997).

### **Existing Training Exercises and Models**

How do counselors gain the knowledge, skills and competencies outlined above? When surveyed regarding the primary drivers of professional development, therapists have consistently noted the following factors: active, experiential and interpersonal learning; practice; supervision; and personal therapy (O’Donovan, Dyck, & Bain, 2001; Orlinsky, Botermans, & Ronnestad, 2001; Rachelson & Clance, 1980; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1995). These are all dynamic, interactive processes that differ markedly from traditional “classroom learning” based on lectures, readings, tests and academic papers. What follows are some examples of how these more active learning opportunities are currently integrated into counselor training programs.

#### **Self-Exploratory Narrative**

It is common for counselor training programs to promote and provide opportunities for structured examination of ones’ own story – to promote adoption and integration of a theoretical foundation, to further relational skills and

capacities such as empathy, and to recognize and address countertransference, all of which are identified as important elements of accredited counselor training programs (CACREP, 2009 standards).

Journals are one common educational device, which can be especially effective in counselor training since, as noted in an article by Hubbs and Brand (2005), reflective journaling “provides opportunities for students to mull over ideas, uncover inner secrets, and piece together life's unconnected threads, thus creating a fertile ground for the significant learning” (61). Researchers and educators, including Boud (2001), Goldsmith (1996), and Moon (1999), have identified reflective journaling as an important and useful tool for “helping move the adult learner toward higher levels of critical (i.e., analytical) thinking, and personal insight” (Hubbs & Brand, 2005, p. 63). Learning theory suggests that students – including adult learners - learn more when concepts and skills are arrived at through experience and self-discovery (Kolb, 1984; Rogers, 1982; Tough, 1968). Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, for example, posits that learning for adults is not primarily an assimilative information-gathering process, but that adults learn by encountering situations that do not conform to their previous understandings or beliefs (i.e. “disorienting dilemmas”), and working through those dilemmas to broader perspectives and understandings (1998, 2000). Relating transformative learning theory to reflective journaling, Hubbs and Brand (2005) argue:

Because transformative learning is thoughtful learning adopted deliberately by the learner, reflective journals can be significant adjuncts in the transformative learning process... The iterative process of examining [a] belief, testing it, and exploring alternatives to the belief

results in transformative learning when the learner is ultimately changed, or "transformed" through the process. Thus, the learner's prior patterns of thinking would ultimately grow and change.... (63)

Biography and autobiography are additional tools employed in counselor training. Especially for marriage and family courses and programs, the exercise of creating and sharing family autobiographies is a common teaching tool. Green and Saeger (1982) offered five self-analytic, reflective writing assignments for family counselor trainees, a "family autobiography" written in the first person among them; their work suggested that among the benefits of such exercises was an increased ability of trainees to "think systems." Professors Lawson and Gaushell (1988) piloted an exercise using a slightly different form for the family autobiography: a genogram (a visual representation of one's family tree which "maps" relational dynamics) and an accompanying narrative recounting significant relationships, dynamics and events in the family of origin. This type of autobiography construction was found to help students gain a greater understanding of their formative experiences and relationships (Lawson & Gaushell, 1988). Subsequent uses of this exercise have been found by other educators to have similarly beneficial results. When 32 masters-level students were asked to complete the family autobiography exercise as part of their Introduction to Family Counseling class, and then asked to rate their degree of agreement (on a scale of 1 low and 4 high) to statements that measured the benefit of the exercise, there was a high level of agreement with the statement, "I understand the effect that my family of origin's dynamics (i.e., structure, relationships) have had on my present relationships and behaviors" (M=3.21,

SD=0.66), and a moderate level of agreement with the statement, "I understand my behaviors and beliefs better as a result of completing a family autobiography" (M=3.03, SD=0.90) (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). While the assessment was written in a way that may have perhaps "suggested" that there should be such benefits from the exercise, overall this study does, like Lawson and Gaushell's (1988), strengthen the intuitive notion that autobiographical exploration can give counselor trainees insights which might help them better understand and manage their own emotions and behaviors within the context of the therapeutic relationship.

### Experiential Training

The Skilled Counselor Training Model (SCTM; Urbani, Smith, Maddux, Smaby, Torres-Rivera, & Crews, 1999) offers a model for a 36-hour counselor training course using peer-to-peer counseling simulations. The SCTM is modeled after the Skilled Group Counseling Training Model (Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, & Zimmick, 1999; Zimmick, Smaby, & Maddux, 2000); it uses modeling by instructors and other experts (e.g. on videotapes, etc.), practice, emotional engagement and supervisory feedback to impart skill mastery to trainees. The SCTM is broken up into three stages: the first, the exploring stage, focuses on basic attention and reflection skills (e.g. establishing eye contact, summarizing client statements). In the exploring stage trainees help their "clients" identify problems that might be addressed during sessions; the focus of the exploring stage is to learn, practice, monitor and evaluate basic helping skills (for oneself and one's peers). The training then moves to the "understanding

phase”, which focuses on intuitive skills such as empathy, self-disclosure and confrontation, and also asks counselor trainees to conceptualize their peers’ behaviors patterns and challenges. Finally, the “acting stage” encourages students to decide and to choose interventions to employ in the counseling simulations, challenging them to use their powers of persuasion to help their peers solve problems (Urbani et al., 2002).

Another example of an existing experiential training model is that of the Triad Training Model (TTM), developed by Pederson (1994), as a way to prime students for cross-cultural effectiveness by giving them greater awareness of how different interpretations of their words and behavior could be made, given different cultural “lenses.” The TTM has counseling students work with triads of coached volunteers who are from cultures different from the dominant one (though each member of a given triad is from the same culture as the others); one member of the triad role-plays a client, one the *pro-counselor*, and one the *anti-counselor*. The *pro-counselor’s* job is to verbalize all of the positive things this client of a different culture might be thinking but not verbalizing about the counselor, based on their internal cultural framework (and cultural differences between them and the counselor); the *anti-counselor’s* job is to similarly voice all of the negative things a client might be thinking but not saying. Studies have demonstrated the value of TTM in giving students increased confidence in their own skills and confidence in working with clients of different cultures (Irvin & Pedersen, 1995; Neimeyer, Fukuyama, Bingham, Hall, & Mussenden, 1986; Pedersen, Holwill, & Shapiro, 1978).

In a study applying the TTM to a multicultural training course, Seto, Young, Becker and Kisileca (2006) asked 14 students (12 masters level, two doctoral) to take part in a TTM training, and compared their scores on four different self-reporting instruments, pre-and post-semester, to two “comparison” groups—23 students enrolled in a pre-practicum, and another eleven enrolled in a career theory course. The researchers hypothesized that TTM-trained students would have developed greater empathic capacity, tolerance for ambiguity and multi-cultural competence, but those hypotheses were only marginally borne out (Seto et al., 2006).

#### Experiential Group Training

CACREP's 2009 standards specify that accredited counselor training programs must provide “studies that provide both theoretical and experiential understandings of group purpose, development, dynamics, counseling theories, group counseling methods and skills, and other group approaches” (CACREP, II.K.6, p. 15). In a survey of 272 academic units exploring the use of group counselor training models, Merta, Wolfgang and McNeil (1993), found that 92% of programs required students to participate in an experiential group as part of their training. Generally these fell into four different categories: groups led by someone other than the group course instructor, in which instructors received no feedback about student performance in the groups; groups led by someone other than the instructor, in which the leaders provided feedback to the instructor about student performance; groups facilitated by someone other than the course instructor, during which the instructor observed the process to monitor student



progress; or, groups led and evaluated by the group course instructor. All in all, Merta et al. found that a full 80% of counselor training programs required experiential groups with some degree of instructor involvement in which students were evaluated on their participation.

While some of these experiential groups are designed to be organic and are built around an expectation that students will experience group dynamics while working through their own personal development, other experiential groups focus more explicitly on skill development. Specifically, the Skilled Group Counselor Training Model (SCTM; Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, & Zimmick, 1999), which, like the Skilled Group Training Model discussed previously, is a 36-hour course that requires students to practice specific, carefully sequenced skill sets within the context of simulated counseling sessions – in this case, group sessions.

#### Experiential Training Models: Ethical Considerations

All exercises and assignments that ask trainees to engage in reflection and self-discovery require a level of self-disclosure, whether to instructors or peers. This has the benefit of creating conditions for the trainee which can allow him or her to appreciate the vulnerable position in which clients find themselves, and which can allow for development of greater empathic capacity (Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998). However, these situations have the potential for less-than-optimum learning experiences for students who feel pressured to disclose more than they are comfortable with and, in the worst case,

out-and-out harm (Ixer, 1999); this danger makes it imperative that educators strive for ethical rigor in implementing experiential teaching practices.

For example, in regard to journal writing, Kerka (1996) identified three conditions necessary when incorporating the use of reflective journals: (a) perceived trustworthiness of the journal reader, (b) clarity of the expectation, and (c) quantity and quality of the feedback. Instructors should consider these conditions when making such assignments, and recognize that students may be initially fearful of possible judgments or reprisals in response to what is written in their journals (Elhow & Clarke, 1987)—considerations equally likely to apply to other forms of student self-disclosure..

Goodman and Carpenter-White, 1996, note the need for care in assigning the family autobiography, due to the implicit requirement of self-disclosure, and the fact that the privacy of not just the student but the student's family is at risk. While noting the potential value in using such assignments, they recommend that instructors take care to abide by ethical considerations by, for example, by using the American Counseling Association's (1995) ethical standards to explain the assignment; ensuring these assignments are kept secure and not read by or shared with others; grading the assignments based on effort rather than content; and giving students the option of completing another assignment that uses a case study approach rather than a family autobiography. The recommendation that family autobiographies not be shared with classmates or peers means that, for purposes of developing a model based on peer-to-peer life story co-narration,

story prompts should be open-ended enough to allow students to share stories that are not likely to present issues of family privacy violation.

Another arena in which ethical considerations are paramount is in the use of group or other counseling simulations which run the risk of creating dual-roles for instructors. This existence of this risk has been particularly noted in the literature pertaining to the use of group counseling training models (Corey, 1990), since so many of those models have instructors facilitating groups in which students are explicitly asked to engage in emotional work (and then evaluating them on that work.) As Nelson and Neufeldt (1998) note, the continued use of experiential training groups involving instructor participation and student evaluation is a testament to the premium most counselor training programs place on the development of personal awareness as an outcome of counselor education.

In a review of the literature on the various ethical considerations related to common experiential training methods for counselor education, including those outlined above, Morissette and Gadbois (2003) give the following general recommendations (which, they note, are in accordance with ACA standards): review the course syllabi with students to let them know the objectives of any experiential activities, and to make them aware that their informed consent is required; maintain well-defined defined boundaries from the outset, making it clear to students that a referral for professional services (i.e. counseling) for issues that may surface while working with peers or instructors through the course of experiential activities is not an expression of indifference, but rather a

gesture of both care and professionalism as an educator; institute safety procedures through which it is clear that students can opt out of emotionally-threatening activities without penalty; promote fairness in grading and don't mistake outward participation with internal intellectual (or emotional) engagement; provide ample time and opportunity for "debrief" regarding experiential learning activities, and make sure that debrief is conducted from a perspective of intellectual inquiry and rigor; and finally, ensure instructors are clearly qualified for the types of experiential activities they are undertaking (e.g. a group facilitator should have previous training and experience in group therapy). All of these recommendations will be taken into account when developing the model proposed in this thesis.

### **Implications for Creating an Experiential Counselor Training Model**

#### **Grounded in Collaborative Life Story Creation**

Journey With Me had at least five primary components, as identified in the previous chapter: learning how to truly collaborate by discovering how to respectfully "co-own" a narrative; developing skill in reflection and interpretation; identifying themes and other consistent narrative elements; validating of personal experience within a group setting; and furthering emotional mastery through exploration of one's own story. If a training model were to be developed based on Journey With Me that could replicate these components, the preceding literature review suggests that it could have real utility for counselor training. To the extent that it asks student storytellers to purposefully and reflectively share with each other important memories, experiences and beliefs, and require

listeners to synthesize elements of character, plot, metaphor, and language into a coherent picture of another's history, beliefs, needs and goals, the literature as reviewed herein does give cause to think that a training model based in experiential narrative co-creation can provide a natural opportunity for students to explore and adopt theoretical frameworks (Green & Saeger, 1982; Guterman & Rudes, 2007; Spruill & Benschoff, 2000). The possibilities for enhanced self-awareness and self-acceptance that such a course could provide are important not only from the perspective of developing professional knowledge and identity, but also, as we've seen, to gain the emotional clarity and grounding to develop ego strength, facilitate emotional regulation and presence, and build self-efficacy (Bedwell, 2002; Beutler, Machado, & Neufeldt, 1994; Gelso & Hays, 1998; Martin, Easton, Wilson, Takemoto & Sullivan, 2004). The practice of collaborative narrative, by definition, offers opportunities to experience interpersonal relating and practice such diverse skills as listening, mirroring, reframing, interpreting, paralleling, assessment and case conceptualization (among others) – mastery of all of which has been implicated in positive therapeutic outcomes (Asay & Lambert, 1999; Hill & Lent, 2006; Richert, 2003).

A collaborative narrative training model might also give students an opportunity to learn about individual and group counseling theory, process, dynamics, leadership, ethical and legal considerations, and exposure to interpersonal and group dynamics – all of which are important to therapeutic outcome. Because it requires a level of self-disclosure, such a model might also provide students an experience of vulnerability which may allow them to better

empathize with clients in the future; given the implied expectation of self-disclosure, designing such a model will necessitate attention to ethical and legal considerations (Morissette & Gadbois, 2003).

## CHAPTER III

### PROPOSED MODEL

This thesis proposes creation of an elective course to be offered within counselor training programs—one that could leverage the power of the Journey With Me workshop model for the benefit of counselor trainees. The goals of this proposed course, which would be built upon activities telling, writing and sharing personal experience narratives in dyads and in groups, would be to facilitate three basic elements of professional and personal development for students: first, knowledge—specifically, knowledge of core counseling theories and tenets, as well as of social constructivism and narrative construction; second, the interpersonal and relational skills that are the backbone of counseling; and third, the more “personal” attributes that have previously in this thesis been classified as “emotional judgment” and maturity.

More specifically, the course aims to accomplish the following:

- 1) To facilitate the continued development of such important counseling skills and attributes as active listening, reflection, empathy, emotional awareness, the ability to accurately identify emotions, and the ability to manage and express emotions skillfully and adaptively—all of which have been emphasized as primary counseling skills (Bedwell, 2002; Martin, Easton, Takemoto & Sullivan, 2004).

- 2) In keeping CACREP standards, to provide another opportunity to directly experience the group process, and observe group dynamics and group facilitation firsthand.
- 3) To practice application of personality and counseling theories and case conceptualization. The literature, and CACREP standards, note that the ability to apply these theories from within an individual counselor's framework is vital (CACREP, 2009; Spruill & Benshoff, 2000).
- 4) To get students to work consciously and explicitly with narrative conventions (*e.g.*, character, plot, language, metaphor), since the Journey With Me experience suggests, and the literature notes, these can be powerful tools for counseling effectiveness and personal development (Burns, 2001; White, 2007).
- 5) To encourage students to work with and through the discoveries regarding values, needs and identity that their individual stories, and broader life narratives, pose—since CACREP standards and the literature regarding counselor training identify counselor self-awareness as vital to competent practice (CACREP, 2009; Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998).
- 6) To allow students to experience the vulnerability created by sharing their stories in a focused, voluntary way that challenges them to build their self-awareness, relational skills and empathic capacities.



### **Course Logistics and Structure**

The course described herein is designed to be included as an elective offering in an accredited Masters-level counselor training program. The core of the model would be experiential: stories would be co-constructed (in writing) for a number of weeks in paired dyads, and shared for a number of weeks in groups, in order to facilitate growth of interpersonal counseling skills and continued personal exploration of trainees' personalities and identities. These experiential components would be framed by didactic content intended to explore the elements of narrative construction, and relate their applicability to the art of counseling—specifically, to counseling theory, personality development, case conceptualization, and interpersonal skills, all of which the preceding review of the literature noted are essential areas of focus in counselor training. Because the course involves advanced knowledge and skill application, only students who had completed at least half of the credits required for their Masters degree would be eligible to register, and previous courses in counseling theory, personality development, and group counseling would be prerequisites. Enrollment would need to be four students at a minimum, and would be capped at twelve.

The course model assumes that one has fourteen full weeks for content after holidays are accounted for (see Appendix A for full outline). It also assumes that the class will meet for 90 minutes twice a week, for a total of approximately 42 hours for the semester. Obviously, this could be adapted based on the scheduling conventions or constraints at a particular institution. The course would commence with three class sessions (approximately 4.5 hours), which,

after reviewing the syllabus and obtaining informed consent, would be devoted exclusively to readings and lectures that would explore social constructivism; review, in brief, theories of counseling that students had already been exposed to in their prerequisite courses; and introduce students to the connections between narrative co-construction and these counseling theories. After the three full class sessions of introductory content, story co-construction in dyads would commence and last for eight weeks. In order to enforce this connection between working with clients' narratives and integrating counseling theory into practice and case conceptualization, story topics would be prompted from week to week, organized around specific themes of significance to the tenets of major theories of human development and change (e.g., about one's earliest memory; about a significant achievement; about learning; about being rewarded or punished; about "home;" about losing something valuable; about one's greatest accomplishment or challenge; about being connected; about being independent, etc.) For four of the eight dyad-focused weeks, students would pair up to work in "dual dyads," in order to observe and give each other feedback. Instructors would be reviewing the observers' notes from these dual dyad sessions, and sitting in on two for each dual dyad over the course of the eight weeks.

Reading assignments related to narrative construction and personality development theories (for review) would extend throughout the eight weeks of dyad work; lectures would continue on alternate weeks, starting in week four, to allow time for these dual dyads to meet (weeks 3,5,7,9). At the end of the dyad sessions (in week ten), an in-class exercise meant to further synthesize the

connection between the readings and lectures and the experience of collaborative narrative would be undertaken; it would ask students to work together in groups to isolate narrative elements within stories they are given, and make connections to the theoretical content. This in-class exercise would serve as a transition to next phase of the course, which would require students to work in groups for three weeks. The course will culminate with an in-class discussion based on students' work on an extensive final analytical paper, again aimed at accomplishing integration between the co-narration experience students' intellectual understanding of key counseling skills and concepts.

The sections that follow describe in detail each of these course components (*i.e.*, the material for lectures and readings, dyad work, the in-class exercise, and group work), the qualifications and role of the instructor, student evaluation, and the ethical considerations to address in implementing this course.

### **Course Components**

#### **Readings and Lectures**

The didactic focus will primarily be on four topics: 1) Social constructivism as a basis for counseling theories; 2) narrative-based theories and therapies; 3) narrative elements (character, plot, language, theme, and metaphor); and, 4) their application in counseling. The first three class sessions will introduce students to concepts of social constructivism, review material that has already been presented in previous courses related to counseling theories, and explore initial links between narrative elements and the counseling theories under review. This review of counseling theory will entail only a brief survey, intended not to

teach any new concepts but rather, like the rest of the initial content, to ground the experiences and activities of the rest of the course within the context of counseling theories and concepts already learned.

Readings and lectures will be drawn from the following:

- 1) *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.), Gerald Corey, 2008.
- 2) *Theories of Personality* (9th ed.). Richard M. Ryckman, 2008.
- 3) *Therapy as social construction*, Sheila McNamee & Kenneth Gergen (Eds.), 1993.
- 4) *The Art of the Psychotherapist*, James Bugental, 1992.
- 5) *Constructive Therapies*, Volume 1 (1994) and Volume 2 (1996), Michael Hoyt (Ed.)
- 6) *Case Conceptualization and Treatment Planning: Exercises for Integrating Theory with Clinical Practice*, Pearl S. Berman, 1997
- 7) Article: "Living Stories, Telling Stories, Changing Stories: Experiential Use of the Relationship in Narrative Therapy." Alphons Richert, 2003
- 8) *Maps of Narrative Practice*, Michael White, 2007
- 9) *101 Healing Stories: Using Metaphors in Therapy*, George W. Burns, 2001
- 10) *Healing with Stories: Your Casebook Collection for Using Therapeutic Metaphors* . George W. Burns (Ed.)

Readings and lectures will both be suspended from weeks 10-14, to allow students to undertake the in-class exercise, workshop their stories in groups, synthesize their individual stories into meta-narratives, and to complete their assigned papers. One final opportunity for content synthesis will be the wrap-up discussion facilitated by the instructor in week 14, which will ask students to reflect on the connections they've made between narrative co-construction and the application of counseling or personality theories.

Table 1: Course readings and lectures

**LECTURE TOPICS AND SUGGESTED READING ASSIGNMENTS**

- Week 1** (two class periods/lectures): 1) Social constructivism, 2) Counseling Theories (review)  
*Readings* - McNamee & Gergen, title essay  
Hoyt (1996), Chapter 16,  
Corey, Chapters 4-7
- Week 2** (one lecture): The use of narrative elements in counseling  
[based on material /sources from the preceding literature review]  
*Readings* – Corey, Chapters 8-13
- Week 3** (no lecture periods):  
*Readings*- Hoyt (1996), chapters 1,3, 4; Hoyt (1994) chapters 4,9;  
Burns (2001), part 1; Bugental, chapters 6-8
- Week 4** (one lecture period): Narrative therapies  
[based on material/ sources from lit review, White (2007), Burns (2007)]  
*Readings*- White, chapters 1-3
- Week 5** (no lecture periods):  
*Readings*- White, chapters 4-6 and conclusion
- Week 6** (one lecture period): Personality development (review)  
*Readings*- Ryckman, chapters 1-9
- Week 7** (no lecture period):  
*Readings* – Ryckman, chapters 10-18
- Week 8** (one lecture period) Beginning to synthesize: Combining theory and narrative know-how in case conceptualization  
*Readings* - Berman, 4-17 & 19-45 & 147-169, Richert article
- Week 9** (no lecture periods):  
*Readings* - Burns (2007), chapter 3 + three chapters of student's choosing; Burns (2001), part 3
- Week 10** (two lecture periods)  
1) Final dyad debrief; in-class exercise  
2) Facilitated debrief of class exercise; intro to group workshops
- Weeks 11-14** – no reading, group and final debrief session

### Dyad sessions

The dyad exercise will require students to work in static groups of two, for 90 minutes, every week for eight weeks, and to pair up with a partner dyad every other week (for an additional 60-80 minutes) during the same eight week period. These dyads may be created randomly; simply drawing numbers or counting off to create pairs. (In the event that there are an uneven number of students enrolled in the course, one group might become a triad, rotating through the roles described below.)

Within their dyads, every week (weeks 2-9) students will meet, any place on campus that is comfortable and private. In these sessions they will each take a turn as story Teller, and as story Recorder, switching roles halfway through the session. Every other week (weeks 3,5,7,9,), students will also be paired with another dyad and asked to take turns observing each other as they work in pairs (*i.e.*, During the first class session of the week, both members of Dyad 1 will observe as both members of Dyad 2 get a turn as tellers and recorders. Then during the second class session of the week, both members of Dyad 2 act as Observers while the members of Dyad 1 each act as Tellers and Recorders.) For these “dual dyad” sessions, the ideal thing would be to have students schedule time to use private observation rooms (with mirrored glass and audio capability) if possible, or anyplace on campus that is comfortable and private if such facilities are not available. The story-Teller and story-Recorder sit and talk together; the Observers are seated at a remove, and are silent and completely outside of the conversation (outside of the room altogether, if observation rooms

are available.) Variations on this set-up, often involving triads whose roles are those of a “counselor,” “client,” and “observer,” are already widely used in a wide array of Master’s-level counseling course; the difference between this and the “typical” triad is outlined in the sections below. Dyad members can schedule these sessions for whenever works for them during the week (and whenever observation rooms are available); the important thing is that they meet consistently every week for 90 minutes, and observe their partner dyad every other week (weeks 3,5,7,9) for 90 minutes.

The role of the story Teller in each weekly session is to relate one or more stories of personal experience that are related to a given weekly topic– with the emphasis on actual stories, not summaries or analyses (as Adlerian therapy has it, “recollection” over “report.”) These should be specific situational memories, not just description. For example, talking about a particular incident with one’s friends, including who did, said or felt what, would be appropriate; talking about the relationships in general terms (e.g. “we are close”; “she is the ‘smart’ one”; “they are usually encouraging”) would not. This is meant primarily to keep the focus on narrative elements and better facilitate the potential for narrative co-creation on the part of the Recorder, which is more possible when one is working with primary narrative elements than with analysis. Likewise, it is meant to further a sense of exploration, rather than simple recapitulation, on the part of the Tellers.

The role of the story-Recorders in these sessions is, first of all, to literally create an audio-recording of the conversation. Beyond that, the role of the story-

Recorder is to participate in finding out more details related to the stories being told. This may sometimes involve reflecting content and asking clarifying questions; at other times it may involve practicing silence. After the first week, Recorders should be striving to make connections between the growing collection of discrete stories: They should look for repeated settings, characters, metaphors, and themes; note what happens between characters; be able to understand why each individual story is important to the teller and how it relates to the others. Outside of the sessions, the Recorders will write up the stories, using the audio-transcript as a framework, and then fleshing out or editing the texts based on their own narrative conceptualizations. This means the texts will be written in first person, primarily using the words of the Teller verbatim, but also including observed "subtext" or points of emphasis where it seems necessary or appropriate to the narrative. These texts should typically be between five and ten pages. Creating these texts based on the verbal accounts of the Tellers is meant to provide Recorders an exercise in empathic, active listening and accurate, relevant reflection.

The written texts will be returned to the Tellers at least one day before the next scheduled dyad session. The object of returning these stories to the Tellers in advance is to allow them to react to these written texts – make clarifications, expound upon certain points, or alter emphasis as appropriate. After the first session, every subsequent session will be allow for 15-20 minutes of beginning discussion and reflection upon the written text from the previous week. Guiding questions (see Appendix B) will be provided to students to help facilitate these



“debriefs,” which are meant to give Tellers an opportunity to see themselves and their experiences reflected back, to understand how these are all storied and might be “re-storied” and/or accepted and learned from—and likewise to help Recorders understand and be aware of how well they are listening, whether they are making assumptions, and on what those assumptions might be based. Implicit in this back-and-forth between Tellers and Recorders will be an opportunity to explore and engage with the potential for transference and counter-transference—facility with which has been identified as a primary attribute of a skilled counselor (Gelso, Latts, Gomez, & Fassinger, 2002; Grant, 2006; Hayes, Riker, & Ingram, 1997). In learning more about the important characters, plots and settings in their partner’s lives, and considering the same elements in regard to their own stories, both Tellers and Recorders should become better positioned to recognize and understand aspects of their own interactions that may cause transference or counter-transference to occur.

In between sessions, story-Tellers and Recorders will be responsible for expanding upon their collaboratively-narrated stories (*i.e.*, the life experiences of the story-Tellers), based on the questions and observations that emerge as they revisit the original texts together, create new and perhaps related stories in subsequent sessions, and get questions or feedback from their Observers. These individual stories will, at the end of the eight weeks of dyad work, be combined into meta-narratives, written by the Recorder in close consultation with the Tellers, which will reviewed and discussed between teller and recorder in their final dyad debrief in week ten. These meta-narratives should incorporate all

of the Teller's individual stories in a way that is well-structured and makes connections between repeated characters, plots, metaphors and themes. After that joint review, and any resulting edits, these meta-narratives will be used as prompts for analytical and reflective papers.

The role of the Observers during these sessions is first to note and describe the dynamics between Teller and Recorder. The Observers should also be paying attention to themes, characters, metaphors, language and settings present in the stories that get told; and beyond that should be noting closely and carefully how these things are unearthed jointly, and worked upon, by teller and recorder. Variations on the guiding questions (see Appendix B) will be provided for Observers to complete each week, to facilitate their own focused observation and analysis. Observers' notes will need to be written down and shared with the members of their partner dyad, as well as with the instructor for evaluation.

#### In-class exercise

In week ten, there will be a classroom exercise intended to pull several of these ideas together, which will entail working with the 2001 Burns text, first as a class and then breaking into small groups. The text, after brief introductory chapters (which by this point students should have read), offers a collection of different stories and identifies the "Therapeutic Characteristics" of each—namely, the problems they might address, the resources they might help listeners develop, and the outcomes they might offer. For example, the sixth story in the book is called "Jim and the Joke Book: A Story of Self-Empowerment" and it notes the following "Therapeutic Characteristics: 1) Problems addressed –

uncontrollable circumstances; problems with health, marriage, family relationships and work; feelings of powerlessness; 2) Resources Developed – learning acceptance; developing creative resolutions; 3) Outcomes Offered – accept the unchangeable; learn strategies for change; do something different; feel good about what you do” (Burns, 2001, p.45). The classroom exercise will involve two parts, both of which will ask students to talk through the different “narrative opportunities” he pinpoints using the stories in the text, and relate those opportunities (i.e., “therapeutic characteristics) back to the study of individual counseling theories and narrative elements as presented in the past nine weeks of lectures.

The first part of this exercise will be a class brainstorm, facilitated by the instructor, for four different stories. Students will be asked to identify how the problems, resources or outcomes identified by Burns correspond with aspects of particular counseling and personality theories. For example, with the “Jim and the Joke Book” story, how might the resources and outcomes be useful or relevant in existential therapy? In reality therapy? In cognitive therapy? To what other therapeutic approaches might the stories be relevant, and in what ways? The instructor can choose any four stories out of the Burns text for this first part of the exercise, which should take about 30-40 minutes.

After this group brainstorm, students will be asked to pair off and to work with another four stories from the Burns text, also chosen by the instructor. These four stories, however, will be distributed in handouts and will not include the list of problems, resources and outcomes that Burns identified. It will be the

students' jobs to identify the potential problems addressed, resources developed, or outcomes achieved with the skillful use of each story/metaphor. Students will be given an additional 40 minutes to complete this exercise, will be encouraged to be as comprehensive, thoughtful and creative as possible, and will be asked to again identify developmental frameworks and or/theoretical approaches to which those problems, resources and outcomes would be most relevant.

Having read portions of the Burns 2007 text prior to this class period, students will already have been exposed theoretically to how metaphors and stories could be applied therapeutically; this exercise will ask them to apply that knowledge, and again, ask them to do so in the context of particular theoretical concepts and frameworks.

#### Group workshops

Starting in the tenth week of the class, students will spend approximately 90 minutes meeting in small groups of not more than six (created by splitting the class in half). This too should take place within the allocated class time. The small group meetings may take place anywhere that is comfortable and private, usually a classroom or conference/seminar room, and will be facilitated by the instructor.

Half of the group participants will be asked, in advance of every group session, to distribute a written story, created by "their" Recorder with their input and feedback. (These can be edited by the Tellers, for sharing with the group, if they feel it necessary to protect their privacy or that of a friend or family member.) The next group session, the other half of the group members will share their

written texts with their peers (this split is to accommodate time constraints.) Since every group member is co-creating stories weekly in their dyads, this means they will have a choice between a number of story texts to share with the group each time it is their turn. Order of sharing could be determined by lottery, in order to avoid putting pressure on people to volunteer. Students will be asked to read each of the distributed texts in advance. During the group session, those group members that distributed written stories will be given the opportunity to share their stories with the group, and get peer feedback.

Each 90-minute group session will start with a beginning ritual, in order to help facilitate the sense of safe space that is so important (Jacobs, Masson & Harvill, 2008). After the ritual, the “workshopping” of stories will commence. The first designated group member will reflect aloud about their story—recounting the narrative highlights, noting why the story is important to them, and reflecting upon what (if anything) they learned from working with their Recorder to create the written text. The group members will then be given a chance to respond. These responses should be framed in terms of guiding questions (see Appendix B), similar in focus to those provided for observers during the dyad exercise; in keeping with the narrative focus of the course, these questions would ask students to elucidate what themes they read in the text or heard from the Teller, what characters or plot points they are curious about, what language or metaphors were prominent (and whether alternate language or metaphors would have been equally possible or those would have altered the story.) In this way, “workshopping” these stories as texts provides group members an opportunity to

adopt an attitude of “not knowing” that allows them to “wonder” with their peers—which social-constructionist approaches, including solution-focused therapies, identify as a powerful and important skill (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992).

As the Teller’s group members react to his/her story, his/her primary role is to listen and reflect upon her group members’ responses, and his/her own reactions to them. After thirty or so minutes (depending on the time allotted and size of the group; the important thing is that everyone has the same amount of “telling” and “reflection” time for his or her story), the group will move on to another group member’s story, until half the group members have had a chance to share, and get reactions to, their own stories.

This group exercise relates back to the goals of the course, as explicated at the beginning of this chapter, in the following ways:

- 1) Like the Journey With Me workshop it may demonstrate the immense therapeutic power of acceptance (White, 2007), providing the story-Teller with the experience of recognizing his/herself in the story that his/her recorder created with him/her, and the opportunity to have that story be heard, accepted and validated by other group members;
- 2) It has the potential to facilitate more of the self-awareness and self-acceptance that Bedwell (2002) and many others have identified as important aspects of the “Emotional Judgment” that counselors-in-training need to develop, by prompting group members to engage even more thoughtfully and deeply with their stories based on the observations and questions of their peers; and,

- 3) It could allow the story Recorders to benefit from their peers' observations and questions, helping them meet the objective of becoming more thoughtful, empathic, skillful "co-narrators."

As previously noted, more than 90% of group counseling courses already incorporate experiential group sessions into their frameworks (Merta, Wolfgang and McNeil, 1983). What is unique about this model is that it explicitly asks students to workshop their peers' co-created life experience stories. This is a much more structured, literal exercise than one might get from an open-ended experiential or encounter group, though like an encounter group it does focus heavily on self-discovery and acceptance. In asking students to analyze and respond to the narratives' structures and formal elements, this is similar to a skills training group—though its focus on self-awareness and identity does set it apart from formalized group training frameworks like the Skilled Group Counselor Training Model (SCTM). Essentially, the group element of this proposed course attempts to draw upon both the skills-focused and the personal development-focused existing group training models.

### **Qualifications and Role of the Instructor**

Because the model seeks to explicitly utilize narrative construction as a vehicle for further applying and integrating different aspects of counselor training, it would be best if this course were taught by someone who had some degree of familiarity and training with narrative construction, and whose theoretical orientation was grounded in a social-constructivist framework (e.g., humanistic, relational, narrative, family, or feminist therapies, among others.) This might be a

practitioner of narrative therapy, motivational interviewing, or appreciative inquiry, for example. This might very well entail engaging an adjunct faculty member to teach the course. If an instructor with such experience were not available, at the very least whoever taught it would probably need to have studied such approaches extensively in order to be able to effectively aid students in making the connection between what they've already learned about counseling theory and personality development, what they will learn regarding narrative construction and its application to therapy, and their experiences in sharing their own stories and writing their peers'.

The instructor will accomplish this goal in several ways. She/he will of course play a primary role in "setting up" the course, with the first three class sessions of lecture and discussion, and continuing lectures through week nine. These lectures will be intended to highlight the ways in which narrative co-construction can be used to accomplish therapeutic goals across theoretical perspectives.

In regards to dyad work, the instructor's role will be less prominent, but nevertheless quite important. She/he will be looking over the notes of the observers for every "dual dyad" session, evaluating them, and providing brief written feedback—primarily in the form of questions for additional consideration. She/he will also "sit in," as an observer for two of the four "dual dyad" sessions for each group (in the weeks between lectures), and like the observers, provide written observations and feedback based primarily on the guiding questions for such. She/he can also use the lecture/discussion periods during weeks three-



ten, which all focus on different elements of narrative construction and their applicability to therapy, as opportunities to provide general feedback and/or guidance to the class as a whole about aspects of collaborative narrative they might pay more attention to or think more about as they work in their dyads.

Once the dyad work is finished, the instructor will facilitate the in-class exercise and the group workshops. While concerns about instructors in dual roles may apply to experiential groups which are more open-ended (Morissette & Gadbois, 2003), that concern is somewhat ameliorated in this instance because the focus of the group workshops will be as much (or more) about how the stories are constructed and presented as it will be about the content of those stories. Moreover, in order to keep the group focused on the guiding questions, it will be important to have a strong facilitator, one more experienced than a graduate assistant may be in linking counseling and personality theories to personal experience narratives. The instructor's role as facilitator will be first, to help set the tone and create a sense of the "safe relational space" necessary to effective group work; second, to model the kind of open-ended, curious exploration and feedback (again, based on the guiding questions) that is appropriate given the focus and goals of the course; and third, to ensure that group members get a chance to participate equally. In particular, it will be incumbent upon the instructor, as group facilitator, to ensure that each Teller has an opportunity to hear from as many of his/her group members as possible (i.e. to ensure that no one, including the Teller him/herself, is permitted to

disproportionately “use up” the reaction time to the story if others have feedback to give.)

The instructor’s final role will be to evaluate student performance in this course, based on the criteria outlined below.

### **Student Tasks and Evaluation**

Student evaluation for this proposed course would be tied both to the experiential elements of the course, and to several additional writing assignments aimed at making explicit connections between the didactic and experiential elements of the course, in order to fulfill the targeted course outcomes identified at the beginning of this chapter.

Evaluation regarding experiential elements of the course will be as follows:

- 1) Participation – 15% - Did students “show-up” for all eight dyad sessions; four of them “dual” so they could act as observers? Did they write six stories, at a minimum, based on their partner’s responses to story prompts? Did students take part in all of the group sessions? Did they thoroughly complete the debrief exercise in week 14? This yes/no approach, and focus on students’ roles as Recorders and Observers rather than Tellers, is deliberately taken in order to avoid the potential ethical issues associated with coerced self-disclosure (Ixer, 1999). While it is true that students are being asked, as Tellers, to share *something*, they are completely in control of how personal, emotional, or “risky” that content is. Focusing on the fact that students practiced their skills as Recorders and Observers, and not making subjective judgments about the depth or quality of the individual stories, is meant to alleviate the potential for ethical issues to arise.
- 2) “Co-narration” as Recorder – 15% - Did students use the individual stories they wrote week-to-week for/with their partners to create a final cohesive meta-narrative? Did that meta-narrative do more than simply present the individual stories in succession; did it attempt to use narrative elements to make specific connections between the separate stories so they truly became one whole narrative rather than a disparate collection? Did their partner rate this narrative as being an insightful and relevant reflection of the stories that were shared?

- 3) Observation notes– 15% - For the four sessions in which students observed their peers working in dyads, were their observations written up completely and professionally? Did they relate directly to the ways in which the peers they were observing were “co-narrating”—focusing on how plot, characters, language, themes, and/or metaphors were being worked with? Did their observations reflect an understanding of personality and/or counseling theories? Did their observations have the potential to be helpful and constructive for their peers?

Several additional student tasks, based on the application of relevant course concepts and material to the experiential component, will make up the remainder of students' course grades:

- 1) Analytic paper 1 – 20% (Due at the end of week 10) - Apply counseling and personality development theories to the relationship with and stories of one's ("Teller") partner.
- 2) Analytic/Reflective paper 2 – 35% (Due in the last week of class) - Analyze the narrative elements of the meta-narrative chronicling one's own lifestories, as written by dyad partner. This paper will have three parts. Part one: What plot presents itself and what plot drivers can be identified? What characters, and potential archetypes, emerge? What language, metaphors and themes are prevalent? Part two: Of all of these, which narrative element/s are dominant? How, as a counselor, might those narrative elements connect with theories of personality development, or be worked effectively with based on one's own theoretical orientation? Part three: Is the combination of these narrative elements different than what you might have done if you had been asked to do your own autobiographical writing based on the story prompts we've used over the course of the semester? If so, how—and how do these differences resonate with, amplify, or clash with, your own understanding of your story?

Both papers should be evaluated for analytical sophistication and depth, and/or the application of relevant concepts.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The experientially-based course allows counselors in training to experience the vulnerability that can come from sharing oneself, and the power implicit in having others share themselves with you. Being able to understand

and develop a comfort factor with both of these feelings is important to counselor development (Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998).

As with any classroom exercise that explicitly or implicitly requires a level of self-disclosure, it is important that students be asked for informed consent before participating. Were this to be made a required course, it would also be imperative that an alternative exercise be made available for those who do not feel comfortable sharing personal experiences of any kind with fellow students (Morissette & Gadbois, 2003); however, given that the course as outlined in this thesis has been explicitly identified as an elective, and potential students would be clearly and emphatically informed that the course would depend on their willingness to share some level of personal experiences explicitly in the co-creation of life-stories, students who do not feel comfortable with this level of self-disclosure can simply opt not to take it. However, it is important that students who are willing in theory to self-disclose, and who sign up for this course, are not pushed in practice to share more than they are comfortable with. It is likewise very important that considerations of family privacy are taken into account given that these personal stories may verge into the realm of family autobiography (Goodman & Carpenter-White, 1996).

Concerns regarding personal and family privacy, especially given that this course proposes to have students sharing not just with their instructor but with their peers, are addressed in a couple of ways that go beyond the voluntary nature of the entire course. First, in that the story prompts are deliberately very open-ended, designed to allow students to be as selective as they wish in their

story-telling. Second, there is no suggestion that students be evaluated in their roles as story-Tellers, either in the group or dyad exercises, largely for this reason. However, students will be evaluated on their skill as Recorders (co-narrators), and this implicitly puts them in a position of relying on their Tellers to work collaboratively and openly with them; and potentially incentivizes them to push their Tellers for details that lie beyond the boundaries of comfortable self-disclosure. For that reason, it will be important for the instructor to take great pains in the first class session to emphasize the following: 1) that there is no expectation or need for students to share anything in particular; the idea is not to create the definitive, complete, autobiography of anyone in the course, but rather to work with whatever stories emerge; 2) that students will in no way be evaluated on the “depth” of the stories that they tell about their own experiences or write about their peers’ experiences; 3) that everything shared in dyads or groups will be subject to the same level of confidentiality that an actual counseling session would; and that, 4) written texts based on a student’s experience, created by his/her dyad partner, will be the sole property of the student whose experiences those narratives reflect. These ground rules are intended to help ensure that students’ rights to privacy and emotional safety are protected. This need to ensure students’ emotional and psychological well-being is in no way threatened by this model is one reason it is being suggested near the end of a program—when students have had a chance to get more comfortable with their peers, their own stories, and themselves as a skilled “co-narrator” having practiced it as a counselor-in-training.

Even with these procedures in place, the possibility remains that participating in the dyads or groups, particularly when relating personal experiences, may inadvertently bring students to places emotionally that are beyond the scope of what can or should be dealt with in this exercise or in a counselor-training program, and that may require professional support separate from this exercise. In light of this possibility, general sources for referrals for outside counseling should be made available at the beginning of the course, and students should be encouraged at the outset to take advantage of such services if/when they feel it would be helpful (Morissette & Gadbois, 2003).

### **Summary**

The goals of this model as outlined at the beginning of this chapter were, in broad terms, to provide counselors knowledge, skill, and capacity (labeled for these purposes as “emotional judgment”) to further their professional and personal development. The lectures, readings, and experiential aspects of the course are all constructed with these three aspects of personal and professional development (which as Hensley, Smith and Thompson (2003) note are fairly intertwined and often indistinguishable in counseling, as opposed to other professions that are not so emotionally-based) at the forefront.

In terms of knowledge—specifically, knowledge of core counseling theories and tenets, as well as of social constructivism and narrative construction—the lecture and reading schedule was designed to meet this goal; the review of material from previous courses is predicated on the pedagogical reality that we learn and retain information through repetition and through

application. In regard to application of knowledge, the two papers, as well as the class exercise in week ten, ask students to do just that. This focus on asking students to apply what they know about counseling and personality theories is based on the consensus in the literature, and in CACREP standards, that helping students to develop and apply their own personal counseling theory/approach is a key outcome of counselor training. Regardless of what theory students prefer, there will be something in this narratively-grounded exercise that will give them a “handle” for application: for example, psychodynamic theorists can focus on the self-concept, needs, drives or defenses that emerge in the stories they are co-narrating; person-centered or relational theorists can work with relationships and incongruent experiences the stories showcase, or can focus on the collaborative nature of the co-narration itself, and how it does or doesn’t inform a person-centered therapeutic approach; those inclined toward solution-focused, family, or other systems approaches can analyze the systems or dominant cultural subtexts in the stories they’re working with present, or can focus on how the experience of co-narration with their peers informs their understanding of these approaches generally; etc.

In terms of the development of counseling skills—the second identified aspect of counselor personal/professional growth—the art of narrative collaboration is in many ways indistinguishable from that of counseling. Both require careful, nuanced listening and reflection, the ability to establish a working alliance, empathy and emotional judgment, analytical capacity, and some facility with language and communication. The dyad and group exercises that serve as

the foundation of this model require students to practice these crucial skills—and have a great deal of precedent in existing counselor training programs, as so many incorporate experiential skills-training elements (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998).

By asking students in the dyad and group exercises to engage with their own stories, in collaboration with their peers, the course aims to facilitate greater self-awareness, ego strength, and emotional well-being—the third, more “personal” aspect of counselor development previously identified as a course goal. It aims to do this because such attributes have been identified as vital to counselors’ development of the interpersonal skills noted above, as well as to the ability to recognize and manage transference and countertransference (Gelso & Hays, 2001).

By targeting these three aims, the course described herein could help students preparing to launch into counseling careers begin the lifelong task of integrating their knowledge, skills, and emotional capacity into one cohesive approach to their profession, while providing a perspective and skill-set that they might not otherwise have at their disposal—namely, that of narrative construction. Much care will need to be taken to ensure that the structure of this class, which relies on self-disclosure to a degree rather more pronounced than most counselor training courses, does not endanger student emotional health and well-being. But given its voluntary nature, and the prerequisites designed to ensure that those involved have at least an initial degree of maturity and emotional judgment, it seems possible that this could be accomplished successfully.



## CHAPTER IV

### EVALUATION OF THE MODEL

This thesis suggests that an elective course like the one described herein could effectively allow students to 1) apply knowledge—that is, counseling and personality theories—to their own and others' personal experience narratives; 2) further develop their interpersonal skills with individuals and groups through additional practice, observation and analysis; and 3) work through their own particular stories to further develop the emotional capacities they will need to be successful counselors. In order to measure the degree to which the course meets these three objectives, a combination of quantitative and qualitative empirical measures might be applied—and will be detailed in this chapter. Naturally, the proposed model could also be subject to any standard course evaluation activities carried out at a given institution.

#### **Proposed Evaluation Methodologies**

In order to test the first hypothesis—whether students of the course learned to more effectively integrate and apply their conceptual knowledge of counseling approaches and developmental psychology—content analysis might be applied to some of the writing generated as part of the course. Content analysis is the methodology often applied to written materials (personal text, diaries, documents) used to identify patterns or prominent themes within these

writings, and to recognize, categorize, and classify various levels of significance within the data.

Content analysis might likewise be employed to assess the success in meeting the second and third goals of the course—skill building and emotional development. In addition, in order to provide a more well-rounded assessment, students will be asked to complete pre-and post-course surveys aimed at measuring whether these aims are achieved, and their responses will be compared to a control group. Since it would be difficult and convoluted to try to measure changes in each individual counseling skill or attribute (especially since as previously noted in this thesis, often the lines between these are merged), two general arenas for which vetted assessment instruments already exist will be used as proxies to indicate increased mastery of helping skills and “personal growth:” emotional judgment and empathic capacity.

### Sample

For the content analysis, the study sample would consist of the course participants and the instructor, since the contents of documents produced by both would be analyzed. Students and instructor would be asked to provide informed consent before any of their materials could be analyzed for course evaluation.

For the pre- and post-course assessments aimed at gauging the success of goals two and three, the registrants of the course would be the study group, and it would be necessary to have a control group against which to compare the survey results as well. The control group would consist of students in the same

program that semester who had taken the same prerequisite courses and had roughly the same number of credits, and had not registered for the narrative course. Each of those students would be invited to participate in this study, would be required to provide informed consent before participating, and would be given access to their pre- and post-semester assessment results upon request. Ideally, the number of students in the control group would be equal to the number of the students in the study group; if the number of volunteers for the control group was greater than the study group, those students whose assessment results would be compared to the study group could be drawn at random.

#### Assessment Instruments

For evaluation of the first hypothesis, related to the application of pre-existing knowledge, content analysis could be applied to student observers' notes from their dual dyad sessions, instructor feedback regarding dyad and group work (the dyad observations would be created by the instructor as part of the course, but group observations would have to be generated by the instructor explicitly for the purposes of this evaluation), and to the analytical papers produced as part of the course. One or more researchers trained in content analysis would be engaged to do this assessment.

For the evaluation of the second and third hypotheses, related to skills mastery and emotional capacity, content analysis may also be applied to the same materials. In addition, as noted above, students will be asked to complete pre- and post-course assessment instruments that will attempt to note changes in their levels of self-awareness, empathic capacity, and helping skills. To assess

changes in self-awareness and relational skills, students in both the study and control groups will be asked to complete the Emotional Judgment Inventory (EJI; Bedwell, 2002) at the beginning and end of the semester. To assess changes in empathic capacity, students from both the control and study groups will be asked to complete the Index of Responding Empathy Scale (IRE; Gazda et al., 1984a) at the beginning and end of the semester.

As noted in chapter three, Scott Bedwell (2002) created the Emotional Judgment Inventory (EJI), a survey with 83 statements to which respondents rate their level of agreement/disagreement on a seven point scale, to measure counselors' and counselor trainees' possession of some of these traits. The EJI has seven subscales: Being Aware of Emotions, Identifying Own Emotions, Identifying Others' Emotions, Managing Own Emotions, Managing Others' Emotions, Using Emotions in Problem Solving, and Expressing Emotions Adaptively. Bedwell (2002) found adequate reliability and validity of measures (Bedwell, 2002, as cited in Martin, Easton, Wilson, Takemoto & Sullivan, 2004).

The Index of Responding Empathy Scale (IRE; Gazda et al., 1984a), asks those who take it to write an empathic response to 10 hypothetical counseling situations. Regarding the IRE, which has also been found to be satisfactorily reliable, Crutchfield, Baltimore, Felfeli, and Worth (2000) have noted:

The IRE has been widely used in research as a general measure of empathy, including studies of human relations training for student teachers (Gazda et al., 1984b). Test-retest reliability for the IRE has ranged from .90 to .92 in previous studies (Black & Phillips, 1982; Gazda et al., 1984b). In a more recent study (Cummings & Murray, 1990)...the authors concluded that the instrument's overall score was representative of a general measure of empathy skill. (p.163)

## Procedures

Before this evaluation could commence, a number of independent evaluators would need to be engaged. These would necessarily include at least one, and ideally two, individuals with training and experience in the practice of content analysis who had advanced degrees in the social sciences. Additionally, someone with experience and familiarity with the EJI would need to be available to score that instrument; this should be someone with an advanced degree in psychology, counseling or related field. Finally, at least three analysts familiar with the IRE, with Ph.D.'s in some branch of psychology or at least five years' working experience in the field of psychology or counseling, would need to be available to score that instrument. These evaluators need not be five or six different individuals; rather, it could be two or three who meet all of the qualifications outlined above and are willing to act as analysts/raters for all three assessments. Also before any evaluation could commence, it would be imperative to obtain informed consent from each member of the different sample groups.

The assessment through content analysis would be completed on an ongoing basis throughout the semester, with the trained analyst/s receiving observation notes after each dual dyad session written by the student observers and instructor, receiving notes from the instructor related to each group session, and receiving copies of student papers, all as they were generated/turned in. These notes and papers would be stripped of identifying information before being submitted to the analyst/s, in order to protect students' privacy. Each of these

observers' notes, instructor's notes, and student papers would be considered one piece of data. An initial categorization scheme would be provided for the content analyst/s based on the three stated course goals as well as the guiding questions developed for each of the course activities and the content of the readings and lectures (which were themselves both based on the course goals. These categories would be grouped initially according to whether the content was *directly* indicative of knowledge or skill application, or emotional growth, or *indirectly* indicative of such. For example, a student might have a line of observation or analysis in his/her paper or notes that itself demonstrated the application of theory (e.g., "Examination of Joe's narrative indicates that he is wrestling with issues related to Erickson's fourth stage of development..."); this would fall into the "direct" categories. On the other hand, all of the instructor's notes and some of the observers' notes might give indirect, observed evidence indicating application of knowledge or demonstration of skill or emotional growth (e.g., "Based on the greater level of agreement/ approval from his Teller for the story Joe wrote up this week versus the one he wrote two weeks ago, he seems to be getting better at accurately interpreting and reflecting themes.") Having thus distinguished between the two types of data, four broad categories would be established for each: 1) demonstration of integration of theoretical knowledge; 2) explicit use of narrative elements as therapeutic devices or lenses; 3) demonstration of helping skills; 4) demonstration of personal growth. Each of these categories would then have discrete elements within them, "use of metaphor" or "use of themes" being two discrete elements of the "use of narrative

elements” category, for example. For each discrete element within the category, a code would be assigned indicating the relative strength of that element’s presence within each piece of data (see Appendix C). Since the initial categories were created independent of an existing dataset and without the expertise of an actual content analyst, it would be at the important for the content analyst/s undertaking the evaluation to be authorized to review, reassign, and prioritize categories if it became evident that too much overlap was occurring (Patton, 2002).

The content analyst/s would be asked to organize his/her/their categorized datasets according to the week of the course in which each piece of data was generated (or in the case of student papers, turned in.) At the conclusion of the course, once all of the data from the observers’ and instructor’s notes and students’ papers had been analyzed, the content analyst/s would first note any instances of “deviant cases” in which the data did not seem to fit into any category (Patton, 2002). If there were two analysts, they would then need to compare any changes they made individually to categorization schemes, and together come to some final agreement about what categories if any should be added, altered or omitted, and what the occurrence of any deviant cases might suggest about the outcomes of the course.

The procedure for the pre- and post-course surveys would be as follows: After providing informed consent for participation in this evaluation, the students in both the control and study groups would be asked to participate in one of two 60-minute sessions during the first week of classes (students could choose which

to attend based on their schedules), during which both the EJI and IRE would be administered by one of the independent trained evaluators. The same instructions would be given in each of the two sessions. The pre-course EJI surveys given to both the control and study groups would immediately be scored, numerically according to the manual, by the assigned independent rater. The IRE essays would likewise be scored; this scoring as noted would require three (or more) raters, and be somewhat more subjective. Crutchfield, Baltimore, Felfeli, and Worth (2000) have noted:

The IRE is typically scored by a group of raters using the Gazda et al. (1984a) 4-point empathy scale. A Level 1 response on the scale is considered irrelevant to the helpee's (client's) statement, possibly harmful to the client, because it does not attend to even the surface feelings involved. A Level 2 response reflects the content of the client's feeling statement but is still considered subtractive because it only partially attends to the surface feelings. A Level 3 communicates the client's feelings adequately, and with appropriately accurate content. Finally, a Level 4 is considered additive because the client's feelings are accurately identified, and content may be used to add a deeper meaning. Raters' scoring is reviewed and compared. Discrepancies in scoring are discussed and a consensus is reached. (p.163)

At the end of the semester, students from both the study and control groups would be asked to once again fill out these assessment instruments, during one of two 60-minute sessions scheduled early in finals week. (They would again choose which of the two fit their schedules.) The same evaluator that facilitated the pre-course assessment sessions would preside over both of these sessions, and would give the same instructions regarding both surveys in both sessions as he/she had given for during the two pre-test sessions at the beginning. These instruments would then be scored by the



same raters, using the same methods, as those employed for the pre-course assessments.

### **Analysis**

Having settled on final categorization schemas and adjusted his/her/their data characterizations accordingly, the content analyst/s would be looking for “substantive significance” within the data. Substantive significance is determined by measuring the consistency and coherence of findings, value of contribution to the field of study, and how useful the findings are for the intended purpose (Patton, 2002.) In this case, the pre-determined categories have essentially been set up as scales and subscales to measure the extent to which each type of desired outcome seems to be in evidence in each piece of data, with the first number in their four-character category codes signifying the relative “strength” of the category. For example, when looking at the extent to which observers’ notes (directly) indicate that the Observer, or (indirectly) indicate that a Recorder, has demonstrated facility in the use of the narrative element of “character”, the sub-category representing “therapeutically sophisticated use of character” would be “DN.42” or “IN.42” respectively; the sub-category “lack of identification and/or use of character” would be “DN.12” or “IN.12” respectively. The “4” in the former category codes indicates the strong presence of this trait, whereas the “1” in the latter category codes indicates a lack of this trait. Thus, after each piece of data has been categorized by the content analyst, it could be scored for each outcome area by tallying these indicators of relative strength and dividing by the total number of discrete elements categorized for that piece of data (of which there

would be a maximum of 15 in the suggested categorization scheme; however, this denominator might be less than 15 if one of the discrete category elements was deemed “not applicable” to a particular piece of data, and thus not assigned a code.) While the content analyst/s looking at the written data may—indeed, should—come to qualitative conclusions, based on their overall evaluations of the dataset as a whole, about what themes or outcomes are evident in course materials, they may also use the means of the weekly data “scores” as one variable in a correlation function, with time (weeks into the course, starting at week three) being the other variable. These correlation functions could be run separately for each “subscale,” keeping the two different sets of data categories (direct and indirect) separate. If there were a statistically significant trend in one or more of these scales/subscales, *and* if the content analyst/s were in agreement that the occurrence of data that fit into the given categories could indeed be said to correspond positively with the course goals, substantive significance might be deemed to be in evidence. It would be important to have the content analyst/s also evaluate whether there is a significant qualitative difference in the data in the “direct” versus “indirect” categorizations, and what the differences between these might signify in terms of an overall course evaluation.

In order to analyze the findings from the pre-and post-course surveys using the EJI and IRE, an analysis of variance would need to be completed for each of these instruments, examining the pre- and post-test differences in mean scores between the control group and the group that took the proposed course.

If, after applying such an analysis, a statistically significant variance is shown, the course will be considered a success in meeting goals two and three. If the results are statistically marginal or inconclusive, it will be important to closely examine the outcomes of the content analysis related to these two goals. If the results of the analysis of variance for both of these instruments is statistically insignificant, goals two and three may be determined not to have been met.

### **Drawbacks and Limitations**

There are a number of potential hurdles or limitations implicit in the evaluation methods suggested, although it seems fair to assume that many of these drawbacks would be an issue in *any* attempt to evaluate the course outcomes, beyond the general course assessments typically given at the end of a course. The most immediate question is whether the prospect of having their observations and/or papers read and analyzed by outside raters would change the quality or content of those documents, or the overall experience of the course for the students.

Another significant drawback would be the need to engage a number of independent raters with specific skill-sets for a fairly intensive evaluation process. It would require internal or external funding from an Institution to support intensive data analysis procedures such as these, involving highly trained raters.

Even if such resources were available, one important drawback of content analysis generally is the potential for disagreement or misinterpretation of content among researchers and observers, leading to erroneous results. It is for this reason that Patton (2002) suggests that when more than one analyst is

working on the same project that they “develop the coding scheme independently, then compare and discuss similarities and differences” (p.464) In this case, the odds of having access to more than one analyst who will evaluate the success of this program is questionable—but it does beg the question of the ultimately subjective nature of this evaluation strategy.

The likelihood of a small sample size and bias (Jaccard & Becker, 2002), might also be considered a challenge to these assessment strategies. More broadly, it may be impossible to tease out effects of this course versus others if the student is taking more than one during the course of a semester (since it may not be feasible to limit the control group to only those students taking the exact same courses, bar this one.) All in all, it would be best from the perspective of accurate evaluation if this course could be offered, and made subject to an in-depth evaluation, multiple times. However, the hurdles implicit in this evaluation may render repeated attempts to implement it impractical at best.

## CHAPTER V

### IN CONCLUSION

We tend to think of our stories as intrinsic, immutable, *a priori*—but as any counseling theory will ultimately presume, implicitly if not explicitly, understanding these stories as having been internally constructed, and as being fundamentally alterable (whether that means changing one’s thoughts, one’s behaviors, or one’s experience of oneself in relationship to others or to one’s circumstances) is a necessary component of change and growth (Fall, Holden & Marquis, 2004; Hoyt, xxx). The training model described in this thesis aims to help students understand how their own and others’ stories can be deconstructed and reconstructed, *as stories*, collaboratively. The practice of seeing these as external texts, rather than as static experiential truths or (solely) internal identity markers, might allow for space to do this work in a way that is non-threatening, thought-provoking, and empowering.

The readings, lectures, activities and assignments comprising this model are all aimed at meeting the broad goals outlined in chapter three—namely, increasing students’ ability to retain and apply knowledge regarding counseling approaches and personality development; giving them opportunity for continued mastery of foundational counseling skills, from listening and reflecting to conceptualizing and making connections; and encouraging emotional growth by providing the space and encouragement for personal reflection upon their own

life experiences. These goals are in keeping with core counseling competencies as outlined in the literature and the CACREP standards for counselor training (CACREP, 2009; Hubbs & Brand, 2005; Martin, Easton, Wilson, Takemoto & Sullivan, 2004; Spruill & Benshoff, 2000). This model takes many experiential elements that are familiar to counselor training programs – controlled self-disclosure, collaborative relationships meant to parallel those created in “real” counseling sessions, students as observers, group sessions (Hill & Lent, 2006; Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, Zimmick, 1999; Urbani, Smith, Maddux, Smaby, Torres-Rivera & Crews, 2002)—but uses them as a means to different, more narratively-sophisticated, ends. By thinking about students’ stories as stories, as narrative constructions with discrete elements that can all be worked with and that all have utility and relevance to core counseling theories, there is the potential to accomplish the “externalizing” function that narrative therapists like Michael White talk about—and thereby, provide opportunity for rigorous analytical inquiry. Likewise, by asking students to think and talk explicitly about personal stories that relate to foundational aspects of counseling theory and counseling skills—achievement, loss, relationships, goals, emotional triggers—the goal is to tap potential for developing even more of the “emotional judgment” and self-awareness that the literature resoundingly notes is crucial for the professional development of counselors (Grant, 2006; Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998).

While the model has been designed as carefully as possible to meet those goals, there are a number of remaining questions and potential areas of further study to consider. One interesting element of the model is the use of story

“prompts”—intended to make it easier for students to apply counseling and personality theories to the narratives they are co-constructing, and meant also to provide a structure within which students can explore life experiences without feeling coerced into divulging anything too personal. While these prompts are included for strategic purposes, it does beg the question of whether they run the risk of distorting the reality of student experience (*i.e.*, changing or forcing the resultant narratives) by creating artificial points of emphasis. It might be interesting to see if there were qualitative changes to the experience of this course if no prompts were provided for students.

Also interesting is the potential for variations on this model—for example, the potential to incorporate some of the experiential components into existing group counseling, theory, or multi-cultural courses. If integrated into a course that occurs early in the Masters degree program, this model has the benefit of being a good introduction to work that may be done throughout the rest of the program. As noted in the preceding literature review, many existing courses incorporate peer-to-peer work, often asking students to assume roles and develop relationships analogous to that of counselor-client (Hill & Lent, 2006). The roles of story-teller and co-narrator, by contrast, may have the benefit of potentially feeling more familiar and less risky for new students, presenting less pressure to be a full-fledged “counselor” right away, and less vulnerability than being a “client” with problems on display for others to help solve.

Overriding all of these questions is, of course, the fundamental one of whether the course as constructed meets the goals at which it aims. In order to

ascertain that, the model would need to be implemented within an actual Masters program, and evaluated using the measures outlined in chapter four (and perhaps others). This could present an exciting and rewarding experience for counseling trainees, if it manages in any way to approximate the “Journey With Me” experience that inspired it. Perhaps it won’t. Perhaps the power in that experience had everything to do with the individuals involved, or with the intergenerational aspect of the program. Perhaps it was simply a matter of being in the right place at the right time. Or, viability of the model aside, perhaps students in masters-level counseling programs already get a chance to do all of the self-examination they can handle, or can benefit from.

In surveying the literature, though, it seems clear that collaborative narrative could indeed be used as a leverage point from which to integrate many important counseling concepts and skills. In the final analysis, what is more fundamental to counseling than story-telling? Isn’t what we do, all day, every day, “journeying with” our clients through the thickets of personal experience, conveyed as narrative? Isn’t a therapeutic alliance one in which you work together to ensure the client’s story is the story he/she chooses? As counselor trainees set out on their own professional journeys, perhaps the simple practice of telling and writing stories together could help light the way.



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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
COURSE OUTLINE

The table below maps out suggested course content and structure by week.

1	Lecture: Social constructivism, course intro	Lecture: Counseling Theories (review)
2	Lecture: Narrative elements and their application to counseling	Dyad set-up Dyad (topic: home)
3	Dual Dyad (topic: achievement/talent)	Dual Dyad (topic: achievement/talent)
4	Lecture: Narrative therapies	Dyad (topic: early memory)
5	Dual Dyad (topic: being rewarded/ punished)	Dual Dyad (topic: being rewarded/ punished)
6	Lecture: Personality development (review)	Dyad (topic: loss)
7	Dual Dyad (topic: giving/getting help )	Dual Dyad (topic: giving/getting help )
8	Lecture: Combining theoretical and narrative know-how in case conceptualization and treatment planning Assign Paper 1	Dyad (topic: independence)
9	Dual Dyad (topic: connection, significant relationship/s)	Dual Dyad (topic: connection, significant relationship/s)
10	Final dyad debrief (re: meta-narrative) Class story exercise (Burns)	Debrief class exercise Final Questions Paper 1 Set up group workshops
11	Assign Paper 2 Group	Paper 1 Due Group
12	Group	Group
13	Group	Group
14	Wrap-up Group Paper 2 due	Wrap-up lecture, discussion Course evaluations

## APPENDIX B

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

#### **Guiding Questions for Dyad Debriefs**

In each dyad session after the first one, Tellers and Recorders should discuss the following questions (in this order) regarding the text created from the previous week's session:

1) Recorder:

-What struck you most about this story: Was it the plot? The characters? A theme or conclusion?

-Was there particular language that struck you, either in the audio session or the "writing up"?

- What in this story is not verbatim? What "editorial" decisions did you make about adding emphasis, explanations, interpretations? About omitting details or changing language? What prompted you to make those decisions?

2) Teller:

- What is it like for you to see this story in writing? Does it feel like it an accurate reflection of "who, what, where, when and why"?

- Were their additions, omissions, interpretations that felt particularly insightful, relevant or helpful? Were there additions, omissions or interpretations that made this story feel like it was no longer an accurate reflection of your experience? (Be specific.)

- Are there any additions or clarifications you feel are necessary to make this story more true for you? (Be specific.)

- What similarities or differences are there between the characters, plot, language or themes in this story from others you have shared in this course?

3) Recorder (again):

- What are the similarities or differences you see in the plot, characters, language, metaphors or themes between this story and others you've heard from your teller?

- (Primarily for reflection, and acknowledgement if relevant; not for extended discussion.) Were there characters or themes in this story that resonated particularly with you based on your own experiences?

### Guiding Questions for Dyad Observers' Notes

For each "dual dyad" session, observers should respond to each of these questions, twice (for each permutation of the dyad they are observing). The answers to these questions should be written up thoroughly and provided to both members of the dyad they are observing, within one week of the session.

The notes should also be provided to course instructors, as 15% of each student's grade will be based on the quality of these notes. They will be evaluated based on the following criteria: 1) Completeness and professionalism; 2) grasp of narrative elements; 3) grasp/application personality and/or counseling theories; 4) potential to be helpful and constructive for their peers.

- 1) Please describe the interpersonal dynamics you see at play in this dyad:
  - Do the Tellers appear comfortable? Do the Recorders appear to be engaged and actively listening?
  - To what extent are the stories driven primarily by the Teller? To what extent are they being elicited by the Recorder?
  - If a collaborative relationship is described as one in which "...", to what extent did this particular session appear to be a collaborative effort?
  
- 2) Please discuss the prominent narrative elements that emerged in this session:
  - Who were the characters? What was the plot? What themes or dominant metaphors were in evidence? What particular language seemed significant, characteristic or telling? What clarifying questions do you have about any of these elements?
  
- 3) Please note how you see narrative elements being identified and worked with by the dyad:
  - What narrative elements were emphasized by Teller and Recorder? Were they the same? What was the impact of the similarity or differences between them?
  - Are there elements that you felt could have been (more) effectively or usefully elaborated upon?
  - Are there similarities or differences between the characters, plot, language or themes in this story from others previously shared by the Teller that you think the dyad might consider paying more attention to?
  - What aspects of counseling theories do Recorders seem to be integrating (if any) in their roles as co-narrators? Are their elements of counseling theory that you believe dyad members (especially Recorders) might consider in striving to become more successful co-narrators?
  - Are there any relevant aspects of personality development theory that the dyad members seem to be integrating, or that you think they might usefully consider, as they work together to better elucidate their jointly constructed narratives?

### **Guiding Questions for Group Workshops**

As they listen and respond to each story, group members should primarily consider the following questions:

-What themes did you hear in this story that struck you as prominent, significant or powerful?

-What characters or plot points are you curious about? What else would you like to know about them?

-Was there particular language that struck you, or that you are curious about?

-Are there specific metaphors that struck you, that you felt were particularly evocative?

-Were there any places where you wondered how alternate language, metaphors or explanations would change the story?

## APPENDIX C

### CONTENT ANALYSIS CATEGORIZATION SCHEME

#### Direct

(Student's writing demonstrates the following):

#### Integration of theoretical knowledge into practice

- DK.41 Sophisticated application of counseling theory
- DK.42 Sophisticated application of personality theory
- DK.43 Sophisticated application of concept from reading/lecture reference
- DK.44 Sophisticated conceptualization of story content and connections between stories
- DK.31 Successful application of counseling theory
- DK.32 Successful application of personality theory
- DK.33 Successful application of concept from reading/lecture reference
- DK.34 Successful conceptualization of story content and connections between stories
- DK.21 Reference to counseling theory (not applied or very superficially applied)
- DK.22 Reference to personality theory (not applied or very superficially applied)
- DK.23 Reference to concept from reading/lecture (superficially or not at all applied)
- DK.24 Appropriate attempt at conceptualization of story content and connections
- DK.11 Lack of reference to or application of counseling theory though appropriate
- DK.12 Lack of reference to or application of personality theory though appropriate
- DK.13 Lack of reference to/ application reading/lecture material though appropriate
- DK.14 Lack of any overarching conceptualization of story content/story connections

#### Explicit use of narrative elements as therapeutic devices or lenses

- DN.41 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "plot"
- DN.42 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "character"
- DN.43 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "language"
- DN.44 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "metaphor"
- DN.45 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "themes"
- DN.31 Successful identification and/or use of "plot"
- DN.32 Successful identification and/or use of "character"
- DN.33 Successful identification and/or use of "language"
- DN.34 Successful identification and/or use of "metaphor"
- DN.35 Successful identification and/or use of "themes"

- DN.21 Attempt at identification and/or use of "plot"
- DN.22 Attempt at identification and/or use of "character"
- DN.23 Attempt at identification and/or use of "language"
- DN.24 Attempt at identification and/or use of "metaphor"
- DN.25 Attempt at identification and/or use of "themes"
- DN.11 Lack of identification and/or use of "plot"
- DN.12 Lack of identification and/or use of "character"
- DN.13 Lack of identification and/or use of "language"
- DN.14 Lack of identification and/or use of "metaphor"
- DN.15 Lack of identification and/or use of "themes"

#### Helping Skills

- DS.41 Excellent reflection of story content
- DS.42 Excellent reframing of story content
- DS.43 Excellent interpretation regarding story content (e.g. themes)
- DS.44 Excellent use of "collaborative" approach (balance of "following" and "leading")
- DS.45 Excellent identification and use of transference/ countertransference
- DS.31 Successful reflection of story content
- DS.32 Successful reframing of story content
- DS.33 Successful interpretation
- DS.34 Successful use of "collaborative" approach (balance of "following," "leading")
- DS.35 Successful use of (actual or potential) transference/countertransference
- DS.21 Appropriate attempt at reflection of story content
- DS.22 Appropriate attempt at reframing of story content
- DS.23 Appropriate attempt at interpretation
- DS.24 Appropriate attempt at "collaborative" approach (balance of following, leading)
- DS.25 Recognition of (actual or potential) transference/countertransference
- DS.11 Awkward or lacking reflection of story content
- DS.12 Awkward or lacking reframing of story content
- DS.13 Awkward or lacking interpretation
- DS.14 Awkward or lacking "collaborative" approach (balance of following, leading)
- DS.15 Unrecognized/ unmanaged (actual or potential) transference/ countertransference

#### Personal growth

- DG.41 Active attempts to understand/accept "unresolved" aspects of experience or trigger issues
- DG.31 Clear recognition of "unresolved" aspects of experience or trigger issues
- DG.21 Ambivalence regarding the need or desire to address "unresolved" aspects of experience or trigger issues
- DG.11 Lack of recognition regarding "unresolved" aspects of experience or trigger issues



### Indirect

(Instructors or student observers indicate they've observed a student demonstrating the following):

#### Integration of theoretical knowledge into practice

- IK.41 Sophisticated application of counseling theory
- IK.42 Sophisticated application of personality theory
- IK.43 Sophisticated application of concept from reading/lecture reference
- IK.44 Sophisticated conceptualization of story content and connections between stories
  
- IK.31 Successful application of counseling theory
- IK.32 Successful application of personality theory
- IK.33 Successful application of concept from reading/lecture reference
- IK.34 Successful conceptualization of story content, connections between them
- IK.21 Reference to counseling theory (not applied or very superficially applied)
- IK.22 Reference to personality theory (not applied or very superficially applied)
- IK.23 Reference to concept from reading/lecture (superficially or not at all applied)
- IK.24 Appropriate attempt at conceptualization of story content and connections
- IK.11 Lack of reference to or application of counseling theory though appropriate
- IK.12 Lack of reference to or application of personality theory though appropriate
- IK.13 Lack of reference to/ application reading/lecture material though appropriate
- IK.14 Lack of any overarching conceptualization of story content/story connections

#### Explicit use of narrative elements as therapeutic devices

- IN.41 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "plot"
- IN.42 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "character"
- IN.43 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "language"
- IN.44 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "metaphor"
- IN.45 Therapeutically sophisticated identification and/or use of "themes"
  
- IN.31 Successful identification and/or use of "plot"
- IN.32 Successful identification and/or use of "character"
- IN.33 Successful identification and/or use of "language"
- IN.34 Successful identification and/or use of "metaphor"
- IN.35 Successful identification and/or use of "themes"
- IN.21 Attempt at identification and/or use of "plot"
- IN.22 Attempt at identification and/or use of "character"
- IN.23 Attempt at identification and/or use of "language"
- IN.24 Attempt at identification and/or use of "metaphor"
- IN.25 Attempt at identification and/or use of "themes"
- IN.11 Lack of identification and/or use of "plot"

- IN.12 Lack of identification and/or use of “character”
- IN.13 Lack of identification and/or use of “language”
- IN.14 Lack of identification and/or use of “metaphor”
- IN.15 Lack of identification and/or use of “themes”

#### Helping Skills

- IS.41 Excellent reflection of story content
- IS.42 Excellent reframing of story content
- IS.43 Excellent interpretation regarding story content (e.g. themes)
- IS.44 Excellent use of “collaborative” approach (balance of “following” and “leading”)
- IS.45 Excellent identification and use of transference/ countertransference
- IS.31 Successful reflection of story content
- IS.32 Successful reframing of story content
- IS.33 Successful interpretation
- IS.34 Successful use of “collaborative” approach (balance of “following,” “leading”)
- IS.35 Successful use of (actual or potential) transference/countertransference
- IS.21 Appropriate attempt at reflection of story content
- IS.22 Appropriate attempt at reframing of story content
- IS.23 Appropriate attempt at interpretation
- IS.24 Appropriate attempt at “collaborative” approach (balance of following, leading)
- IS.25 Recognition of (actual or potential) transference/countertransference
- IS.11 Awkward or lacking reflection of story content
- IS.12 Awkward or lacking reframing of story content
- IS.13 Awkward or lacking interpretation
- IS.14 Awkward or lacking “collaborative” approach (balance of following, leading)
- IS.15 Unrecognized/ unmanaged (actual or potential) transference/ countertransference

#### Personal growth

- IG.41 Active attempts to understand/accept “unresolved” aspects of experience or trigger issues
- IG.31 Clear recognition of “unresolved” aspects of experience or trigger issues
- IG.21 Ambivalence regarding the need or desire to address “unresolved” aspects of experience or trigger issues
- IG.11 Lack of recognition regarding “unresolved” aspects of experience or trigger issues