Exploring Cognitive Complexity Development in a Hybrid Counseling Theories Course Designed Using the Recursive Superstructure

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EXPLORING COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY DEVELOPMENT IN A HYBRID COUNSELING THEORIES COURSE DESIGNED USING THE RECURSIVE SUPERSTRUCTURE

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Applied Psychology and Counselor Education
Counselor Education and Supervision

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This Dissertation by: Ashley Nichole Branson

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has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in the School of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education, Program of Counselor Education and Supervision

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Date of Dissertation Defense: April 29th, 2016

Accepted by the Graduate School

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ABSTRACT


The purpose this research was to explore how an intentionally scaffolded hybrid counseling theories course facilitated cognitive complexity development for counselors in training (CITs). A qualitative portraiture case study design was utilized to illuminate CITs experiences regarding the impact of face to face and online learning on the development of cognitive complexity in the context of theoretical application. Data were collected in five ways: (1) pre, mid, and post questionnaires; (2) online reflection journals and discussion responses; (3) case study and treatment plan; (4) final reflection paper; and (5) individual or dyadic qualitative interviews. Developmental portraits were constructed from the data for each of the 15 participants. Three clusterings of case based themes emerged across participant portraits. Participants demonstrated cognitive complexity development through increased ability to monitor personal reactions, increased awareness of multiple valid perspectives, increased attempts to correct for biases and limitations, and increasingly accurate appraisals of personal strengths and limitations. Implications related to the use of critical and contextual constructivist pedagogy to foster development of cognitive complexity in relation to multicultural and social justice advocacy competencies are discussed. Recommendations for counselor
educators who wish to design hybrid or flipped learning environments designed to foster cognitive complexity are provided.

*Keywords*: pedagogy, development, cognitive complexity, hybrid, online
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The knowledge that you have emerged wiser and stronger from setbacks means that you are, ever after, secure in your ability to survive. You will never truly know yourself or the strength of your relationships, until both have been tested by adversity. Such knowledge is a true gift, for all that it is painfully won, and it has been worth more than any qualification I ever earned. J.K. Rowling

The journey of development is a rocky one. Throughout this program there have been some early mornings and days that felt like they would never end. Times where I was uncertain in myself and times I felt the ambiguity was absolutely intolerable. Times where I considered back up careers and felt sure I would not survive the program and make it out on the other side. Development is like that. The uncertainty and fear and uncomfortable feelings don’t ever go away, they always resurface. And yet it is absolutely worthwhile. Becoming a counselor educator and supervisor is one of the most fulfilling things I have done in my life. Through this process I found that I love teaching more than I ever imagined was possible. I would have never made it to this point in my development without fantastic educators that I could model myself after and go to for validation and support. I hope that each of you are able to see pieces of yourself in both my dissertation and the educator that I have become.

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remotely possible without your guidance and support. I would not be the educator that I have become without you as my model and mentor. Your willingness to let me try out new things and take risks has made all the difference in the world for me. I am overwhelmingly grateful for all of the opportunities we had to teach and supervise together. Thanks for being my safe base from which to explore, you have made me secure in my ability to survive.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Multicultural and social justice advocacy competency have been increasingly emphasized in recent years and are now considered foundational to counselor identity and counseling practice (CACREP, 2015; Kaplan, Tarvaydas, & Galdding, 2014; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). Utilizing multicultural and social justice perspectives as a foundation for counseling practice requires a shift in the way that counselor educators train counselors in training (CITs) to utilize theory, to conceptualize and understand client struggles, and to select congruent strategies of intervention (Ratts, 2009). Training multiculturally aware counselors involves teaching CITs how to select and apply a counseling theory based on the contexts and intersectional characteristics of each client (Lewis, Ratts, Paladino, & Toporek, 2011). Similarly, training counselors to be socially just and to develop advocacy competencies involves teaching counselors in training to conceptualize client struggles systemically and to identify barriers to client wellness at meso and macro levels (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009).

However, some counselor educators continue to encourage counselors in training to select a theoretical approach that is based upon congruence with their personal belief systems and worldviews (Brubaker, Puig, Reese & Young, 2010; Guiffrida, 2005; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). This may be related to limited literature regarding specific pedagogical approaches and curriculum design strategies that counselor educators can utilize to scaffold counseling theories courses in a way that simultaneously encourages
counselor development of self-reflexivity and contextual assessment of theoretical ‘fit’
(e.g., developmentally, culturally, relationally) at both client and counselor levels (e.g.,
Brubaker et al., 2010; Dollarhide, Smith & Lemberger, 2007; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014;
Spruill & Benshoff, 2000). Despite efforts in counselor education to intentionally design
theories courses with increasing attunement to multicultural competency and social
justice advocacy, much is still unknown about the conditions that facilitate the
understanding of these constructs for beginning counselors (Odegard & Vereen, 2010).

Various frameworks and theories related to cognitive processing and cognitive
complexity development (Bloom, Maudas, & Hastings, 1981; Perry, 1970) have been
articulated and applied specifically to counselor development (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000;
Granello, 2002; Welfare & Borders, 2010). These frameworks may be helpful in
understanding the conditions that facilitate multicultural and social justice competencies
for counselors in training because they attempt to contextualize and categorize the
cognitive steps and conceptual templates that counselor educators and CITs occupy when
talking through complex client scenarios and learning to apply theory. The development
of cognitive complexity requires a significant shift in thinking for counselors in training
as they must learn to consider multiple and sometimes contradictory perspectives
simultaneously.

In counseling theories courses it is common for counselor educators to encourage
counselors in training to identify their personal beliefs regarding healthy development,
client struggles, and the therapeutic change process and then to encourage CITs to select
a theoretical approach that is congruent with their belief systems (Brubaker et al., 2010;
Guiffrida, 2005; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). While CITs development of self-reflexivity
regarding theoretical preference and worldview is critical, this approach to theoretical understanding and application is potentially inadequate as it prioritizes congruence with the counselors’ worldview over congruence with the clients’ worldview (Brubaker et al., 2010).

Theoretical selection based solely on counselor, supervisor, and/or educator preferences is likely to result in an inability to meet the needs of diverse clients with differing beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews and may lead to cultural insensitivity and client harm (Brubaker et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2011; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). When counselors in training begin a counseling relationship with a fixed theoretical orientation and schema for how they plan to approach the counseling process, they may be more likely to ignore assumptions of a theory that are inconsistent with a clients’ worldview or culture (Brubaker et al., 2010).

It is therefore seemingly necessary for CITs to explore a given theory’s ‘fit’ in ongoing and self-reflexive ways at both the client and counselor level, which requires cognitive complexity, reflective judgement, and an ability to differentiate salient contextual and client characteristics while considering multiple perspectives concurrently. As a result, educators may choose to take contextual, critical, constructivist, and developmental approaches to teaching theoretical understanding and application that combine flipped and/or hybrid components with experiential and problem based classroom activities that together create a learning environment that may be more likely to encourage ongoing reflexivity and cognitive complexity development.

Counselors in training who are presented with the idea that no single theory will ‘fit’ for every client and are instead provided with a framework that allows for ongoing
opportunities (both online and in person) to engage in structured processes of reflexivity, from both client and counselor perspectives, may be more likely to understand case conceptualization and theoretical selection as an ongoing dynamic and inductive process rather than a predetermined event. These CITs may also be better able to attend to multiple perspectives, tolerate ambiguity, and think in more cognitively complex ways (Granello, 2002).

Thus, there is a critical need for counselor educators to consider how counselors in training develop cognitive complexity, so that theoretical information and reflexive processes can be scaffolded through online and classroom praxis based learning, in a way that maximizes opportunities for student engagement with diverse contextual intersections, intentionally sequenced activities designed to foster cognitive complexity development, and critical self-reflexivity during theoretical application. Online learning environments interwoven with face to face classroom learning environments that include experiential and problem based learning activities, discussions, and just in time teaching mini-lectures designed to address gaps in learning (Educause, 2012; Moran & Milsom, 2015) seem to have a strong potential to support and enhance cognitive complexity development, theoretical understanding, and application in counselor education theories courses.

**Problem Statement**

Research specific to facilitating CITs development and acquisition of knowledge, awareness, and skills related to multicultural and social justice constructs fostered within online class formats is very limited (e.g., Moran and Milsom, 2015; Smith et al., 2015). Thus, there is a need to better understand how counselors learn to apply theories based on each unique client so that counselor educators can provide training that is congruent with
multicultural and social justice foundations (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). This need is addressed by the first research gap, which is related to understanding how counselors learn to apply theories in multiculturally and socially just ways within hybrid learning formats.

Research has demonstrated that counselors in training who have opportunities to engage in experiential praxis based classroom activities may develop more cognitive complexity and may be better able to navigate the theory to practice gap (Granello, 2000). Similarly, Duys and Headstrom (2000) found that increasing the time educators spent utilizing supervised experiential activities in the classroom that allow for ongoing opportunities for reflection and feedback may increase student cognitive complexity. Utilizing a hybrid and/or flipped classroom learning environment in the context of a counseling theories course may be potentially advantageous as CITs may come to class frontloaded with the necessary theoretical knowledge and self-reflexivity that produces increased opportunities for discussion and experiential activities to occur in the classroom, potentially leading to more opportunities for CITs to observe and demonstrate cognitive processes that are congruent with higher levels of critical thinking and cognitive complexity (Moran & Milsom, 2015).

Educators from various disciplines have reported that utilizing hybrid and flipped classroom learning environments allows for additional time to cover a greater range and depth of course materials and activities (Mason, Shuman, & Cook, 2013), increases interactions with and among students, and increases educators’ opportunities to provide individualized feedback during in-person class meetings (Milman, 2012). A meta-analysis of 45 studies comparing online, face-to-face, and hybrid learning for students
across a broad range of disciplines suggests that hybrid and/or flipped courses may have the potential to offer more benefits in terms of student learning outcomes than face-to-face or online classes used in isolation (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia & Jones, 2010).

The meta-analysis found that, on average, online learning conditions performed modestly better than those receiving face-to-face instruction. The difference between student outcomes for online and face-to-face classes was larger in those studies contrasting conditions that blended elements of online and face-to-face instruction [hybrid/flipped classroom course designs] with conditions taught entirely face-to-face. Analysts noted that these blended conditions often included additional learning time and instructional elements not received by students in control conditions. (Means et al., 2010, p. ix)

While these findings are not specific to the CES courses they suggest that hybrid and/or flipped learning environments utilized within counseling courses may have potential benefits for CITs in terms of fostering cognitive complexity development. Currently research exploring the effectiveness of student learning outcomes and development within hybrid/flipped counseling courses and programs is extremely limited (e.g., Moran & Milsom, 2015; Reicherzer et al., 2012). Further, literature specific to fostering cognitive complexity development through the utilization of hybrid/flipped learning in counselor education is non-existent. However, cognitive complexity is essential for counselors in training as they learn to apply counseling theories, as it is a prerequisite for effective client conceptualization (Welfare & Borders, 2010) and therefore multiculturally sensitive and effective counseling. This highlights a need for research pertaining to how counselors in early phases of training develop cognitive complexity through learning to apply theories in a hybrid/flipped learning environment.

**Gaps**

My hope in conducting this research is to fill two gaps that exist in the counselor education literature. The first is a gap in how beginning level counselors in training...
develop cognitive complexity through engagement with hybrid/flipped learning environments. The second is a gap in understanding how counselors in training learn to apply theories in multiculturally sensitive ways within hybrid learning formats.

**Research Questions**

Three primary research questions guided and framed my qualitative portraiture case study. The first primary research question is related to the face to face and online learning environments and CITs perceptions of how these learning environments may have the potential to impact counselor cognitive complexity development. The second primary research question is specific to understanding CITs experiences of learning to apply counseling theories related to diverse client contexts and salient identify factors. The final research question is specific to the ways in which CITs are able to demonstrate cognitive complexity development through statements that indicate tolerance of ambiguity and intersectional and contextual awareness regarding the impact of multiple systems and factors on client wellness and development and is further delineated through an additional sub-question specific to the way in which CITs describe this process.

**Q1** How do counselors in training describe face to face and online learning as impacting their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity?

**Q2** How do counselors in training who are enrolled in a hybrid theories of counseling course describe the process of applying counseling theories and developing cognitive complexity?

**Q3** How do counselors in training demonstrate cognitive complexity through multiplistic or relativistic ways of thinking when considering client struggles?

**Q3a** How do counselors in training describe the recursive process of identifying and evaluating theoretical lenses when presented with client cases involving diverse contexts and intersectional identity factors?
Purpose

The purpose of my qualitative portraiture case study was to explore how an intentionally scaffolded hybrid counseling theories course could potentially facilitate CITs development of cognitive complexity through the differentiation and integration of salient client contextual and identity factors and the evaluation of theoretical lenses. I was also interested in exploring how participants’ engagement with both online and in class components of the hybrid theories counseling course could potentially increase counselor empathy, knowledge, cognitive complexity development, reflective judgment, multi-systemic awareness, and multicultural and social justice competency.

Significance

In performing this research, I hoped to construct new ways of fostering development of cognitive complexity for counselors in training through both classroom and distance based strategies. Cognitive complexity development requires a shift in thinking as one must consider multiple contexts and contradictory perspectives concurrently while simultaneously remaining aware of and setting aside one’s own values. Many counselors in training struggle with this shift in thinking. Hybrid and flipped classroom learning environments may allow CITs more experiential opportunities to construct new understandings and applications of theoretical frameworks and may aid CITs in developing the cognitive complexity necessary to navigate the theory to practice gap.

Counselors in training who participated in the hybrid theories counseling course may have gained new understandings and awareness regarding their process of cognitive complexity development through identifying and evaluating theoretical lenses and their compatibility with multi-layered client contexts and characteristics. The results of this
study have the potential to inform intentional structuring and scaffolding of information, reflective practices, strategies, techniques, and experiential activities for hybrid counseling theories courses. The results of this study may also benefit counselor educators and supervisors by helping them to better understand how counselors in training develop cognitive complexity and how educators and supervisors can foster educational environments that allow expanded opportunities for this development.

**Summary of Research Study**

I used a qualitative portraiture case study design to explore counselor cognitive complexity development within the context of a hybrid counseling theories course. This design is congruent with my research due to the overlapping nature of my phenomenon of interest, (i.e., cognitive complexity development) and the context of the case, (i.e., interactions within the hybrid learning environment) which are not easily distinguishable as they are mutually and reciprocally interrelated. My goal in conducting this research was to explore, interpret, and represent the multi-layered and relational nature of CITs cognitive complexity developmental processes through situating this development within the relational context of the hybrid learning environment in which it unfolds. My qualitative portraiture case study can be conceptualized as being bound by time, place, and location (Yin, 2009), as the participants were counselors in training enrolled in the counseling of theories course in the Spring 2016 semester.

Data for my study were collected in five ways: (1) pre, mid, and post questionnaires; (2) online reflection journals and discussion responses; (3) the final case study and treatment plan; (4) the final reflection paper; and (5) individual or dyadic group qualitative interviews following the completion of the course. When analyzing the data, I utilized a constant comparative method, starting with open coding to create tentative
categories and then combining and expanding categories through inductive constant comparison. Categories were developed out of an interaction between the data and the theoretical concepts guiding the investigation through tracing participant emergent themes and connecting them with my anticipatory themes (e.g., changes in counselor’s self-reflexivity, tolerance of ambiguity, openness to multiple perspectives, and critical evaluation of theory based on context). Data were represented through developmental portraits of each participant. The emergence of consistent case based themes across participants were represented collectively in the case, although reaching saturation was not necessarily a goal of this research.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

**CITs:** This is an abbreviated term that refers to counselors in training it is used somewhat interchangably with the term students. However, it is utilized to more specifically refer to the developmental trajectory of counselors as they move through their master’s programs.

**Client conceptualization:** The ability to organize relevant information; recognize contextual, developmental, and relational factors that influence clients’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; make sense of clients struggles within a larger holistic picture; consider alternative ways of understanding and intervening; identify desired short and long-term outcomes; and select appropriate interventions or techniques for particular clients in particular contexts and settings at a particular time (Lee & Nelson, 2014).

**Cognitive complexity:** “Counselors encounter conceptually complex variables when working with clients. Case conceptualization skills, understanding the flow and process of the counseling relationship, attending to multicultural dynamics, and
the use of counseling theory call for increasingly complex cognitive processes” (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000). Cognitive complexity involves understanding the ways that something can be known and is often associated with higher levels of critical thinking, reflective judgment skills, tolerance of ambiguity, and an inductive process of differentiation and integration. “When theories of cognitive complexity are applied in a counseling context, differentiation refers to the number of client characteristics the counselor can recognize, whereas integration refers to the counselor's system for understanding how those characteristics fit together” (Welfare & Borders, 2010).

**Constructivist pedagogy:** An approach to education that assumes “learning should be an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on their current or past knowledge... encouraging learners to be active creators of their own knowledge. Conceptual growth comes from the sharing of various perspectives and the simultaneous changing of the student’s internal representations in response to those perspectives as well as through the cumulative experience... The student and educator engage in active dialogue, and the educator encourages students to discover principles by themselves...The educator needs to create meaningful zones of proximal development and cognitive bridges through social interactions. Evaluation of learning is constant throughout the process. As each new activity is encountered, the student uses previous knowledge to develop more complex ideas and integrate new information” (Brandon & All, 2010, p. 90).
**Contextual pedagogy:** “Encourages teaching that is connected to real-world experiences outside of the classroom. It incorporates aspects of the constructivist and social-cognitive models and underscores the importance of the social nature of learning and the shared nature of knowledge…Learning is attached to the context in which the knowledge is constructed, and knowledge is seen as inseparable from the context and activities within which it develops. In this view, teachers become participants along with the learners in the process of shared cognition or of constructing meaning in a given situation. This approach assumes that knowledge that is mastered in one context is not assumed to be automatically transferable to other contexts… Contextual theorists argue that the most effective way to transfer learning is to actively participate in the new situation. Specifically, when students engage in authentic activities and learning activities that approximate as closely as possible what actually occurs in the field-they advance cognitively and learn critical thinking and problem-solving skills more effectively than through traditional didactic classroom activities” (Granello, 2000, p. 1-2).

**Counseling:** “A professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals” (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 366).

**Critical pedagogy:** An approach to education based on the work of Friere (1993) that seeks to foster development of a critical consciousness of one’s own reality while empowering students to engage in transformative action through praxis. Critical pedagogy “emphasizes the development of ‘concientización’—the development of a critical awareness of how personal dynamics unfold within social and
political contexts. Subsequently, this leads to second order change that implies a fundamental or significant break with past and current practices and requires new knowledge and skills for successful implementation. Utilizing postcolonial approaches to therapy requires locating individuals and families within a context that considers the influence of colonization, class, gender, sexual orientation, level of ability and advocating for social justice. In addition, social justice requires both a critique of the institutional barriers and deliberate actions designed to dismantle oppressive forces. It is necessary to examine the influence and interactions of power, privilege, and oppression in every relationship. This approach acknowledges that the causes and or consequences of some clinical problems reflect political, economic, and psychological oppression, and that experiences of oppression require public, institutional, and internal family process solutions” (Brown & Perry, 2011, p. 4).

Critical thinking skills: An inductive cognitive process that involves actively conceptualizing, applying, interpreting, and constructing working hypotheses and then analyzing, synthesizing, and reflecting/re-evaluating the hypotheses based on new information gathered through observations, experiences, self-reflexivity, and relational interactions. Critical thinking skills involve “the ability to take multiple perspectives ... to differentiate among and manipulate a wide range and large numbers of relevant facts and causal factors ... to integrate and synthesize in creative or unusual ways large amounts of information ... [to engage] in this quest in active collaboration with the client” (Blocher, 1983, p. 28).
**Experiential learning**: Education that involves activities that engage counselors in training through active immersion in feeling and doing (Young & Hundley, 2013). Examples of experiential activities that might be utilized in counselor training include role-plays, service learning projects, sculpts, sandtray, and photo elicitation exercises.

**Flipped classroom learning environments**: “Consists of two parts: interactive group learning activities inside the classroom, and direct computer based individual instruction outside the classroom. Students spend time before class not only reading the material but also engaging with it, [through online videos and activities] allowing them to become more actively involved in their own learning both before and during class” (Moran & Milsom, 2015, p. 32).

**Hybrid learning environment**: A learning environment that blends and is inclusive of both online and in-person learning environments. A hybrid learning environment may be accomplished through a flipped classroom format or as a way to replace intentionally selected units of learning that may have otherwise been presented in-person.

**Face-to-face in-person learning environment**: The portions of the class that occurred in the classroom with all students and instructors present in person at the same physical classroom location.

**Instructional design**: “Incorporates known and verified learning strategies into instructional experiences which make the acquisition of knowledge and skill more efficient, effective, and appealing. Instruction involves directing students to appropriate learning activities; guiding students to appropriate knowledge;
helping students rehearse, encode, and process information; monitoring student performance; and providing feedback as to the appropriateness of the student’s learning activities and practice performance. Instructional design is the technology of creating learning experiences and learning environments which promote these instructional activities” (Merrill, Drake, Lacy, & Pratt, 1996, p.6).

**Multicultural theoretical perspectives in counseling:** Can be considered “both a helping role and process that uses modalities and defines goals consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of clients, recognizes client identities to include individual, group, and universal dimensions, advocates the use of universal and culture specific strategies and roles in the counseling process; and balances the importance of individualism and collectivism in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of client and client systems” (Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 46).

**Online learning environment:** Refers to the portions of the class that occurred online and is inclusive of the website hosting the videos and self-reflexivity prompts, the blackboard small groups/discussion boards, and the discussions students completed through discussion boards, Google Hangouts, Skype, and/or FaceTime.

**Problem based learning:** Is similar to experiential learning as it shares many similarities with experiential based learning through active immersion in feeling and doing (Young & Hundley, 2013) and is often utilized in counselor education through client case scenarios and ethical dilemmas. “It is based on the belief that students develop their cognitive skills, improve their long-term retention of material, and develop sound problem-solving skills when they are presented with real-world problems to solve. Using this approach, students are presented with a problem,
and they work individually or collaboratively to develop solutions. Problem-based learning integrates situated teaming (it is based on real-world applications), social cognition (problems are worked through together and often redefined as students wrestle with applications), and distributed cognition (various perspectives are brought into the discussion). In the classroom, instructors become coaches and guides. This approach requires students and faculty to be comfortable with the lack of definitive answers to the problems. Students are not seeking the answer, but an answer or alternative” (Granello, 2000, p. 5).

**Recursive Superstructure:** A symbolic representation of the recursive process of counselor development that is situated above a foundation of constructivism and within the framing of contextual/systemic, and multicultural/social justice theoretical perspectives.

**Reflective judgment:** “A sequence of changing assumptions about knowledge and how those assumptions affect the ways a person reasons to a conclusion about problems that do not have verifiable right and wrong answers…They may be seen in individuals' responses to the following types of questions: What and how can we know? How certain can we be about what we know? How can we convincingly defend what we know or believe? Answers to these questions offer useful information about students' reasoning styles, because students' assumptions about knowledge (e.g., what can be known and with what degree of certainty) are reflected in the strategies they use to gain knowledge; these, in turn, affect the adequacy with which students can solve complex and controversial problems” (Mines, King, Hood, & Wood, 1990, p.538).
**Salient intersectional socio-cultural identity factors:** Elements related to one’s identity that may become more or less resonant based upon one’s context. For example: ethnicity/race, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, spirituality, socio-economic status, language, immigration history, body shape/image, developmental life stage, education/career history, family values, personal values, and relational patterns. These factors may intersect with one another and mutually and reciprocally influence one another depending on context. For example, my ethnicity became salient for me the first time I entered a neighborhood (context) where I was the only White person. I became immediately aware of my ethnicity and how it intersected with my socio-economic status, gender, age, and language as I interacted with others in the neighborhood.

**Social Justice Theoretical Perspectives in Counseling:** A multidimensional approach to counseling that is “related to a growing need to connect human development issues with toxic environmental conditions. Environmental factors such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism can delay people’s growth and development and hinder people’s ability to reach their potential. This is especially true for clients who have been historically marginalized in society such as people of color, those in poverty, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Helping clients recognize the presence of oppressive factors is important because it prevents them from blaming themselves for their plight” (Ratts, 2009, p. 163-164).

**Qualitative Portraiture Case Study Methodology:** A synthesis of portraiture methodology and qualitative case study methodology which share a substantial
overlap including being bound by context and requiring the triangulation of many data sources. Merriam (1988) labeled portraiture methodology as a qualitative case study approach. However, portraiture methodology can be distinguished from other forms of qualitative case study research in two primary ways. The first involves the way in which the researcher’s voice is intentionally intertwined with the participant’s voices to capture the relationship between researcher and participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The second involves the way in which portraiture emphasizes participant goodness (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) which includes strength based language and a recognition of positive intentions.

**Summary**

In this chapter I described how utilizing multicultural and social justice perspectives as a foundation for counseling practice requires a shift in the way that counselor educators train counselors to utilize theory, to conceptualize and understand client struggles, and to select congruent strategies of intervention (Ratts, 2009). Thus, there is a critical need for counselor educators to consider how counselors in training develop cognitive complexity, so that theoretical information and reflexive processes can be organized and scaffolded through online and classroom praxis based learning in counseling theories courses. Through my qualitative portraiture case study, I began to address two gaps in the counseling literature. The first is a gap in understanding how counselors learn to apply theories in multiculturally sensitive ways within hybrid learning formats. The second is a gap in how beginning level counselors develop cognitive complexity through engagement with hybrid/flipped learning environments. In
performing this research, I hoped to construct new ways of fostering development of
cognitive complexity for CITs through both classroom and distance based strategies.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I explore two interlocking domains: counselor development and contextual/critical constructivist pedagogy. I will then evaluate the ways in which these two domains can directly inform the instructional design of hybrid learning environments in CES programs and more specifically in counseling theories courses to foster self-reflexivity and cognitive complexity development. The literature in this section relates directly to my study as it builds an argument for the importance of understanding cognitive complexity development for counselors in training (CITs), particularly in the context of theoretical application. In this way the literature relates not only to the purpose and research questions but also builds theoretical and empirical justification for the intentional scaffolding used to design the hybrid learning environment of the theories course, which was the context and sampling frame for my study.

Counselor Development

A review of some of the widely used theories, models, and conceptualizations of counselor development is important as I have constructed portraits of CIT development in this study. In this section I provide an overview of two prominent models of counselor development. This is followed by a brief review of research regarding expert counseling supervisors’ behaviors, as the expert population represents the upper boundaries of counselor development. Next, I visit the novice end of the counselor development spectrum through discussion of counselor self-awareness and interpersonal skills, which
are both pre-requisites for client conceptualization and counselor cognitive complexity development. Finally, I offer a synthesis of multiple developmental models through the process of recycling identity formation. This synthesis is foundational to both my anticipatory template and understanding of how I believe cognitive complexity development unfolds and for the development of the hybrid theories of counseling course that was the context for this qualitative portraiture case study.

Models of Counselor Development

One helpful way to conceptualize counselor development across counseling masters’ programs is through the Integrative Developmental Model originally articulated by Stoltenberg (1981) and later updated by Stoltenberg & McNeil (2010). The Integrative Developmental Model characterizes early stages of counselor development as involving high levels of anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, motivation to perform well in front of educators and peers, and increasing observation and scrutiny of the self (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010).

Similarly, Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) found that at the onset of master’s level counseling programs CITs tend to display high levels of both invested excitement and critical self-doubt. Counselors in training at early stages may also be more easily recruited into dichotomous thinking and the idea that there is one ‘correct’ way to engage in the counseling process (Granello, 2002). It is common for counselors in training at this stage to idealize and attempt to imitate educators, supervisors, or ‘experts’ and to demand advice and concrete directives as they struggle to try to organize and understand the dynamic and inductive nature of the counseling relationship and process (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010). Counselors in training at early developmental stages also commonly report challenges in trying to bridge theory with applied counseling practice and often
fluctuate between imitation of experts and self-reflective and evaluative behaviors (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992).

As CITs move toward successive developmental stages they oscillate between high and low levels of both motivation and anxiety, become increasingly self-aware, and begin to recognize potential impacts of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors on the ways in which they respond to and interact with others (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010). As counselors in training develop they are increasingly able to monitor personal reactions, accurately self-evaluate areas of strengths and areas of limitation, and seek appropriate supervision and consultation to address areas of limitation. With time, ongoing practice, supervision, and feedback CITs become more self-reflexive, less self-critical and anxious, more emotionally stable and responsive, less dependent on concrete supervisory directives, more authentic, and more autonomous in their counseling skills (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010). One potential criticism of the Integrative Developmental Model (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010) has to do with the ways in which counselors in training move through development as this movement is not always linear as stage models seem to suggest.

However, this model attempts to account for the non-linearity of development by encouraging supervisors to consider counselor development on a spectrum within eight domains: counseling interventions, assessment techniques, interpersonal assessment, case conceptualization, treatment planning/goals, theory, multicultural development, and professional ethics (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010). While the eight domains are useful in conceptualizing counselor development across core areas of counseling practice, the model does not provide clear direction in terms of prioritization of a given domain, how
to address struggles that intersect across multiple domains, the specific ways in which interventions might take place, or the sequence in which interventions might occur.

Further, many of the domains (e.g., interpersonal assessment, case conceptualization, multicultural development and ethics) could be areas of development that are fostered in the learning environment prior to CITs work with clients, in an effort to avoid client harm (Branson, Cardona, & Thomas, 2015). The Integrative Developmental Model does not provide a clear framework for minimal foundational development that counselors in training should attain as a requisite to working with actual clients during practicum or internship. A second potential limitation of the Integrative Developmental Model has to do with the focus on early stages of counselor development with less emphasis and exploration of later stages of development and mastery (Kemer, Borders, & Willse, 2014). Despite these limitations the Integrative Developmental Model (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010) presents a useful, although somewhat reductionist, framework for conceptualizing counselor development across time and applied practice.

**Supervisor Conceptualizations of Fostering Counselor Development**

When conceptualizing later stages of counselor development and mastery it may be helpful to consider expert supervisors’ experiences. Anderson (1983) distinguished novices from ‘experts’ based on the ways in which they understand and access knowledge. For example, when faced with a complex dilemma with multi-layered contextual intersections novices are more likely to anchor to familiar perspectives and seek out and use declarative knowledge and ‘facts’ to guide conceptualization and intervention whereas experts are more likely to think about a complex dilemma in multiple ways, seek out multiple perspectives, use procedural knowledge, recognize
coherent meaningful patterns, and inductively alter their approach in response to new information (Anderson, 1983). Counselor educators can model for CITs the way in which one can move from content oriented linear organizational understandings to more dynamic circular and recursive organizational strategies that are more process and thematically oriented.

Borders (2009) and Kemer et al. (2014) found that expert supervisors moved fluidly between considering concrete and somewhat reductionist frames of their supervision theory/model and more nuanced and intricate CIT relational dynamics and intersectional contextual factors in order to construct meaningful patterns. These supervisory processes could be thought of as modeling and paralleling the process to which counselors in training would ideally approach conceptualization and assessment of theoretical fit with clients. Characteristics of expert supervisors include a tendency to prioritize procedural knowledge, the ability to participate in prolonged engagement with the conceptual and self-reflexivity processes, and the ability to follow systematic inductive qualitative procedures to construct complex patterned conceptual formulations of client and CIT struggles in context (Eells, Lombart, Kendjelic, Turner, & Lucas, 2005; Kemer et al., 2014).

Expert [supervisors] reported high levels of self-reflection, including being aware of their limitations, biases, and possible countertransference issues; seeking consultation and supervision when necessary; and keeping a constant check on themselves with respect to being nonjudgmental or pondering what was bothering them about a supervisee. Moreover, experts reported a willingness to be human, genuine, honest, and transparent; own their mistakes; and share authority and responsibility with their supervisees, even when it was difficult to do so. Expert counseling supervisors evaluate their own work transparently and accurately and reflect an awareness of their own strengths and limitations…They reported ongoing decision making during the session about issues such as whether their feedback was balanced, whether to self-disclose, what their supervisee’s most immediate
needs seemed to be, and how to end the supervision session. Finally, the experts gave much more attention to the supervisory relationship. (Kemer, et al., 2014, p.13-14)

**Development of Awareness and Interpersonal Skills**

Counselor educators are tasked with providing clear expectations for counselors in training by modeling foundational skills early on in CITs programs so that they are able to attain basic counseling skills prior to counseling real clients in an effort to protect clients and provide the best services possible (Branson et al., 2015). Counselor educators who create developmentally responsive and intentionally scaffolded classroom environments that are facilitative to CITs development of self-awareness while simultaneously allowing space for the modeling and practicing of applied clinical skills may provide counselors in training with more resources, feedback, and opportunities so that they can successfully develop cognitive complexity and navigate the theory to practice gap (Granello, 2000) during practicum and internship experiences.

Counselors in training at early stages of development who are more likely to idealize and imitate ‘experts’ may benefit from counselor educators who consistently model interpersonal and group facilitation skills in the classroom. Interpersonal skills include characteristics such as warmth, genuineness, and positive regard that are foundational to the counseling process (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Group and classroom facilitation skills tend to have substantial overlap including setting clear expectations, co-constructing ground rules, anticipation of the stages that the class/group will likely progress through (i.e., early/forming stage, transition stage, working stage, and termination stage), slowing down interactions among participants, linking responses, and making process comments (Erford, 2011; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Process comments
and process oriented questions can also help counselors in training to explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors during and after experiential exercises assisting CITs in self-reflexively monitoring their reactions and allowing CITs to benefit from new personal awareness as they engage with applied learning processes (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002). Interpersonal and group process skills that are successfully modeled by counselor educators involve an ability to communicate presence and investment, link student responses, and convey expectations and empathy in a manner that fosters safety among students.

Counselor cognitive complexity and skill development can be conceptualized as circular and interlocking rather than linear in nature. For example, interpersonal skills modeled by counselor educators in the classroom allow for the development of strong relationships among the students and the instructors which supports CITs to take risks to and to be vulnerable in sharing their tacit knowledge and lived experiences despite high levels of anxiety anticipated during early stages of development (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010). Counselor Educators use of interpersonal skills and relational monitoring in the classroom also helps to counter fears and defensive reactions that have the potential to impede learning.

Counselor educators can slow interactional classroom processes down among counselors in training and help them to monitor their emotional reactions and thoughts while encouraging them to genuinely share their reactions in the moment. Self-disclosure of personal reactions allows for consideration of multiple valid perspectives and provides space for counselors in training to question their ‘declarative knowledge’ (Anderson, 1983) eventually facilitating new ways of conceptualizing, understanding, and utilizing
procedural knowledge (Anderson, 1983) while allowing opportunities to address relational ruptures which simultaneously strengthens interpersonal skill sets and relationships.

A Recycling Identity Formation Process

Auxier, Hughes, & Kline (2003) conducted a qualitative grounded theory study in an attempt to better understand counselor identity formation and development of master’s level counselors in training and found a ‘recycling identity formation process’ emerged in which CITs described cycling between conceptual learning, experiential learning, and external evaluation. Conceptual learning was operationally defined as ‘traditional’ learning experiences such as content knowledge presented through lecture based pedagogical practices, while experiential learning involved greater levels of engagement and applied skill development through activities such as role plays, discussions, and practicum and internship experiences (Auxier et al., 2003). The researchers found that CITs at earlier stages of development highly valued conceptual learning and traditional pedagogical approaches, however, across the course of their programs they came to increasingly value experiential approaches and eventually valued them over conceptual approaches to learning (Auxier et al., 2003).

The researchers also found that the transition from a preference for conceptual learning toward a preference for experiential learning was marked by anxiety, discomfort, increased self-monitoring and increased self-doubt as experiential learning was fundamentally linked with external evaluation and feedback (Auxier et al., 2003). However, as counselors in training were able to consider feedback from multiple
perspectives and engage in self-monitoring behaviors they become more open to
constructive feedback and appreciative of experiential learning approaches.

The disorientation that participants felt as they encountered experiential
learning eventually subsided as they began to cycle experiential and
conceptual learning. As they identified, clarified, and re-clarified
definitions of themselves as counselors, the participants’ attitudes toward
the learning process usually changed from apprehension to realistic self-
confidence. (Auxier et al., 2003, p.36)

**The Recursive Superstructure**

I hypothesized that the recycling identity formation process (Auxier et al., 2003)
observed in CITs at beginning developmental levels represents a direct parallel to the
circular recursive organizational strategies that Borders (2009) identified as being
employed at expert supervisor levels of development. The difference between early
novice stages of cognitive complexity development and expert stages of more advanced
cognitive complexity development then may be understood as how dynamically one can
can navigate through the cyclical paths (i.e., ability to think through multiple perspectives
and recognize and refine finer salient intersectional factors in context) and the length of
time that one can remain cycling within this process (i.e., prolonged engagement and
critical self-reflexivity).

These cyclical processes of development can be symbolically represented and
organized through The Recursive Superstructure. The Recursive Superstructure is a
useful tool for counselor educators as it illustrates the inductive processes of cognitive
complexity development as moving through reciprocal and interrelated domains and
demonstrates counselor cycling between ways of being, understanding, and intervening
(Cheston, 2000) within the counseling relationship (see illustrated image below).
The Recursive Superstructure helps to visually synthesize and organize the cyclical ways in which counselors in training use self reflection skills to consider their own personal contexts, values, worldviews, and experiences to gain higher levels of self awareness. Increased self awareness can then be used to more effectively monitor personal reactions to clients which directly influences one’s way of being with a client in a counseling session. Ongoing self reflection also leads to a greater awareness of self in relation to others and awareness of the unique context in which the client’s struggle is embedded. As client’s experiences are compared and contrasted with the CITs own experiences and ways of knowing and understanding counselors in training become increasingly attuned to and open to multiple perspectives (including multiple theoretical ways of knowing and understanding). This leads to counselors in training being better able to evaluate their own strengths and limitations and to inductively alter their thematic assumptions and working hypotheses based on the contexts and intersectional characteristics of each client and their unique needs. Which ultimately inductively influences CITs ways of intervening.
Figure 1. *The Recursive Superstructure*

**Cognitive Complexity Development in Theories Courses**

Many counselors in training begin theories courses with the assumption that theories are counseling and that there is a single correct theory or way to approach to the counseling process that has not yet been fully realized (Granello, 2002). However, as CITs are exposed to multiple potentially useful theoretical perspectives and are given opportunities to apply theories to diverse intersectional client scenarios and contexts they may realize that there is no ‘one’ correct way to approach counseling. Instead counselor educators can provide counselors in training with a framework that allows them to practice the inductive processes necessary to assess theoretical ‘fit’ while gaining
experience tailoring theories based on client contextual factors and counselor congruence in ways of being (Cheston, 2000; Granello 2002).

Researchers have suggested that CITs who are able to think in less rigid dualistic ways and more cognitively complex ways may be more objective when considering client struggles (Fong, Borders, Erthington & Pitts, 1997), perceived as more empathetic and open to client perspectives, demonstrate higher levels of multicultural and social justice advocacy competencies (Brubaker et al., 2010; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014) and may be better able to devise multifaceted conceptual hypotheses and case conceptualizations (Ladany, Marotta, & Muse-Burke, 2001). The Recursive Superstructure might be a useful conceptual tool for counselor educators as they design courses that are attuned to maximizing development of cognitive complexity and fostering multicultural and social justice competencies.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks in Theories Courses**

The process of learning to conceptualize clients in context of environmental and situational factors has been demonstrated to be highly interrelated with counselor development of cognitive complexity (Welfare & Borders, 2010) as well as a counselor’s ability to provide multiculturally sensitive counseling services (Morrow & Deidan, 1992; Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 2010). Learning to conceptualize clients has also been considered one of the most fundamental competencies for novice counselors in training (Eells et al., 2005; Sperry, 2010). Through utilizing a conceptual lens in combination with interpersonal skills (e.g., ways of being including genuineness, empathy, positive regard) CITs are able to help clients explore contextual and identity intersections of their lived experiences related to socio-cultural, developmental, and
relational factors. Some common salient identity factors include: ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, social location, ability, language, spirituality, education/career, developmental life stage, relational patterns, immigration history, family of origin factors, and social support (Lee & Nelson, 2014; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014).

Co-construction of intersectional understanding among cultural, contextual, developmental, and relational factors allows CITs to congruently frame client problems as residing outside of clients while gaining perspective into client worldviews and values allowing for genuine understanding and empathy. Beginning with contextual systemic approaches to conceptual understanding shares congruency with core multicultural and social justice values in the counseling profession due to an emphasis on wellness and empowerment through collaborative identification, challenging, and removal of systemic barriers that have the potential to impede human growth and development (Kaplan, et al., 2014). This process of dynamically moving between relationship building and exploration of client identified salient factors informs the inductive development of the map for the counseling process and informs the specific strategies and techniques that counselors in training will ultimately utilize within the counseling relationship (Ladany Friedlander, & Nelson, 2005; Lee & Nelson, 2014).

Cognitive complexity development can be observed within conceptual processes through the ways counselors in training differentiate and organize relevant client information including the contextual, developmental, and relational factors that influence clients’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Welfare & Borders, 2010). Cognitive complexity can also be observed in conceptual processes through the ways that CITs
integrate relevant client information to form working hypotheses and make sense of clients' struggles within a larger holistic picture (Welfare & Borders, 2010). Cognitive complexity development may be better understood by exploring how counselors’ learn to consider alternative ways of understanding and intervening, how counselors’ identify desired short and long-term outcomes, and how counselors’ utilize appropriate interventions or techniques for particular clients in particular contexts and settings at a particular time (Lee & Nelson, 2014).

**Conceptual Skills in Relation to Theoretical Selection and Application**

The process of counseling itself is sometimes mistaken with theoretical application and counseling techniques, which are in reality, small components of a holistic counseling process (Lambert, 1992; Wampold, 2001). Counselors at earlier developmental stages (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010) are motivated to demonstrate competence and are eager to utilize concrete ways of intervening which can result in well intentioned, albeit reductionist attempts to go straight to a preferred theory or set of declarative assumptions and a tendency to anchor to these perspectives when working with clients. Counselor educators who are aware of this developmental tendency can use this knowledge to their advantage to structure learning environments that help CITs to become aware of and challenge their beliefs, biases, and worldviews in an effort to help them avoid circumscribing divergent perspectives and theoretical lenses that could be useful within some client’s contexts and worldviews. Bolman and Deal (2013) discuss a similar phenomenon that occurs in the context of addressing ethical dilemmas and complex intersectional difficulties within organizations.
In making sense of complicated and ambiguous situations, we depend greatly on our personal theories or worldview to give us a full reading of what we are up against. Our interpretations depend much on our cognitive repertoires, expectations, beliefs, and values. The fuzziness of everyday life makes it easy for people to shape the world to conform to their favored internal schemata. People can become so intimately familiar with known patterns that they may fail to recognize or respect the importance of the new wrinkle. In such cases snap judgments will work against, rather than for, the person who is trying to figure things out. Changing old patterns and mindsets requires taking risks and being vulnerable. It can lead to erosion of confidence and effectiveness. Our assumptions biases and beliefs can become self-sealing filters blocking us from recognizing our errors. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p.35)

The dynamic and idiosyncratic nature of understanding clients’ struggles in context requires moving between abstract and concrete ways of understanding while attending to multiple intersecting relational, contextual, and developmental factors. This process often involves more layers and interrelated dimensions than beginning level counselors can be expected to identify and attend to simultaneously. When faced with ambiguous client struggles, well intentioned counselors in training will first try to conceptualize these dilemmas through their preferred frames of reference, theoretical perspectives, worldviews, values, and ways of understanding. As suggested by Bolman & Deal (2013) these worldviews, beliefs, and values might be considered ‘personal theories’ as they guide counselors in training toward identification of “what is important and what can be safely ignored, and they [help CITs to] group scattered bits of information into more manageable patterns” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 36).

Preferred counseling theories, favored worldviews and ways of understanding can be identified and self-reflexively explored within theories counseling courses to help CITs understand the way that these preferred perspectives can produce blind spots and impact the factors they attend to and the route they select within the counseling process. Counselors in training who are able to self-reflexively identify the ways in which their
worldviews and beliefs make sense in the context of their lived experiences while simultaneously identifying times when their worldviews and values may be getting in the way of their ability to select a theory that fits more congruently with clients’ worldviews and contexts, may be better able to correct for these errors and may demonstrate higher levels of cognitively complexity. Thus, there is a need to expand pedagogical practices within counselor education programs in order to incorporate developmentally responsive strategies and frameworks while allowing opportunities for CITs to construct theoretical understandings and applications.

**Contextual, Critical, and Constructivist Pedagogy**

Granello (2000) argues that counselor education and supervision has historically lacked a well-articulated pedagogical foundation and has instead focused too heavily on declarative knowledge and the content of courses while overlooking the processes of how information is constructed and delivered. Developmental implications for intentional scaffolding of counseling courses both internally and in relation to interconnected counseling curriculum as a whole has also often been overlooked (Granello & Hazler, 1998). I share this perspective and feel that within many counseling courses didactic approaches to pedagogy are emphasized, creating an artificial separation between declarative knowledge acquisition and experiential procedural knowledge application. This results in CITs learning concepts that are artificially separated from one another rather than allowing them to see the way in which each content area (e.g., counseling theories, ethics, multicultural) is systemically interconnected and a part of the larger aesthetic whole of the applied counseling relationship and process. Counselors in training are then expected to synthesize this information and make the theory to practice leap during the practicum and internship process without having adequate opportunities to
observe and practice moving between abstract and concrete learning. Contextual/critical constructivist approaches to pedagogy and instructional design may provide the bridge necessary to foster the cognitive complexity development that will ultimately allow CITs to transverse the theory to practice gap. Granello (2000) defines contextual teaching and learning as:

A pedagogical model that encourages teaching that is connected to real-world experiences outside of the classroom. It incorporates aspects of the constructivist and social-cognitive models and underscores the importance of the social nature of learning and the shared nature of knowledge… At the heart of contextualist philosophy is the belief that behaviors are seen as acts-in-context. People learn in a variety of contexts and from a variety of situations. Many methods of didactic education assume a separation between knowing and doing, and treat knowledge as an integral, self-sufficient substance, theoretically independent of the situations in which it is learned and used. By contrast, in a contextual approach, learning is attached to the context in which the knowledge is constructed, and knowledge is seen as inseparable from the context and activities within which it develops. In this view, teachers become participants along with the learners in the process of shared cognition or of constructing meaning in a given situation. (Granello, 2000, p.2)

Contextual approaches to pedagogy that blend constructivist and social-cognitive lenses assume that knowledge grasped in one context will not automatically transfer to other contexts (Granello, 2000). This assumption was integral to the development of the hybrid learning environment as I assumed that abstract theoretical ways of understanding would not automatically transfer to novel contextual intersections or theoretical ways of intervening when CITs were presented with multilayered and complex client struggles. Instead I assumed that counselors in training would need to be provided with the scaffolding and support to allow for multiple opportunities to encounter diverse intersectional client factors through praxis based experiential activities, problem based learning, discussions, and feedback.
When examining critical pedagogical approaches (Friere, 1993), it becomes apparent that they share a substantial overlap and work in tandem with contextual constructivist pedagogical approaches. This overlap and interconnected relationship could be considered analogous to the relationship between multicultural (i.e., contextual) and social justice (i.e., critical) theoretical perspectives and is most clearly evident in the contextual, applied, and experiential nature of the learning process. Critical approaches to pedagogy and instructional course design share many substantial elements with contextual approaches including: an empowering relationship between educators and students in which power dynamics are recognized and intentionally mitigated, a fostering of critical awareness of the self in context, a ‘deep examination’ of one’s worldviews, values, biases, and privileged social identity factors through ongoing self-reflexivity and critical discourse, consideration of multiple divergent perspectives, intentional fostering of conscientization (Friere, 1993) and reflective judgment (Kitchner & King, 1981).

Praxis might be described as a cyclical process of unlearning, learning, relearning, theoretical application, evaluation, and reflection that allows one to engage in transformative actions that disrupt oppressive systems through this continual process of self-examination (Friere, 1993). What differentiates critical pedagogical approaches from contextual pedagogical approaches can be found in the ways of intervening as critical approaches emphasize ‘liberation’ at micro level development and transformative action and praxis at meso, exo, and macro levels through identifying ways that counselors and clients can disrupt power dynamics operating in broader social systems through advocacy and empowerment to ultimately engage in collective strategies of resistance. Praxis in counseling courses, can often be seen through service learning (Manis, 2012; Murray,
Pope, & Rowell, 2010) which allows CITs to shift from individual level interventions and “a paradigm in which counselors are helpers/responders who fix clients/students to a paradigm that is proactive in scope, that is preventive in design, and that addresses sociopolitical forces that impede human development (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009, p.274).

Some authors have noted that a significant limitation to contextual/critical pedagogical approaches that utilize experiential activities and problem based learning is related to the time intensive nature of these approaches due to the design and planning of experiential activities and the instructor and learner processing and debriefing throughout such learning experiences (Granello, 2000; Odegard & Vereen, 2010). While such approaches are seen as highly useful in helping counselors in training to transfer learning to diverse intersectional contexts they are also likely seen by educators as ultimately limiting the amount of content material that can be covered within a course due to their time intensive nature.

I believe that the use of hybrid and/or flipped classroom approaches may offer a unique solution to this limitation. Smith et al. (2015) explored CITs experiences with online and face-to-face instruction and found that they perceived online and face-to-face learning as equally beneficial, however, they experienced online learning as significantly more efficient in terms of content knowledge acquisition. Similarly, Hayes, Taub, Robinson, & Sivo (2003) quantitatively investigated the efficacy of multimedia instruction compared with instruction as usual within an in person counselor education skills course and found no difference in learning outcomes in terms of CIT skill development. The authors concluded that, “from the results of the study it appears students can complete a unit of multimedia instruction to attain a level of counseling skill
development comparable to the effects of traditional instruction” (Hayes et al., 2003, p.185). This study seemingly suggests that counselors in training benefit equally well from multimedia based instruction which could be easily completed outside of the classroom through a hybrid or flipped classroom curriculum design.

Taken together these studies seem to provide further support for my hypothesis that hybrid learning environments can be utilized to frontload CITs with the necessary theoretical content knowledge and structured time for self-reflexivity that may prime them for more active and engaged in-person experiential learning and meaningful opportunities for discussion.

**Experiential Learning and Hybrid Environments**

Until recently contextual and critical pedagogy, which utilize experiential activities and applied problem based learning strategies, may have been seen as at odds with online teaching approaches, as relational and experiential learning approaches do not seem to fit neatly into online learning environments. Attempting to adapt contextual, critical, and constructivist pedagogical approaches to rigorous hybrid and/or flipped learning environments comes with some challenges (e.g., significant time commitment to produce videos, navigating fair use of videos and video editing, scaffolding videos so they inductively build upon one another, creating opportunities for interaction and active problem based learning during online reflective activities, etc.).

However, intentional scaffolding and design of hybrid and/or flipped counseling courses can be made compatible with contextual and critical approaches to pedagogy which may have advantages to maximize CITs development of cognitive complexity. It seems probable that the utilization of hybrid and/or flipped learning environments may be
especially advantageous in counseling courses that cover a large amount of content knowledge in addition to applied skill components (e.g., counseling theories, legal and ethical, and multicultural counseling courses).

Counselor educators could design a structured online and in person learning environment in a counseling theories course that walk counselors in training through the steps necessary to assess the ‘fit’ of a theoretical approach at multiple levels while encouraging identification of multiple ‘correct’ answers. Starting with such approaches online may encourage thinking through various divergent perspectives while giving counselors in training practice at transitioning from knowledge recall toward application.

Online videos, mini-lectures, and learning activities that include sound, graphics, animation, and video add richness and depth to understanding while eliciting emotional reactions from counselors in training. Including such elements in online learning environments may be helpful because counselors in training must learn to monitor their own emotional reactions while relying heavily on listening skills and visual and auditory cues to identify things like non-verbal behaviors, changes in tone and pace of voice, and eye contact, all of which can be made increasingly transparent through client scenario videos in a way that, for example, a written case scenario cannot. Text can be added to live counseling session demonstration videos to make transparent what element of a theory a clinician is utilizing as the skill is demonstrated. Question slides can also be added to videos to help CITs at early stages of development to begin to practice identifying both micro-skills and theoretical ways of conceptualizing and intervening (H. Helm, personal communication, August 27, 2015). I hypothesized that adding transparent text elements to videos can facilitate the process of moving between abstract theoretical
hypotheses and applied counseling interventions significantly more concrete for CITs at beginning stages of development.

Counselor educators wishing to utilize a contextual and critical pedagogical approach to hybrid learning can communicate a student centered perspective acting as facilitators that are responsible for intentionally scaffolding the learning environment and holding the space to create the context for everyone in the class to serve as teacher and learner (Brandon & All, 2010). “Much as the client-centered therapist tries to create conditions in which clients can solve their own problems, the student-centered instructor creates conditions in which students occupy an unusually active role [in the co-construction of procedural knowledge and understanding]” (Upton & Bernstein, 2011, p. 357).

**Online Learning Environments in Counselor Education**

The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs is the major accrediting body in the counseling profession (CACREP, 2014). CACREP accredited counseling programs are at a critical juncture where they must adapt to the changing needs of students and faculty, who require greater access and efficiency through the use of new educational technologies (Kirp, 2003) while staying true to the foundational values of the profession. Core values of CACREP accredited counseling programs include:

Advancing the counseling profession through quality and excellence in counselor education; ensuring a fair, consistent, and ethical decision-making process; serving as a responsible leader in protecting the public; promoting practices that reflect openness to growth, change and collaboration; and, creating and strengthening standards that reflect the needs of society, respect the diversity of instructional approaches and strategies, and encourage program improvement and best practices. (CACREP, 2014)
CACREP counseling accredited programs are challenged with finding ways to adapt to online environments by offering more hybrid class options while simultaneously preserving the core values articulated in the 2009 CACREP Standards (CACREP, 2009) related to access, ethical decision making, social justice, raising of social consciousness, fostering of cognitive complexity, gatekeeping efforts to protect the public from harm, meeting the changing needs of society, promoting learning, growth, and development through a variety of instructional strategies and formats, and pursuit of qualitative and quantitative research in counseling and counselor education and supervision meant to serve the public good.

Currently twelve institutions, ten private and two public, have CACREP accredited counseling programs that offer primarily online courses with some in person components (CACREP, 2015). Despite a need to transform pedagogy in CES programs through the inclusion of online course components, CES programs lag behind other disciplines with regard to instructional design that integrates technology through hybrid and/or flipped classroom learning environments. This is evidenced by a variety of conceptual publications that assert an interest and need for counselor educators to utilize instructional design techniques that integrate hybrid or flipped learning environments into their pedagogy and the relatively few empirical publications or studies available examining the construction or utilization of these environments within CES courses and programs (e.g., Erichsen, Bolliger, & Halupa, 2012; Hayes, 2008; Hayes et al., 2003; Hayes & Robinson, 2000; Moorhead, Neuwer-Colburn, Edwards, & Erwin, 2013; Moran & Milsom, 2015; Renfro-Michel, O’Halloran, Delaney, 2010; Smith et al., 2015). This is problematic for counselor educators who wish to use hybrid or flipped classroom designs
because there is very little direction regarding instructional design strategies to construct hybrid or flipped counseling learning environments (Moorhead et al., 2013), and educators are generally not taught how to construct hybrid or flipped counseling learning environments in their doctoral training programs (Moran & Milsom, 2015).

This lack of adequate training may be problematic as 2016 CACREP standards require institutions to provide “adequate and appropriate access to counseling instruction environments (on or off campus) that are conducive to training… [and require] counseling instruction environments to include technologies” (CACREP, 2016). Despite this requirement CACREP does not have a parallel standard for teaching hybrid curriculum design as part of larger pedagogy practices within CES doctoral training programs. This seems to be a significant oversight as it is unlikely that future counselor educators will develop the skills necessary to construct hybrid or flipped classroom learning environments without adequate preparation and training in CES programs (Moorhead et al., 2013).

While online and hybrid learning environments are beginning to be utilized more frequently in counselor education and supervision programs (Reicherzer, Dixon-Saxon, & Trippany, 2009) many counselor educators remain hesitant to utilize hybrid and/or flipped classroom learning environments in their counseling courses. This is likely, at least in part, due to a lack of adequate training and preparation in pedagogical and instructional design approaches that would be necessary for counselor educators to co-construct such learning environments. An additional factor that may be affecting the limited use and research of hybrid and online counseling learning environments may relate to counselor educators’ concerns about the suitability of online instruction for
training counselors, particularly in the development of interpersonal and applied clinical skills (Murphy, MacFadden, and Mitchell, 2008). A final factor that may be contributing to counselor educator’s hesitance in adopting hybrid and/or flipped classroom approaches could be the perceived interpersonal and interactional limitations that online learning environments present.

In recent years advances in technological communication (e.g., Google Hangout, Second-Life, VoiceThread, Skype, FaceTime) have made online discussions and interactions more accessible, however, experiential and tactile activities (e.g., online sand tray) and meaningful active discussions may not always translate authentically to online interactions. Despite these limitations, I believe that hybrid learning approaches can be designed to be highly congruent with contextual constructivist pedagogy and instructional design through intentional scaffolding of online and in-person learning environments in relation to one another. I argue explicitly that the idea that interpersonal and applied clinical skill development cannot be facilitated through online methods is not an accurate appraisal of online instruction. I believe that hybrid and/or flipped classroom environments can be intentionally and rigorously designed to work in tandem with experiential and problem based learning activities that can be completed and processed within the in-person classroom environment. My qualitative portraiture case study provides a step by step illustration that will address how this process can be accomplished within counselor education and supervision courses. My qualitative portraiture case study also details how hybrid and/or flipped learning environments can be structured to offer benefits beyond what online or face-to-face instruction can offer in isolation.
Design of the Hybrid Learning Environment

To aid with designing the hybrid learning environment for this study I conducted an extensive literature review specific to online learning in counselor education, counselor development, counselor development of cognitive complexity, pedagogical approaches utilized in counseling theories courses, and pedagogical approaches utilized to foster multicultural and social justice competency in counselor education. Four organizational tools: Contextual Models of Treatment Effectiveness (Wampold, 2001), the Common Factors model (Lambert, 1992), the Ways Paradigm (Cheston, 2000); and the Five Forces (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014) were selected based on their congruence with the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of our course design (i.e., constructivism and systems/ecological, multicultural/social justice theoretical perspectives).

Organizational Tool: Contextual Models of Treatment Effectiveness

Counseling theories can be conceptualized as belonging to two distinct models: a contextual model or a medical model (Wampold, 2001). Counselors working within a medical model evaluate clients for symptoms then use research to locate treatments for individual symptoms. Contextual models are more congruent with core values of the counseling profession, as they include multiple aspects of clients’ culture, such as ecological systems in order to determine an initial intervention, which is subsequently evaluated and refined as client contexts become more and less salient.

As the field of counseling, led by ACA, moves away from the medical model of treatment to a [contextual] wellness model as ‘the foundation to the counseling profession’ counselors and counselor educators ultimately need to focus on the holistic care of their clients. Counseling from any perspective that places all responsibility for change on the individual is
relatively culturally impositional because it functions from the presumption that change occurs within the individual regardless of the environment. Issues of social advocacy and activism are becoming more central in counseling and thus counselor education. (Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010, p. 85)

When examining medical and contextual approaches to counseling both have been demonstrated to be effective for treating clients’ concerns. Thus, it appears that there are factors that support client change that underlie theory (Wampold, 2001).

Organizational Tool: The Common Factors Model

The Common Factors model (Lambert, 1992) accounts for the relational, interpersonal, and other factors that form the foundation of the counseling process. The common factors are communicated to counseling clients using counseling micro-skills (Ivey et al., 1968) such as reflecting content, feeling, and meaning as well as questioning, challenging, and encouraging. In this way micro-skills serve as a common factor as well as a toolset for using the common factors with clients. The common factors have consistently been shown to account for a substantial proportion of the variance in counseling outcomes. Meta analyses show that between 30% (Lambert, 1992) and 49% (Cuijpers, et al., 2012) of client change variance can be accounted for by the common factors. This is contrasted with theory-specific counseling techniques, which account for approximately 16% of client change variance (Cuijpers, et al., 2012; Lambert, 1992). Given the prominent role of the common factors in client change it is important that counselors in training be taught to recognize, understand, and implement them.

The micro-skills are present in the Recursive Superstructure (Branson, Branson, & Cardona, 2016) when counselors are working from a common factors approach as a way of being within the larger ecological, social justice, multicultural, and systemic
framing of the model. When the counselor begins to conceptualize the client through the lens of a theory, which is then adapted based on the client’s context and salient intersectional factors, the counselor is able to become aware of themes and to generate working hypotheses. These working hypotheses form the intentionality for the ways in which the counselor intervenes with the client. Thus, in the stages of counseling following the initial assessment the counselor uses micro-skills as a way of intervening (which is informed by ways of understanding) as well as a way of being.

The foundational role that the counseling micro-skills have been shown to have in the overall counseling process (e.g., Cuijpers, et. al, 2012; Lambert, 1992) provides a rationale for integrating a variety of theoretical perspectives based on salient client contexts. That is, if a majority of client change is accounted for through the common factors it does not seem sensible to operate from a single theoretical perspective as the theory is not the most substantial driving factor in the change process, rather it provides a conceptual lens through which counselors can better understand and therefore empathize with clients. Similarly, the concept of equifinality (Lee & Nelson, 2014) in systemic counseling, or the idea that multiple paths lead to identical ends is also explained through the common factors.

Teaching the common factors in theories of counseling courses allows CITs to better understand the role that theories play in the counseling process. That is, theories are contextualized within the broader counseling process. Counselors in training can be presented with examples of counseling micro-skills and informed that theories provide a way of understanding the client that is facilitated by the larger counseling relationship, which is constructed using counseling micro-skills, and client contexts. Theories can also
provide a way of intervening with clients. For example, teaching a client to engage in thought stopping is a way of intervening that is highly congruent with cognitive behavioral therapy. In this way, counselors in training are encouraged to consider theories through context and salient client intersectional factors, which is congruent with a multicultural approach to counseling. In summary counseling micro-skills, such as open ended questions and reflections of content, feeling, and meaning, account for a substantial portion of the variance in counseling outcomes (Cuijpers, et. al, 2012; Lambert, 1992). Micro-skills also provide a means for equifinality within the counseling process and a justification for using a culturally aware integrative approach to counseling. The micro-skills are present in multiple locations, depending on context and timing, within the Recursive Superstructure model. Thus, CITs encounter them in multiple contexts as they are cycling through the model. In this way the micro-skills interact with the overall process of counselor development.

Organizational Tool: The Ways Paradigm

The ways paradigm (Cheston, 2000) might be thought of as an organizational strategy that is appropriate at beginning stages of development as it provides counselors in training with a structure to understand and organize counseling theory and practice helping them to move between the three central ways of operating within the context of a counseling relationship: a way of being, a way of understanding, and a way of intervening (Cheston, 2000). A way of being can be thought of as specific to the counselor’s interpersonal skills, ability to self-monitor, and ability to accurately communicate empathy, warmth, genuineness, immediacy, and presence in the counseling relationship. Each theoretical perspective has a set of assumptions regarding a
counselors’ ideal way of being in relation to clients (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). A way of being then, is the way in which a counselor shows up in the counseling relationship and fosters the therapeutic alliance (Cheston, 2000).

A way of understanding (Cheston, 2000) can be thought of as specific to a counselor’s conceptual skills, ability to understand clients in context and in relation to larger systems, and ability to select and apply theoretical lenses that are congruent with client context, worldview, lived experiences and goals for growth and development. Each theoretical perspective has ways of understanding clients that will inform the way in which the counselor conceptualizes health and wellness and the map and route that counseling will follow (Reiter, 2014).

A way of intervening (Cheston, 2000) can be thought of as specific to a counselor’s technical skills or the specific structure, techniques, and scaffolding procedures the counselor employs within and between counseling sessions to allow interventions to inductively build upon one another to support the client towards desired change and growth. Each theoretical perspective has different techniques and intervention strategies that are thought to encourage the therapeutic change process.

Organizational Tool:
The Five Forces

Ratts & Pedersen’s (2014) five forces theoretical clustering’s were selected as an organizational tool that was determined to fit with the ecological/systemic, multicultural, and social justice framework that would be utilized in the course design. I then adapted this organizational structure slightly from five forces to four forces (i.e., psychoanalytic; behavioral/cognitive; humanistic/existential/gestalt; and multicultural/social justice). I accomplished this by merging the multicultural and social justice forces into one force as
I believe that they are highly congruent and effective when used in tandem with one another and doing so reduced the complexity of the organizational system for counselors in training.

**Conceptual Tool: The Recursive Superstructure**

The Recursive Superstructure was used as a conceptual tool to inform the instructional design of our course with the aim of selecting and designing course materials, experiential activities, and learning environments that would be likely to increase opportunities to for cognitive complexity development. The recursive superstructure provided me with a framework to understand the inductive processes of cognitive complexity development, which is represented by cycling through reciprocal and interrelated domains as counselors in training engage with applied learning. The Recursive Superstructure was initially used to select pedagogical strategies and experiential activities identified in the counseling literature that were determined to have the potential to foster cognitive complexity development for CITs. Pedagogical strategies and activities were selected by visually mapping out the ways that these activities may foster cognitive complexity development for counselors in training through the Recursive Superstructure. Transparent Counseling Pedagogy (Dollarhide et al., 2007) and several experiential activities from Brubaker et al.’s (2010) Case Example of Integrating Social Justice into Counseling Theories Pedagogy were ultimately selected.

**Pedagogical and Experiential Strategies: Transparent Counseling Pedagogy**

Transparent Counseling Pedagogy is an experiential problem based learning strategy that can be utilized within theories counseling courses to offer counselors in
training developmentally appropriate opportunities to observe and engage with realistic counseling demonstration sessions in the classroom environment (Dollarhide et al., 2007). Transparent Counseling Pedagogy approaches require instructors and/or outside counselors to serve the roles of counselor and client who engage in a live role-play demonstration where they intentionally ‘pause’ the counseling session at strategic times to make transparent their thinking and metalog while eliciting responses from CITs about what the counselor might say to the client next.

After a few minutes, each student group is asked for their ideas and clinical rationale; this allows students to think convergently (as a class) and divergently as they hear and consider a wide range of clinical possibilities. The counselor gathers that input and then discusses each topic or question proposed in terms of timing, consistency with the theory being taught, appropriateness for the client, and appropriateness for the presenting issue. Options are explored aloud; the counselor then selects one of the clinical directions or interventions offered, giving the clinical rationale for the choice. If the counselor says something without class input, the counselor pauses the interaction with the client by once again raising a finger and thinks aloud in a monologue to highlight the clinical thinking involved. For example, the counselor would follow a clinical statement to the client with the following statement to the class: ‘The client seems hesitant, and she just looked at her watch. One possible explanation is that she might be worried about disclosing too quickly. I will check this out to see if this might involve more trust building. (Dollarhide et al., 2007, p. 245)

Students act as participant observers during the demonstration and are encouraged to actively participate in dialogue during the session ‘pauses’ as well as during post-session processing. During the demonstration the counselor can pause to make transparent their theoretical working hypotheses and how those ways of understanding impact the selected theoretical route they follow in session. The client can then make transparent their reactions and the fit of counselor responses with their worldviews and perspectives (Dollarhide et al., 2007).
Post-session processing can involve reactions to the session, observations about counselor ways of being, and perceived fit between the theoretical lens utilized and the client’s worldview, beliefs, and context. Transparent Counseling Pedagogy (Dollarhide, et al., 2007) may be advantageous to CIT development as it provides opportunities to practice considering multiple perspectives and ways of understanding clients in context before working with actual clients. Instructors who utilize Transparent Counseling Pedagogy demonstration sessions (Dollarhide et al., 2007) can highlight counselor in training discoveries and collaborate with CITs to co-construct knowledge and understanding while transparently modeling clinical thinking processes and self-monitoring skills which can help to demystify the counseling process.

Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role-play demonstration sessions (Dollarhide et al., 2007) can also be utilized in combination with the ways paradigm (Cheston, 2000) to further make transparent the domains that the counselor occupies and cycles through when talking through complex client scenarios and attempting to congruently apply theory. For example, returning to the metalog statement

The client seems hesitant, and she just looked at her watch. One possible explanation is that she might be worried about disclosing too quickly. I will check this out to see if this might involve more trust building. (Dollarhide et al., 2007, p. 245)

This statement can be made more transparent with the statement ‘I need to shift my focus to my way of being with the client right now while ensuring that I am understanding their worldview and perspective. I will intervene by reflecting back what the client just said to make sure I am understanding’. The counselor could then turn to the client and respond with a reflection of feeling or content or they could continue to ‘pause’ the session by turning to the class and ask them how might my ways of being,
understanding, and intervening ‘fit’ or ‘not fit’ with person-centered theory? How might my ways of being, understanding, and intervening ‘fit’ or not ‘fit’ with the client’s worldview, values, context?

Transparent Counseling Pedagogy (Dollarhide et al., 2007) operates through the Recursive Superstructure on multiple systemic levels (Brofenbrenner, 1979) simultaneously. The counselor, client, and counselors in training all represent microsystems within the Transparent Counseling Pedagogy demonstration. These three microsystems are connected through the larger mesosystem of the class as well as the mesosystems of the counselor-client dyad and educator-CIT dyad, and through relationships between CITs in the course. The mesosystem is particularly salient during the pauses and time-outs in the session as this is when counselors in training are able to talk aloud through their ways of understanding, ask questions, and hear multiple perspectives regarding theoretical perspectives and client contexts to co-construct shared meaning in relation to their own experiences, values, worldview, and contexts. Transparent Counseling Pedagogy (Dollarhide et al., 2007) was selected because it could be conceptualized as an activity consistent with contextual pedagogical approaches that has the potential to foster rapid cycling through each of the domains of the Recursive Superstructure by transparently opening up and revealing the inner workings and interconnectedness of the domains.
For example, (see Figure 2 above) the counselor begins the role play by opening salient client contexts through reflections of feeling, content, and meaning while the CITs observe. In this way the counselor, who is in the position of power (power between the counselor and client is represented in the model on the vertical axis) opens the interaction. The diagram above depicts the counselor’s box in green as it is the first component to become active. When the counselor begins to interact with the client, for example by asking an opening question, the counselor must draw upon their own pre-existing contexts to determine their way of being, as they have no actual knowledge about the client at this point. The opening question is transmitted through the active green arrow in Figure 2 from the counselor to the client, who then becomes a part of the active path. The client then responds to the counselor’s opening statement, both verbally and
non-verbally, with contextual information which activates the arrow running from client to counselor.

In gathering information about the client the counselor is using their personal values, experiences, beliefs, and world-views to inform their ways of being and understanding the client. The counselor then makes their personal reactions to the client known to the class by pausing the session and disclosing their countertransference. The counselor might pause, turn to the class and say “I have experienced a similar problem in my own life. I need to make sure that I am monitoring my own emotions, thoughts, and somatic reactions so that I can avoid imposing my experience with a similar problem onto this client that way I can communicate accurate empathy”.

At this stage the counselor is focusing on ways of being that foster an environment that supports the client in feeling safe while gathering initial conceptual information based on salient client contexts. Once the counselor has sufficiently demonstrated reflections of clients’ thoughts, feeling, and experiences and gathered the initial conceptual information they are prepared and should feel free to follow the arrows into the theoretical perspectives. This allows for the CITs to follow the counselor’s lead as they begin to make transparent the process of selecting and implementing a theory or theories in the session.
For example, (see Figure 3 above) the counselor might say to the counselors in training, “I have noticed that the client has brought up multiple times during the week where he found himself thinking that he isn’t worthwhile with his family, with his friends, and now at school. The theme of not feeling worthwhile has come up three time across different contextual intersections. From what the client shared this theme of not feeling worthwhile seems to be intersecting with gender and career expectations, all of which seem really salient for this client at this time. I am thinking that cognitive behavioral therapy might be a nice theoretical fit with this client.”. This might be followed by the counselor asking the CITs “How do you think that I decided to try out CBT with this client?”
Notice the arrows between the client and theory become active \((\text{Figure 3})\) before the arrows between counselor and theoretical perspective \((\text{Figure 4})\). This is consistent with a multicultural and contextual framework as it allows the counselor to dynamically integrate theories that are congruent with the client’s cultural ways of being, understanding, and intervening \((\text{Lewis et al., 2011})\). Once the counselor begins to interact with the client, both parties begin to build shared ways of understanding that include the cultural contexts of both the counselor and client and that are informed by theories.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{counseling_diagram.png}
\caption{\textit{Transparent Counseling Pedagogy Recursive Superstructure 1c}}
\end{figure}

Students are then challenged to cycle between the counselor’s personal values and influences, client context, and the theory domains in order to determine the fit of each with the others. For example, \((\text{see Figure 4 above})\) students may begin the activity situated in the client context, as they may have been made privy to background
information about the client. They could also begin in the counselor’s context, as they may have knowledge about the counseling style of their instructor. Perhaps the CITs enter the activity already cycling between counselor and client contexts as the instructor might introduce the role play scenario and transparently share their reactions to the upcoming session with the client.

This highlights the subjective fluid entry points for various individuals and microsystems that interact with one another inside of the Recursive Superstructure. As the counselor opens the session and begins to gather conceptual information from the client the students move between counselor and client contexts. The educator makes transparent their process of selecting a theory, which draws the students into the theoretical portion of the model and includes them in the counselor’s way of understanding. As the educator shifts back into the role of counselor the students follow in the cycle between counselor and client context and theoretical lenses. Once the counselor has enough conceptual knowledge they can begin to work with the client to gain thematic awareness and to generate working hypotheses.
Ways of intervening follow ways of understanding, as one must understand clients in context in order to intervene in sensitive and aware ways. Figure 5 (see above) shows thematic awareness becoming part of the green active paths only after the counselor has conceptualized the client through various theoretical perspectives and assessed theoretical fit with client contexts, worldview, and culture (shown in previous figures). The client provides the link to thematic awareness and working hypotheses. As the counselor’s own biases and systems inherently impact their choice of theoretical lenses it is important that the counselor demonstrate self-awareness in making transparent the process of selecting and integrating a theory or theories based on the client’s contexts. Thus, the Superstructure depicts the importance of forming the therapeutic relationship
and collaboratively cultivating thematic awareness and working hypotheses that are based on client context rather than counselors’ contexts.

The process of selecting theories and ways of intervening highlights the influence of the exosystems and macrosystems in which the counselor, client, and CITs are embedded. The counselor will likely select theories that are impacted by their exosystem, for example, theories that were preferred by the counselor’s mentors and educators. The theories were developed in the context of specific cultural macrosystems, including dominant cultural narratives, biases, and discourse. The educator/counselor may choose to make these relationships known to the counselors in training during the post session processing to encourage them to reflect on the influence of systemic contexts, thereby further expanding their ability to think through the lenses of context and multiculturalism.

At this point it has been demonstrated that the CITs, counselor/educators, and client have cycled multiple times through the counselor contexts, client contexts, theoretical perspectives, and working hypotheses. This cycling has facilitated and has also been facilitated by the counselor’s ways of being, understanding, and intervening with the client and the entire process has occurred in an ecological and systemic context. The process of cycling recursively between the client, counselor, and theoretical perspectives thereby developing awareness of themes and working hypotheses continues throughout the session. Constructivism frames the entire process as each time counselors in training cycle between components or engage with one another they further build out their growth and development.

Unlike growth and development thematic awareness and working hypotheses emerge from the model. However, self-awareness, development, and relationship
building all take place as client and counselor cycle through the Recursive Superstructure, thus they never leave the structure. Rather, growth and development fuel and are fueled by ongoing movement in the Recursive Superstructure. Interpersonal attachment is depicted in the Superstructure between the counselor and client via the large arrows which attach the two in a genuine way that is not mediated by theoretical perspectives. When educators use learning strategies such as Transparent Counseling Pedagogy, that allow them to model authenticity and transparency (i.e., through the role of counselor or client) in such vulnerable ways in front of CITs, attachment processes and trust among the CITs and between the educators and CITs rapidly strengthen. Self-awareness, development, and attachment processes are considered ongoing for all participants (counselor, CITs, client) as they cycle through the Superstructure and thus are not an outcome, rather an inherent part of recursively cycling through the model.

**Pedagogical and Experiential Strategies: Case Example**

Brubaker et al.’s (2010) provide a concrete case example that illustrates the ways in which counselor educators can transition from an empirical post-positivist pedagogical framework to a critical socially just pedagogical framework in a counseling theories course. The authors detail how this epistemological transition shapes the structure and design of the counseling theories course across educator interpersonal ways of being through attempting to form an ‘egalitarian power structure’, conceptual ways of understanding through ‘de-ideologizing dominant paradigms’, and technical ways of intervening at multiple systemic levels through facilitating ‘praxis based experiential learning’ (Brubaker et al., 2010). Counselor educators who adopt critical social justice pedagogical frameworks seek to facilitate a classroom environment where counselors in
training can serve as teachers and learners through creating opportunities to construct collaborative and validating relationships among the CITs and between CITs and instructors through interpersonal ways of being. Instructors operating from a critical social justice oriented perspective maintains awareness of the power differentials that exist between counselor educators and counselors in training and monitors the ways in which these power differentials may be made transparent. Educators can serve as models for counselors in training as they critically examine and challenge their values, beliefs, biases, assumptions, and worldviews aloud and then encourage CITs to do the same (Brubaker et al., 2010).

The action of critically examining one’s biases aloud could be conceptualized as an interpersonal way of being that seeks to minimize power differentials and encourage relationship building through the authenticity and vulnerability that is communicated in the process of recognizing personal biases and reflecting on potential limitations. However, it could also represent a conceptual way of understanding through recognition of CIT hesitancy to focus on self of the therapist factors related to a desire to appear competent and a fear of critical evaluation in early developmental stages. Lastly it could be conceptualized as a technical way of intervening to normalize the uncomfortable nature of the self-reflexive process involved in examining systems of power and privilege while demonstrating how one might approach this process.

Several specific examples of concrete experiential and problem based activities utilized within a critical pedagogical frame were included in Brubaker et al.’s (2010) counseling theories course case example. The scaffolding of these experiential activities across the curricular design of the course could be thought of as an intentionally
structured step-wise sequences that operate through the Recursive Superstructure. The first experiential activity presented by Brubaker et al. (2010) involved encouraging students to select five words that represented their salient intersectional factors (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status). This experiential activity loads into the CIT experiences, values, worldviews, and context domain of the Recursive Superstructure helping counselors in training to become aware of themselves within larger systemic contexts and power structures (illustrated below).

Figure 6. Social Justice Recursive Superstructure 2a
The second experiential activity involved examining pictures of the counseling theorists that had developed theories which would be covered within the course and making observations about their salient cultural factors (e.g., most of the theorists are white European men). The third experiential activity was a kinesthetic activity developed by Brubaker et al. (2010) which he based on Prilletensky’s (2000) four theoretical value clustering’s (i.e., traditional, empowering, postmodern, and emancipatory communitarian) and was designed to foster value awareness in relation to various theoretical perspectives.

Students were then invited to place themselves in proximity to the category of theories that best fit them. Some students found that they were positioned between theories, others were outside the circle, aligning with only one category. While standing students then talked about why they positioned themselves as they did in the exercise. Subsequently the two instructors moved into the circle and described how their theoretical alignment had changed over time. Because the two instructor perspectives were somewhat different students could see a demonstration of respect for multiple and divergent theoretical choices and the developmental nature of the counselor self. (Brubaker et al., 2010, p. 95)

The second and third experiential activities (Brubaker et al., 2010) would represent cycling between CITs context domains and theoretical perspectives domains (Figure 7) through recognizing the values, assumptions, and worldviews of theoretical perspectives in relation to the cultural and socio-political contexts in which a particular theory evolved and assessing the fit of these values with one’s personal or preferred theories as they evolve dependent upon context (illustrated below).
The fifth experiential activity (Brubaker et al., 2010) involved service learning in which CITs explored systemic barriers that needed to be addressed within their community and identified potential ways of intervening at a systemic level through a collaborative relationship with individuals living in the community who had experienced homelessness.

Through constructive dialogue with individuals from the local community, students were able to explore the impact of clinical strategies by directly asking community members about their strengths and the oppressive forces they face, including counselors themselves. Back in the classroom, students reflected on how their values and theoretical orientation might support or hinder this population and others with different values in the overall community. Furthermore, students were introduced to how counseling may occur outside an office setting. (Brubaker et al., 2010, p. 97)
This quote and the step-wise sequence that the service learning project followed are depicted in Figure 8 and Figure 9. The relationship between the counselors in training and the community members are represented in Figure 8 by the large green arrows spanning counselor and client. In this instance the CITs are taking the role of the counselor and the community members are taking the role of the clients. This is because the CITs have more power based on the context of these interactions and thus are represented in the counselor domain higher on the vertical axis of the diagram.

![Figure 8. Social Justice Recursive Superstructure 2c](image)

After the counselors in training interact with and form relationships with community members, identify community member strengths, and contextualize
oppressive systemic forces that community members face the instructor processes the role of the CITs values related to their preferred theories and ways of understanding. During this processing time the counselors in training cycle between their own personal context and theories and the educator uses their relationship with the CITs to facilitate this process. The relationship between the educator and counselors in training is highlighted in Figure 9 through the large arrows while the CITs cycling with the theories is highlighted by the green arrows running between the CITs and theoretical perspectives. In addition to engaging in multiple relationship cycles and cycling between theoretical perspectives, counselors in training have also cycled between occupying the higher box in the model and the lower, less empowered box as they have moved between contexts of empowerment while in the role of counselor and disempowerment while interacting with the educator. Each of these cycles provides counselors in training with ongoing experiential contact, which facilitates development.
The final two experiential activities discussed in the theories course case example were the use of real plays and a final processing and synthesis activity. Real plays (Brubaker et al., 2010) were described as role plays based on real-life low level life stressors that counselors in training could appropriately disclose in class to create an authentic client scenario. This experiential activity would represent student cycling between their own lived experiences in the higher domain, theoretical perspectives in the mediating domain, and role-play client contexts in the lower domain. CITs have opportunities to play both the counselor and client, thus taking turns occupying the lower and higher domains. The real play activity results in applied thematic awareness and working hypotheses that allow counselors in training to try out interventions and receive

Figure 9. *Social Justice Recursive Superstructure 2d*

The final two experiential activities discussed in the theories course case example were the use of real plays and a final processing and synthesis activity. Real plays (Brubaker et al., 2010) were described as role plays based on real-life low level life stressors that counselors in training could appropriately disclose in class to create an authentic client scenario. This experiential activity would represent student cycling between their own lived experiences in the higher domain, theoretical perspectives in the mediating domain, and role-play client contexts in the lower domain. CITs have opportunities to play both the counselor and client, thus taking turns occupying the lower and higher domains. The real play activity results in applied thematic awareness and working hypotheses that allow counselors in training to try out interventions and receive
feedback, thus enabling them to move through the Recursive Superstructure, thereby starting the cycle over again (See Figure 10 below).

Students were given opportunities to present final self-reflection papers synthesizing their experiences, articulating their personalized ‘integrated working theories’, and reflecting and discussing how their integrated working theory may or may not interface with specific client systems or contexts (Brubaker et al., 2010) allowing CITs additional opportunities to engage in self-reflexivity and chances to re-cycle through all domains of the Recursive Superstructure with each new contextual intersection encountered (illustrated below). Engaging in the experiential activities presented by Brubaker et al. (2010) results in a chaining effect where the counselors in training have moved through the model many times, in many different ways, and from multiple entry points.
Figure 10. *Social Justice Recursive Superstructure 2e*

**Constructing Videos for Hybrid Courses:**
**Navigating Fair Use**

Fair use is foundational to the design and implementation of the hybrid counseling theories course as much of the course material was copyrighted by various publishers. The Fair Use Evaluator (http://librarycopyright.net/) was used to weigh the advantages of using the content against four instrumental copyright factors: Purpose of use, nature of use, amount of use, and the effect of use. As the purpose of using the videos was non-profit education, which for some of the videos was also transformative (i.e., they were not initially designed for counselor education and were offered with additional supplemental materials designed by the co-instructors), a fair use argument began to emerge. Although
the course videos are not directly used in this research project, the purpose of research is also considered favorable to fair use.

In addition to purpose, the nature of the works seemed to also favor fair use as all of the works have been previously published and many of the works have been published for cost-free viewing on the internet. Further, the videos were all transformed through editing selected film compilations into more concise and focused narratives, sometimes combining parts of several separate works, before being presented to students, another factor that favors fair use (American Library Association, 2014). The nature of the use could be considered transformative and socially beneficial as using the videos in teaching supported students’ creation of new knowledge, understanding, awareness, and development. In order to prevent viewing outside of the educational context, videos were uploaded as ‘unlisted’ on YouTube and links to the videos were password protected. Password protecting the videos increased the likelihood that the watchers of the videos would be students who had already paid for subscriptions (through student fees) to any video that was not free.

Password protecting further mitigates any effect on the original publishers’ revenue, which favors a fair use argument. Although a strong fair use case for the videos in the course emerged, copyright owners were still contacted in some cases. I attempted to email the licensing division of WGBH, who owns frontline copyrights. They declined to respond to our requests for use, which further supports our argument of fair use. Similarly, I consulted with a representative from Alexander Street Press, the company that the copyright to several of the videos. The representative indicated the copyright holder was agreeable to the work being modified in any way, as long as my intention was
to make the video more accessible for educational usage in the classroom and Alexander Street Press got their subscription fees. All of the students in the hybrid theories of counseling course paid library fees, a portion of which went to obtaining an institutional subscription to Alexander Street Press. Finally, I attributed all video footage to the copyright holder on the webpages that the videos were embedded in. While fair use is a subjective principal, it appears that there are numerous arguments favoring our use of videos as fair.

The American Library Association (January, 2014) observes that it is considered fair use for an educator to screen record a work, edit the work so it is shorter, combine film compilations from multiple works to create a transformative product, and then distribute the work digitally to distance-learning students, which summarizes the process that was used with the majority of the videos in the hybrid theories of counseling course. The videos that do not meet this criterion were written and produced by myself and the co-instructor, which allowed us to license the videos for our use.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

**Context Videos**

In order to begin to construct the videos for the online portion of the class I began searching for and watching a wide variety of videos that provided information on the development and tenets of the major theoretical clusterings’ (i.e., psychoanalytic, behavioral/cognitive, humanistic, and multicultural/social justice) that would be covered in the course. It was determined fairly immediately that to meet my goal of contextualizing the development of theoretical perspectives within the socio-cultural contexts that they developed would require substantial editing, combining, and re-storying of videos. This was accomplished in a similar fashion to methods of thematic
analysis that are commonly used in qualitative research. Essentially, I engaged with each theoretical clustering through prolonged engagement with readings and videos and then I selected the most salient parts of the videos and began cutting those clips for use in the re-storying process. This process was extremely time consuming and produced similar engagement to the process of transcribing interviews as it resulted in my watching and engaging with the same portions of videos over and over again as clips were sequenced and re-sequenced within the video.

Appendix G provides a screen shot of what this process looked like. Each segment seen in the screen shot is an individual video segment that has been re-sequenced into place among the other segments. This method at times resulted in multiple videos (two to four separately produced videos) being cut and re-ordered into an aesthetic whole. Once videos were roughly cut and edited into novel stories they were watched by the co-instructor, who served as a peer reviewer, and myself, we performed final edits on the videos. These included refining edit points, adding transitions, adding and animating text, and making minor changes to the storyline. A context video was created for each of the following six theoretical perspectives: psychoanalysis; analytic psychology; behaviorism; CBT; REBT; humanistic, gestalt, & existential; multicultural and social justice. The final steps included writing self-reflexivity prompts to go with each video.

Example prompts can be found in Appendix C.

Counseling Demonstration Session Videos

In their article on Transparent Counseling Pedagogy, Dollarhide et al. (2007) suggested that counseling theories instructors pause the Gloria (Shostrom, 1965) films to process the counselors’ behavior as well as the counseling process with CITs in an
identical manner to the Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role play, which was described in Chapter II. In these films, the same client, Gloria, sees three different therapists Albert Ellis (REBT), Carl Rogers (person centered), and Fritz Perls (gestalt). The films are designed to highlight the differences between these three theoretical approaches and thus are a useful training tool for teaching counselors in training to begin to apply theory. I used the same analytic process described above to edit the Gloria films (Shostrom, 1965) from an hour in length to under 20 minutes, in order to show what I deemed as the most critical parts of the session. I then adapted Dollarhide et al.’s (2007) suggestion by editing subtitles over video footage of counseling demonstration sessions. This was accomplished by noting video times in which a particular skill was demonstrated as I watched and re-watched through the videos in the process of editing them down. The subtitles were then reviewed by and animated by the co-instructor onto the videos in order to provide information on counselors’ ways of intervening and understanding including behavior and metalog throughout the session.

I then identified session demonstration films that were consistent with the Ratts & Pedersen (2014) five forces theoretical clustering’s. The Ratts five forces films (2012) feature one client, Annie, who sees five counselors each practicing from a different theoretical perspective (i.e., psychoanalytic, cognitive behavioral, existential, multicultural, and social justice). A similar analytic process was used to edit these films from several hours in length to under 25 minutes in length as I sought to keep all films to the minimal length required to impart the essence of the information. Similarly, the co-instructor animated the text subtitles to provide information on counselors’ ways of intervening and understanding including behavior and metalog throughout the session.
Slides containing quotes from the counselor as well as questions designed to encourage reflection were added at two to four points throughout the film as a way to increase student active engagement with the session demonstration videos (H. Helm, personal communication, August 27, 2015). Theoretical demonstration sessions were produced for the following theoretical perspectives: psychoanalysis, REBT, CBT, person centered, gestalt, existential, multicultural, and social justice. The final steps included writing self-reflexivity prompts to go with each video. The self-reflexivity prompts were created when I adapted processing questions from Brubaker et al. (2010), Dollarhide et al. (2007) and Arthur & Achenbach (2002) that were intended to be used with experiential classroom activities in order to make them applicable to the videos.

**Applied Client Scenario Videos and Treatment Planning Activities**

Next, Frontline videos (produced by WGBH & PBS) showing life struggles that were realistic presenting concerns for clients coming to counseling were identified. The issues selected included death of a partner, transitioning from incarceration, academic struggles, coming out as transgender, and poverty. Each video included multiple salient client intersections that were presented in context through emotionally evocative documentary films. I actively watch Frontline and thus am familiar with many of the episodes. I selected episodes for the hybrid course intentionally based on course objectives. I used a similar process to the one above to edit the films to shorter narratives (i.e., under 15 minutes) that emphasized client intersections and contexts. These films weren’t subtitled.

Client conceptualizations and treatment plans were written based on the client scenario videos and were included with the videos to add richness and depth to the
scenario. Client conceptualization and treatment plans included an introduction, presenting concern, background information, and client strengths, and potential counseling goals. Additional fictional details were added to client conceptualization and treatment plans to make them more rich and multi-layered. The final steps for finalizing the applied client scenario videos included writing self-reflexivity prompts and small group discussion questions to go with each case scenario videos and structuring an in-person experiential activity that would build upon the online portion of the client scenario reflexivity and discussion activity. The in person component of the client conceptualization and treatment planning activity is detailed along with a step by step illustration of all of the experiential activities utilized in the hybrid counseling theories in Appendix K the Pilot Study.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have presented a range of literature demonstrating the importance of training multi-culturally sensitive counselors who are able to select a counseling approach based on a client’s personal contexts. I began by exploring theories of counselor development, which were used to inform the development of the hybrid theories of counseling course that was the foundation for this study. I then discussed the importance of training counselors to utilize conceptual and theoretical frameworks in their work with clients and highlighted contextual and critical approaches to constructivist pedagogy that are potentially useful in training multiculturally sensitive counselors. I then described the Recursive Superstructure (Branson et al., 2016) that was used to build the hybrid theories of counseling class and provided an example of how the Superstructure can be used to conceptualize activities that have been used in theories of counseling courses. I concluded this chapter by describing the process of developing the online component of
the theories of counseling course and summarized how the concept of fair use enabled us
to utilize existing media in novel forms to provide students with an optimal online
learning experience.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I discuss the interlocking and congruent nature of the guiding foundations, frameworks, and research components used to scaffold my study. Qualitative research (Merriam, 2009) and constructivist epistemology (Crotty, 1998) provide the foundation from which the qualitative portraiture case study (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Yin, 2009) was shaped and formed. Contextual and critical constructivist pedagogy (Granello, 2000; Friere, 1993) intersects with systemic/ecological (Broffenbrenner, 1979) and multicultural/social justice theoretical perspectives (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014) to provide the philosophical beliefs, assumptions, and values that frame the context in which I will explore counselor in training (CIT) development of cognitive complexity and ability to critically evaluate theoretical application within the conceptual process (Bloom et al., 1981; Kitchner & King, 1981; Perry, 1970; Welfare & Borders, 2010).

Together these elements shaped the Recursive Superstructure that informed every layer of the instructional design strategy (see Chapter II) and methods utilized in the course and my study. In the methodology section I expand on qualitative case study and portraiture methodologies and the ways in which these overlapping methodologies interface with constructivism and my selected theoretical perspectives to scaffold and co-construct the methods used in data collection as well as data analysis. Lastly, I discuss the
rigor and trustworthiness of this qualitative portraiture case study including ethical considerations and potential limitations inherent in the research process.

**Qualitative Research and Constructivist Epistemology**

Qualitative research is congruent with the purpose and focus of this study because I am concerned with the affective experiences, thought processes, behavioral actions, and development of counselors in training as they move between objective ‘declarative knowledge’ and subjective ‘procedural knowledge’ in order to co-construct and synthesize meaning (Anderson, 1983; Crotty, 1998). Specifically, as counselors in training engage with their learning environments (online and in person) they interact with a broad range of counseling theories (which each have their own set of ‘objective’ ways of knowing, declarative knowledge, assumptions, values, and inherent worldviews), as well as, multi-layered contextual intersections reflected at both an individual and relational level (subjective procedural ways of knowing) to ultimately co-construct new meanings and awareness.

Epistemologies can be thought of as ways of knowing or belief systems based on principal philosophies of science that ultimately guide what we can know informing the foundation for my research design and interpretation (Crotty, 1998). When considering research design, it is critical that one’s epistemology, theory, methodology, and methods are congruent as these perspectives will shape the decision made in the research process and ultimately the trustworthiness of the research (Crotty, 1998).

Constructivist epistemology differs from positivism and objectivism as it seeks to move fluidly between objective and subjective ways of knowing and seeks to create synthesis between both objective and subjective truths. Conversely, researchers practicing from a positivist perspective believe that an objective reality exists
independent of subjective meaning and experiences and researchers’ goals are to ultimately separate out subjective interpretations and reveal the objective Truth (Crotty, 1998). Constructivism, on the other hand, emphasizes that there is no absolute ‘Truth’. Instead there are multiple valid or useful ‘truths’ and perspectives (Crotty, 1998; Lahman & Geist, 2008). Individuals create meaning based on their interactions with people and objects in their environment. This is not to suggest that these environmental variables would not exist without reciprocal meaning making, rather it is to say that there can be ‘no meaning without the mind’ (Crotty, 1998).

Crotty (1998) defines constructivism as the epistemological “view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p.42). Put another way, a constructivist might say that while a given object may have an objective meaning, the meaning of the object is ultimately interpreted and assigned by a person or group of people, who will filter the object through their subjective lived experiences (e.g., culture, development, relational interactions with others, etc.). Therefore, objects are only really meaningful with an understanding of the context in which the object is observed as different observers will likely construct different meanings depending on their context and lived experiences in relation to the object.

**Synthesis of Objective/Declarative and Subjective/Procedural Ways of Knowing**

Constructivist researchers seek to understand the meaning that individuals and/or groups of individuals make within the context of and interaction with their environments (Crotty, 1998). From a constructivist perspective one would seek to utilize context, lived
experiences, and meaning making processes as a frame to move between objective and subjective realities with the goal of uncovering multiple, potentially contradictory truths that create finer and finer categories to account for the intersections and relationships among multiple dimensions of factors that mutually and reciprocally influence one another. I am interested in multilayered and complex relational interactions inherent in the learning and development process and find that a constructivist perspective ‘fits’ well with my research aims.

Constructivism is well suited to explore complex social interactions while accounting for multiple useful perspectives and allowing one to move between subjective/declarative and objective/procedural ways of knowing (Anderson, 1983; Merriam, 2009). Allowing for assessment of the ‘fit’ of a given truth depending upon a specific context at a given time, ultimately creates a strong parallel with the focus and design of the hybrid counseling theories course that will serve as the learning environment for my study.
In the following section I discuss the various theoretical perspectives that I used to frame my qualitative portraiture case study and describe the ways in which these theories mutually and reciprocally inform one another and work in tandem with one another. The theoretical perspectives framing this study include: Systems/ecological theory, multicultural/social justice theory, contextual/critical/constructivist pedagogy, and cognitive complexity/reflective judgment development theory.
Ecological Systemic Theory

Ecological and systemic theories are useful when conceptualizing the context in which my qualitative portraiture case study will unfold and when considering the historical and socio-political context in which the counseling theories relevant to the course were developed. Broffenbrenner’s (1979) human ecology model provides a broad contextual and systemic framework that is beneficial to the research design of my study while also providing the flexibility to be inclusive of the multiple useful theoretical perspectives explored within the hybrid counseling theories course. This theory postulates that individual development does not occur in isolation; rather it is a complex bi-directional interaction between a person and various systems in which the person is a part. Therefore, individual development cannot be understood without awareness of the context of multiple ‘proximal’ and ‘distal’ systems, which include the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system (Broffenbrenner, 1992). Each systemic layer can be thought of as having the potential to mutually and reciprocally influence other levels of the system, as well as, the individual.
Individual counselors in training come with unique lived experiences and personal narratives that will become salient as they interact with one another and the hybrid learning environment. The micro-system in my case can be thought of as an individual CITs immediate context in which they interact. For example, the interactions among counselors in training in their small learning groups represent a micro-system level in my study (Broffenbrenner, 1992). The multiple microsystems in which CITs interact are connected by mesosystems. For example, a mesosystem might bridge a CITs small group interactions in the classroom (classroom microsystem) with the CITs interactions with members of their family microsystem while they are working on the class from home. The meso-system level represents the way in which micro-systems influence and interact
with one another. The hybrid learning environment can be conceptualized as both a microsystem and a mesosystem. The learning environment is a microsystem as it is the immediate environment in which a given counselor in training interacts. However, the learning environment is simultaneously comprised of multiple microsystems, such as small learning groups. As the learning environment connects these multiple microsystems it is also a mesosystem.

The exo-system includes the larger systems in which the meso- and macro-system are nested. Individuals do not directly interact with their exo-systems, however exo-system still have important influences at the micro and meso levels of the case (Brofenbrenner, 1992). For example, evolving CACREP accreditation standards (CACREP, 2009), with an increasing emphasis on multicultural and social justice advocacy competencies could be seen as operating at the exo-system level as these standards influenced the aims and goals of the course and the overall design of the hybrid learning environment at a local level. Similarly, university administrators and policy makers, who are not directly involved with students, yet whose decisions impact students substantially also comprise the exo-system. Educators, mentors and other influential figures who impacted the course instructors could also be conceptualized as members of student’s exo-system as students didn’t directly interact with them, however, their influence was present in the style and content of the course.

Micro, meso, and macro systems can all be thought of as subsystems existing within a larger cultural and systemic context called the macro-system. Macro-systems can be thought of as the broadest overarching system that is considered within the case and is sometimes referred to as the ‘socio-political level (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). For example,
the macro-system of U.S. higher education and changing needs and values within the U.S. higher education system related to technology and access could be considered to permeate all other subsystems in the case (Astin & Astin, 2000; Ikenberry, 2009).

Similarly, shifting socio-political movements in U.S. culture across time are considered as a macro-system that is used to contextualize the development and evolution of each of the theoretical perspectives explored throughout the hybrid counseling theories course.

**Ecological Systems Theory and Constructivism**

Utilizing a broad systemic theory, such as Brofenbrenner’s (1979, updated 1992) ecological systems theory provides the flexibility necessary to conceptualize the context of the case while also allowing for the general systems value of equifinality (Lee & Nelson, 2014), which is the idea that many routes have the potential to lead to the same outcome, thus the idea that many theories could be considered useful simultaneously and the usefulness of a given theory will be dependent on the intersections of salient intersectional factors at multiple systemic levels. Systemic theories are complementary to constructivism as both recognize the constructed nature of reality, multiple truths, and shared meanings (Lee & Nelson, 2014). Specifically, when using the lens of constructivism one recognizes that CITs and clients' worldviews are impacted significantly by the systems in which they are nested, especially culture and community (Crotty, 1998). Recognizing the subjective nature of reality helps counselor educators and counselors in training to avoid imposing judgments based on their own socially constructed realities, and instead allows them to embrace multiple theoretical perspectives and worldviews simultaneously (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). From a constructivist and systemic perspective, meanings regarding CIT development of
cognitive complexity will be co-constructed relationally through interactions that occur at
the micro and meso levels of the case and these meanings will naturally evolve across
context and time.

**Multicultural and Social Justice Theories**

In this section I operationalize multicultural and social justice theoretical perspectives and clarify my view that these theoretical perspectives have a substantial overlap and connection with an ecological systems perspective. Together these three theoretical perspectives had a significant influence on the instructional design of the hybrid learning environment and therefore the context of the case. In this section I will also summarize some of the major shifts in multicultural and social justice movements in relation to the counseling profession as these developments are influential to the theoretical context of the qualitative portraiture case study at exo and macro levels.

**Multicultural Theoretical Perspectives in Context**

Historically multicultural movements in counseling began to gain momentum following World War II during the late 1950’s to 1960’s paralleling the Civil Rights movement and widespread racial segregation and socio-political tension in the United States making salient race and ethnicity (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). A cultural metaphor that was commonly valued during this era described the U.S. as a ‘melting pot’ where immigrants could seek the American dream and financial opportunity as long as everyone assimilated and ‘melted’ into one ‘Americanized’ culture. During the 1960’s and 1970’s humanism and a cultural emphasis on individuality, freedom, autonomy, creativity, and authenticity strengthened the cultural belief that there were universal principles that connected and united all humans (Shostrom, 1971). This value manifested in counseling
as a belief that universal similarities between people should be emphasized and the idea that any empirically supported counseling theory could be applied universally in equally beneficial ways to people regardless of their ethnicity, culture, or salient intersectional identity factors (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). This approach to counseling was damaging in some contexts as it led to the pathologizing of some individuals, couples, and families when oppression, socio-political, and contextual factors were the root of their struggles.

The feminist movement in U.S. culture made gender salient as it gained traction amidst the socio-political climate of the late 1960’s and 1970’s. During this time period and following World War II women increasingly worked outside of the home and began to gain rights regarding control over their fertility (e.g., Roe v. Wade, 1973). In the 1980’s there was a backlash (Faludi, 1991) against the feminist movements that paralleled the Cold War and growing religious and fiscal conservatism in the United States in response to socio-political fears of ‘atheist communist’ Russia. Sexism in the United States began to be conceptualized by some feminists during this time period (e.g., Pharr, 1988) as intersecting with heterosexism due to the connection between patriarchal gender role expectations and what Pharr (1988) defined as compulsory heterosexuality (Hackman, 2013).

First and second wave feminist movements in the United States were criticized for too narrowly focusing on struggles of white women focusing almost solely on gender oppression while ignoring other important salient intersections (e.g., race, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status) that impact women’s lived experiences of oppression.

Implicit in this simplistic definition of women’s liberation is a dismissal of race and class as factors that, in conjunction with sexism, determine the
extent to which an individual will be discriminated against, exploited, or oppressed. Bourgeois white women interested in women’s rights issues have been satisfied with simple definitions for obvious reasons. Rhetorically placing themselves in the same social category as oppressed women, they were not anxious to call attention to race and class privilege. (hooks, 2013, p.340)

Multicultural counseling became increasing emphasized in the counseling profession in the 1990’s paralleling many contextual factors in U.S. culture that were making the intersectionality of various social identity factors more visible including multicultural and inclusivity movements within U.S. higher education systems and efforts to make higher education more accessible and multiculturally sensitive to a diverse range of student needs (Astin & Astin, 2000). During this time period the disability rights movement, and the passing of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990, amended 2008) made ableism salient along with other identity factors (e.g., socio-economic status, access to healthcare and access to education/career resources). Ability became conceptualized as an identity factor which is likely to change throughout the course of one’s life as a result of traumatic events (e.g., injury, war, or car accident) and across a person’s lifespan (e.g., due to aging).

The intersection between one’s disability and classism is a glaringly important example of how the issues may be intertwined. People with disabilities, particularly low income and people of color, face many barriers as the costs of health care, assistive technology, and digital hearing aids (to name a few) are often unattainable. This results in some receiving inadequate health care, limited employment opportunities, and significant learning disadvantages while attending school. (Castaneda, Hopkins, & Peters, 2013)

Counseling and Multicultural Approaches

Multicultural theoretical perspectives in counseling are based on the idea that we are all cultural beings that are impacted by the context, systems, and culture in which we
reside. One criticism of multicultural theoretical perspectives is that they have historically focused too heavily on single dimensions of identity. For example, various models of identity development (e.g., ethnic, gender, or sexual orientation identity development models) are helpful conceptualization tools, however, in isolation they are too narrow and do not allow for the complexity and intersectionality of multiple identity dimensions that become simultaneously salient in real-life contexts (Pope-Davis, Ligero, Liang, & Codrington, 2001). However, some authors have argued contemporary theories of multiculturalism are more inclusive of intersectional salience of multiple identity factors, especially when they are used in tandem with social justice theoretical approaches. For example, Sue and Sue (2013) operationally defined multicultural counseling as:

Both a helping role and process that uses modalities and defines goals consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of clients, recognizes client identities to include individual, group, and universal dimensions, advocates the use of universal and culture specific strategies and roles in the counseling process; and balances the importance of individualism and collectivism in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of client and client systems. (p. 46)

Social Justice Theoretical Perspectives in Context

In 2000 the American Counseling Association put together a task force to construct a framework that would later become the formalized counseling advocacy competencies (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). While perspectives consistent with social justice can be found throughout the counseling profession’s history it wasn’t until the early 2000’s that social justice advocacy began to gain traction as a formalized theoretical perspective in counselor education, literature, and practice (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). Awareness of oppression has increased steadily over the last seven years paralleling similar social justice movements at the exo-system level of US higher education (Milem,
Chang, & Antonio, 2005) and the macro-system level through socio-political shifts in the United States culture.

This is evidenced by contextual events such as the 2008 economic recession, the 2010 passing of Affordable Care Act, and the Occupy Wall Street movements beginning in 2011, all of which culminated to make socio-economic status, access to health care, and economic privilege in the United States culturally salient. In 2014, a series of protests and civil unrest occurred in Ferguson Missouri after police shot and killed an unarmed African American adolescent. This violence made intersections related to race, socio-economic status, and historic and current racism present within U.S. law enforcement and legal systems become culturally salient. The U.S. Justice Department later determined that the Ferguson Police Department had participated in misconduct against the citizens of Ferguson, Missouri through discriminatory practices against African-Americans and applying racial stereotypes through a pattern of unlawful conduct.

In October 2015, racial tensions exploded during a homecoming parade at the University of Missouri when Tim Wolfe, the university’s president, was confronted by a group of peaceful student protestors who demanded for racism to be addressed and disrupted within their campus community. Wolfe refused to get out of the backseat of his vehicle or dialogue with the students and it is alleged that Wolfe’s driver struck a student with the car when they refused to move, a claim that Wolfe denies (Woodhouse, November, 2015). Wolfe avoided apologizing for the incident until nearly a month later and refused to address growing student concerns that spread rapidly via social media regarding his failure to acknowledge or stand up to racism on the University of Missouri’s campus. These events culminated in a large number of student and faculty
protests demanding his resignation. Wolfe and the University of Missouri’s chancellor eventually gave in to the protesters and both resigned on November 9th, 2015 (Woodhouse, November, 2015).

Until this week at Missouri, no campus had seen unrest intensify to the point where the university’s major athletic team joined the protests. In Missouri constituencies that are often disconnected -- everyone from faculty to graduate groups to lawmakers to student athletes -- have been united in seeking what they say is a better response to racism on campus. (Woodhouse, November, 2015)

During the 2008-2015-time period LGBT movements in the United States experienced increased visibility and support making sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, heterosexism, and heteronormativity more salient in U.S. culture. For example, the 2015 Supreme Court ruling which made same sex marriage legal in all 50 states.

Counseling and Social Justice Approaches

Social justice theoretical perspectives in counseling can be operationally defined as a multidimensional approach to counseling that is

…related to a growing need to connect human development issues with toxic environmental conditions. Environmental factors such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism can delay people’s growth and development and hinder people’s ability to reach their potential. This is especially true for clients who have been historically marginalized in society such as people of color, those in poverty, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Helping clients recognize the presence of oppressive factors is important because it prevents them from blaming themselves for their plight. (Ratts, 2009, p. 163-164)

Social justice theoretical perspectives can be conceptualized as building upon multicultural perspectives in counseling, advocates for social justice theoretical perspectives would state that, while it is necessary for counselors to assess the ‘fit’ of a given theoretical approach to a client’s worldviews, values, and contexts, it is equally
important to intervene at meso, exo, and macro levels (Brofrenbrenner, 1992) in order to disrupt oppressive community and socio-political factors that impede client growth and development (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). In other words,

The recent growth of the multicultural and social justice counseling perspectives can be attributed to the growing realization that office-based interventions that ignore the social milieu may have daunting limitations. [As well as] an increasing understanding that helping approaches focusing entirely on the individual without regard for environmental factors may not be in the best interest of those we serve. (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010)

**Congruence of Epistemological and Theoretical Assumptions**

Constructivist epistemology is congruent with multicultural and social justice theoretical perspectives as both emphasize the constructed nature of reality, the validity and usefulness of multiple perspectives, and an awareness of context including the ways in which context can shape people’s interpretations and meaning making processes (Guiffrida, 2005; Steele, 2008). Constructivist contextual and critical pedagogical approaches are also congruent with systemic, multicultural, and social justice, theoretical perspectives (Manis, 2012). Ford and Dillard (1996) described the process of becoming multiculturally sensitive and aware of context as “more than just a learning process, it is a socialization process that involves qualitative degrees of self-development” (p. 5). Similarly, Sleeter, Torres, & Laughlin (2004) highlighted the necessity of intentionally scaffolding this process for CITs so that they can develop the self-reflexivity skills necessary to understand clients’ lived experiences and salient intersectional factors relative to their own social location and understandings of power, privilege and oppression.
Fostering Multicultural/Social Justice Competency

While base-line levels of multicultural and social justice advocacy competency (Lewis et al., 2011) seem critical for counselors in training to develop prior to their work with clients there has not been adequate research exploration regarding how counselor educators can scaffold instructional course and curriculum design to foster this development. Odegard and Vereen (2010) conducted a grounded theory exploring counselor educator’s efforts to foster multicultural and social justice advocacy competency through their courses and found that counselor educators used a wide variety of didactic and experiential approaches that thematically centered around increasing self-awareness and reflexivity, facilitating a paradigm shift in ways of understanding (i.e., helping CITs to adopt a constructivist rather than positivist/post-positivist frame), and designing and re-structuring curriculum to meet the changing developmental needs of counselors in training as they navigate this developmental processes.

Despite these emergent core tenets, the authors ultimately concluded that much of “how counselor educators teach these constructs to students is a mystery” (Odegard & Vereen, 2010, p. 145). They go on to suggest that a more, “detailed focus on curriculum and resource development has the potential to enhance the training and development of emerging counselors” (Odegard & Vereen, 2010, p. 145). Hays, Dean & Chang (2007) suggested several approaches that counselor educators to consider when sequencing activities that foster CITs development of multicultural and advocacy competency into their instructional and curriculum design. Counselor educators strive to:

Foster a paradigm shift; promote counselor growth in the classroom through experiential activities; create a safe environment in which topics of privilege and oppression could be actively discussed; honor individual perceptions rather than stereotyping groups; be upfront about personal beliefs, attitudes, and agendas; engage in continuing education around these topics;
infuse this material into all classes; specifically list multicultural topics in
the syllabi; and acknowledge other types of diversity beyond race. (Hays et
al., 2007, p.85)

In reviewing a large body of counseling literature specific to encouraging
multicultural competency and social justice advocacy among counselors in training,
Manis (2012) concluded that both the counseling conceptual literature and empirical
research suggests that critical pedagogy that attends to client context offers a valuable
framework for training counselors. Manis (2012) also concluded that within critical
pedagogical frameworks counselor educators tend to prioritize experiential and service
learning strategies as resources for encouraging CIT development. Arthur and Achenbach
(2002) also found experiential strategies to fostering CIT multicultural awareness to be
effective in counselor education courses, especially when they were intentionally
designed to support counselors in training to develop self-reflexivity as well as relational
and contextual awareness. These authors also identified debriefing as a potentially helpful
process in which counselor educators collaborate with CITs to help them to begin to
transfer and evaluate new self-awareness and realizations into applied ways of being,
conceptualizing, and intervening with clients and within client contexts and systems
complexity development in a skills based counseling course and found that students who
engaged in more experiential learning showed greater advances when compared to a
control group that did not receive the opportunities to engage in experiential applied
classroom learning.
The Recursive Superstructure

Figure 13. The Recursive Superstructure.

Taken together these conceptual and research publications offer significant support and rationale for the use of Recursive Superstructure (see Figure 11 above) as a conceptual framework to identify and design pedagogical and experiential strategies that will allow CITs opportunities to dynamically cycle through processes of self-reflexivity and cognitive complexity development as they encounter new socio-cultural intersections and become increasingly attuned to context. The cyclical processes represented in the
Recursive Superstructure are highly consistent with theories of counselor development (e.g., Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010) as well as theories related to the development of multicultural and social justice competency (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014) and cognitive complexity development (Granello, 2000).

For example, Granello (2000) conceptualized counselor cognitive complexity development through Perry’s (1970) model. Perry’s (1970) research observed that as students advanced in their university classes there were distinct shifts in their cognitive perceptions related the ways in which they epistemologically approached knowing and understanding, their expectations of the role of educators in the creation of knowledge, and their expectations of themselves within their self-directed learning processes.

Perry believed that the epistemological assumptions made by the students not only revealed their perceptions about the world of knowledge, but these assumptions also provided insight into the reasoning that they used to organize and evaluate these perceptions… He delineated a series of nine development positions along a continuum. These nine positions can be condensed to four major categories: dualistic, multiplistic, relativistic, and committed relativistic thinking. Dualistic thinking, is characterized by a dichotomous structure in which the world is viewed in absolute either-or terms…In the second category, multiplistic thinking, the dualistic structure is discarded and replaced by uncertainty...The third category is relativistic thinking. Knowledge is seen as contextual, and decisions are made based on the best available information. In the fourth category, committed relativism, individuals take lifelong moral and ethical stances on the basis of their beliefs and learn that they need values, along with knowledge, to make choices in life (Granello, 2000, p. 281).

Simpson, Dalgaard, & O’Brien (1986) applied Perry’s (1970) model to medical students and found that they started out in dualistic stages of development and moved towards multiplistic stages, however, when challenged with new contexts (e.g., residency) they returned to earlier dualistic stages and started the developmental process of moving toward multiplistic and relativistic thinking over again. Granello (2000) used this concept of re-cycling through development to inform her quantitative study as
Simpson et al.’s (1986) results, if generalizable to counseling students, seems to suggest that it is likely that educators/supervisors and counselors will have more refined and nuanced cognitive maps in domains of client intersections to which they have had greater exposure and may return to more dualistic ways of thinking when presented with divergent contexts and intersectional client factors. A hypothesis which was supported by Granello’s (2000) data.

One of the more interesting findings, if validated by further research, may be that students who are cognitively advanced in other areas of their lives regress to earlier developmental stages when they begin to pursue their studies in the graduate program in counselor education. To the extent that this is true, this may help counselor educators understand the learners who enter counseling education programs. Adult learners, who bring a wealth of experience and are cognitively advanced in other areas in their lives, may have to re-progress through these stages as they relate to counseling. (Granello, 2000)

These research findings (Granello, 2000) regarding CITs re-progression through stages of development seems consistent with the re-cycling nature of the Recursive Superstructure. Further, Granello (2000) found that most counselors in training came in at the multiplistic stages of development and that while advances were quantitatively small, the largest advances in cognitive complexity development occurred during the latter part of CITs master’s programs and was thought to be related to applied counseling experiences with clients (e.g., internship or practicum). This finding is also consistent in supporting experiential applied learning as potentially increasing cognitive complexity development for counselors in training and demonstrates that Perry’s (1970) model may be useful in understanding counselor cognitive complexity development.

While these findings seem promising, it is important to note that while researchers (e.g., Granello, 2002; Lyons & Hazler, 2002) have found preliminary support for cognitive complexity development across graduate programs for counselor educators and
CITs, these developmental changes have been relatively small and difficult to measure quantitatively. Further, it may be especially difficult to capture these developmental shifts because they tend to be highly domain specific (Welfare & Borders, 2010) and potentially re-cursive in nature (Auxier et al., 2003; Granello, 2000). It seems probable that counselor educators who want to further understand development of cognitive complexity would benefit from further operationalization and more detailed conceptualization of what the various levels of this developmental process may look like and how it is best facilitated beyond providing opportunities for experiential and problem based learning. This is further justified by Welfare and Border’s 2010 study in on domain specific shifts in counselor cognitive complexity in which they found that experience working with clients seems to have a stronger impact on the ability to recognize many client characteristics than it does on the ability to integrate them. It may be that exposure to more and a greater variety of clients over time readily highlights new and relevant individual characteristics but does not necessarily lead counselors to see new, meaningful connections among those characteristics. (Welfare & Borders, 2010, p.173)

Perry’s (1970) model and Kitchner and King’s (1981) model can be combined to create a more comprehensive model with finer intersections to conceptualize CIT cognitive complexity development. Perry’s (1970) model is compatible with Kitchner & King (1981) reflective judgment model as they share the idea that cognitive complexity, which Kitchner & King (1981) term reflective judgment may be closely related to epistemological shifts in the assumptions regarding ways of knowing and understanding. For example, CITs beliefs regarding what constitutes ‘truth’ and to what degree of certainty something may be known (i.e., tolerance for ambiguity). This combined model fits with the large general patterns of counselor development articulated by Stoltenberg & McNeil (2010), is consistent with the research on constructivist, contextual, and critical
pedagogy in cultivating systemic and contextual awareness in addition to multicultural and social justice advocacy competency and fits with the Recursive Superstructure as it plays a role in determining the entry point and step-wise sequence that a counselor educator might employ to maximize developmental tailoring to counselor in training learning needs.

**Anticipatory Template: Cognitive Complexity Developmental Model**

When combined, Perry (1970) model and Kitchner and King’s (1981) model create a more nuanced and supportive structure for operationalizing and identifying development across divergent contexts and intersections in a flexible way that allows the same counselor in training to be represented across multiple developmental domains simultaneously dependent upon divergent contexts and intersections of client factors. Both models assume that ways of knowing and understanding can be observed in the ways in which students talk through complex situations, the factors that they identify as relevant to understanding and knowing, and the strategies students employ to make meaning and inform decision making. Therefore, a CIT who demonstrates contextual awareness and multi-layered understandings of client intersections in one area (e.g., intersections of gender, body-image, and peer and family pressure to be thin) may not demonstrate the same level of complexity when working with a client presenting with divergent contexts and intersections (e.g., intersections of sexual orientation, spirituality, and family pressure to be straight). An example of my anticipatory template and conceptualization of CITs at various stages of the combined model (Kitchner & King, 1981; Perry, 1970) is provided in Appendix L. I created quotations illustrating the way in
which I view cognitive complexity at various intersections to make transparent the way I understand the process of cognitive complexity development for counselors in training.

**Dualistic Domain**

In this stage experiences are considered a global reality and knowledge is understood declaratively and absolutely. Something is understood as either correct or incorrect, as black or white, with nothing in between (Kitchner & King, 1981; Perry, 1970).

**Reality**

In this sub-stage one’s beliefs are seen as entirely true and values and worldviews are conceptualized as a complete and accurate reflection of reality (Kitchner & King, 1981).

**True False Claims**

In this sub-stage knowledge still is seen as either fully correct or fully incorrect, however, the experiences that form the foundation for a given CITs ways of knowing are supported with the opinions of others that they subjectively deem as experts or valuable sources of knowledge (Kitchner & King, 1981; Perry, 1970). Counselors in training at this level will often express frustration that experts (e.g., educators and supervisors) are unable to determine an absolute truth or linear step by step guide to engage in the counseling process (Granello, 2002).

**Multiplistic Domain**

The transition to the multiplistic domain represents a recognition that two seemingly opposing things are sometimes both ‘true’ and may result in indecision and feelings of uncertainty (Kitchner & King, 1981; Perry, 1970). This stage is often characterized by cognitive dissonance and contradictory thoughts, feelings, and
behaviors. For example, a CIT that complains that their client continues to put them in an expert role and expects them to provide quick-fix solutions to complex dilemmas while they demand that their supervisor tell them concretely how to effectively intervene with the client.

**True Reality, False Claims, and Uncertainty**

Counselors in training at this sub-stage are either completely certain or momentarily uncertain. It is hypothesized that counselors in training at this sub-stage will heavily imitate subjectively identified experts who they are sure are correct and will oscillate between high and low confidence (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). However, when expert’s knowledge fails to align with CITs beliefs, values, and worldviews they will use their experiences and biases to fill gaps in understanding to make meaning.

**Reality Exists but Cannot be Known**

In this sub-domain knowledge is evaluated based on context and lived experiences of self and others as well as shaped by biases to which one continues to remain unaware of. During this sub-stage counselors in training will begin to become more aware of the self in relation to others and context. They increasingly value multiple perspectives and are better able to tolerate ambiguity. They recognize that declarative knowledge cannot be applied to every situation due to contextual factors and they often latch on to the phrase ‘it depends’, said in good humor rather than out of frustration. Knowledge becomes more procedural and perspectives can only be ‘true’ or ‘useful’ to a certain degree in context. This generally is thought to occur during the second half of CITs master’s degree programs (Granello, 2000) and becomes increasingly apparent as CITs have more chances to bridge the theory to practice gap through applied clinical
experiences (Fong, Borders, Ethington, & Pitts, 1997; Granello, 2000). Counselors in training operating from this sub-domain could be conceptualized as continuing to fluctuate between self-doubt and confidence and high and low levels of motivation (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992), however, their self-reflexivity and awareness of their strengths and limitations also become more consistent and accurate (Auxier et al., 2003).

The hypothesis that counselors in training temporarily return to lower levels of motivation and experience more self-doubt could instead be conceptualized as a normal part of the recursive developmental process in which CITs encounter new contexts and intersecting client factors and return to more dichotomous ways of thinking as a first step in re-constructing systemic ways of understanding to fit new contexts and intersections.

**Relativistic Domain**

The transition to the relativistic domain represents a shift in epistemological understanding and a recognition that context and personal lived experiences shape one’s meaning making processes and understandings. Knowledge acquisition becomes more fluid and is seen as dynamically changing based on the best available information at a given time (Kitchner & King, 1981; Perry, 1970).

**Personal Interpretation of Individual Realities**

In this sub-domain knowledge is seen as procedural and subjectively based on personal interpretations and understandings within specific contexts and systems (Kitchner & King, 1981). Counselors in training operating from this sub-domain are more self-reflexive and are able to use this self-awareness to correct for biases so that can more flexibly shift their ways of understanding to fit with the situation. At this sub-stage it is hypothesized that counselors in training will begin to exhibit greater differentiation
within specific contexts and intersections (i.e., more intersectional and contextual interconnected complexity) and evidence can begin to be integrated and synthesized within these specific domains through prolonged engagement. Stoltenberg and McNeil (2010) characterize this developmental stage as involving increasing levels of autonomy and self-directed learning. I hypothesize that CITs operating from this stage are more confident in their ability to self-initiate their cycling through the Recursive Superstructure and are able to seek procedural knowledge to prolong the cycling process. Research seems to indicate that CITs rarely reach this sub-domain during their master’s programs as it is thought to be correlated with exposure through direct counseling experiences (Granello, 2000).

**Reality Assumed**

The reality assumed sub-domain represents the highest developmental level conceptualized in the combined model (Kitchner & King, 1981; Perry, 1970). While higher levels of reflective judgment/cognitive complexity development have been articulated (e.g., committed relativistic in Perry’s 1970 model) they have not been adequately empirically supported (Granello, 2000). I hypothesize that the committed relativistic level was included in the original model to symbolically represent an ideal level of functioning that one can strive towards across multiple domains and intersections. However, it seems likely that because development is both an aim and an ongoing process, one’s ability to think in relativistic terms will not consistently transfer to every new context and intersection. For that reason, I did not include the committed relativistic developmental level in my conceptualization. In other words, I view development at its core as a circular and recursive process and the idea that one could arrive at an ideal developmental destination is fundamentally at odds with the way in
which I conceptualize developmental processes as recursively expanding out exponentially across endless intersectional combinations and contexts. Therefore, one’s strengths as a counselor, or counselor educator/supervisor, might ultimately be found in the awareness that reality is assumed based on the factors of which one is aware of requiring intentionality to keep one’s biases in check through self-reflexivity processes that allow for more factors and intersections to surface (Borders, 2009).

I hypothesize that counselors, counselor educators, and counseling supervisors functioning through the reality assumed sub-domain operate from an integrated internal map (i.e., symbolically represented through the Recursive Superstructure) that contains the inductive systematic qualitative procedures necessary to co-construct multifaceted patterned conceptual formulations of client and counselor struggles in context (Eells, et al., 2005; Kemer et al., 2014). I also hypothesize that counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors functioning through the reality assumed sub-domain are better able to recognize thematic patterns at multiple systemic levels and are therefore better able to collaboratively identify strategies for intervention that have the potential to disrupt oppressive forces at various systemic levels beyond the individual (e.g., meso, exo, and macro).

Counselor educators and supervisors operating from the reality assumed sub-domain may find that as they are exposed to these new ways of understanding counselor development they are increasingly motivated to systemically disrupt the ways that counselors have been traditionally taught, the ways in which courses are designed, and the ways in which counseling curriculum is interconnected and scaffolded with the recognition that such efforts could produce more accelerated development for counselors
in training and more multiculturally competent and socially just services for clients. This realization and the resultant efforts to critically transform counseling pedagogy are certainly not unique to myself, as these efforts has been evidenced by consistent shifts in pedagogical approaches toward constructivist, contextual, and critical foundations documented in the counseling literature (Manis, 2012).

At early stages of development counselor educators and supervisors are striving to provide multiple opportunities for ongoing self-reflexivity and applied experiential learning while transparently lending CITs their ways of understanding to help them see the dynamic and endless ways in which one can navigate the Recursive Superstructure. It is counselor in training experiences of collaboratively moving repeatedly through these mental frameworks with the support and challenging of their instructors and peers that serve as the epistemological foundation on which the CITs will later adapt and collaboratively build their own more nuanced Recursive Superstructures that will become more specific to the clients that they serve and their specific systemic context (e.g., agency setting).

I hypothesize, based on the literature and my interpretations, that counselor educators and supervisors are already making significant efforts to engage in these identified processes in their classrooms and that when provided with the Recursive Superstructure and additional examples of strategies to enhance these developmental processes through both in-person and online methods they will creatively synthesize and create learning environments and experiences that are tailored to their unique contexts and needs. I believe counselor educators and supervisors are in a prime position to disrupt status quo systems of counselor education as their ‘expertise’ and most refined
conceptual maps will likely be found in the domain of facilitating development of beginning level counselors. It is possible and understandable that some of the hesitancy seen in counselor educators with regard to using technology based pedagogical strategies may be attributed to counselor educators returning to a dualistic framework as they encounter novel contexts with novel intersections. My qualitative portraiture case study is a step by step resource detailing one way in which counselor educators might apply this process to a hybrid counseling theories course. With exposure, pro-longed engagement, self-reflexivity and experience educators may be able to generalize these concepts to other courses.

Qualitative Portraiture Case Study Methodology

In the following sections I will describe elements central to qualitative case study methodology and portraiture methodology, the substantial overlap that exists between the two methodologies, and how they can be synthesized to create a methodological approach that interweaves the guiding frameworks, researcher stances, and theoretical perspectives that support, scaffold, and shape my research design and methods.

Qualitative Case Study Methodology

My study was particularly well suited to a qualitative case study design (Merriam, 2009) as I was interested in exploring counselor development of cognitive complexity across time within the specific context of CITs interacting with a hybrid theories of counseling learning environment. I conducted a pilot case study in the hybrid counseling theories course in the Fall of 2015 (see Appendix K for an in depth description of instructional design and the pilot case). The participants in my qualitative portraiture case study were consenting counselors in training enrolled in a counseling weekend format
theories course at an extended campus of a University in the Rocky Mountain region in Spring of 2016. The counseling theories course represents a holistic case as it is a *bounded system* with clear parameters related to time and setting (Yin, 2009). I chose a multiple case design by beginning with a pilot case in Fall of 2015.

I chose to pilot the case (prior to my proposal defense) due to the technical complexity and time commitment involved in co-constructing a hybrid learning environment and in order to ensure that the data collection methods were viable in terms of both the content of data that I am collecting and the process that I will follow to collect the data. Piloting the case was necessary for a number of reasons related to developing instructional design skills in online settings and the need to practice and refine my teaching methods through a novel pedagogical approach. Merriam (2009) notes that case studies are commonly used in education to understand and improve pedagogical innovations. Piloting the case allowed me opportunities to develop theoretical and conceptual clarification for my research approach (Yin, 2009), to refine my research questions, and to dynamically respond to CIT developmental learning needs while simultaneously improving the contextual learning environment for my case study that I conducted during the Spring 2016 semester.

My case study could be considered instrumental (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995) as it focused on CIT development of cognitive complexity within the context of a hybrid counseling theories learning environment. In this way the case itself is not the central focus, rather cognitive complexity development and theoretical application within the hybrid learning environment are the focus. This is consistent with instrumental case study as instrumental case study provides insight into something other than the case itself while
providing room to explore tentative hypotheses based on theoretical assumptions (Merriam, 2009). It is important to note that in replicating my case study in the Spring 2016 semester I was not necessarily seeking to generalize as the course did not represent an exact replication of the pilot study and included contextual differences (e.g., the number of CITs enrolled in the course, changes in online components of course design specific to time allotment for videos/online discussion, relational dynamics among counselors in training, gaps in learning addressed through the just in time teaching mini lectures, etc.). Despite contextual differences across cases many factors remained consistent (e.g., the instructors teaching the course, the videos/experiential activities/assessments completed in the context of the course, etc.) and I hypothesized that there would likely some consistent themes across cases, as well as, salient differences between cases, which are equally of interest. Yin (2009) offers a helpful list of criteria that I utilized to determine qualitative case study as a congruent and useful approach for my current study. The criteria utilized included the following elements:

1. The study explores a contemporary phenomenon in depth in a real-world context through one case or multiple cases
2. The boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident
3. The study benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis
4. The research questions are *how* or *why* questions and are explanatory in nature,
5. The research questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time
6. The case involves the triangulation of multiple data sources (Yin, 2009, p.16-17)

The case fits nicely within Yin ‘s (2009) criterion as I used a single case (the hybrid counseling theories course in the Spring 2016 semester) to explore CITs cognitive complexity development within the real world context of a hybrid learning environment.
Furthermore, the overlapping nature of my phenomenon of interest, (i.e., cognitive complexity development) and the context of the case, (i.e., interactions within the hybrid learning environment) were not easily distinguishable as they are mutually and reciprocally interrelated. In other words, the phenomenon of interest cannot be easily separated from the context in which it unfolds. The hybrid learning environment was scaffolded based on a clear set of theoretical propositions that directly led into triangulated data collection procedures utilized in the case (i.e., qualitative interviews, pre-, mid-, post course questionnaires, pre and post photo elicitation activity, and CITs online reflection journals and discussion responses completed throughout course).

The research questions that guided my study were how questions that are explanatory in nature and deal with tracing operational links over time in an effort to capture small shifts in developmental processes. Schramm (1971) sums up why a qualitative case study methodology is congruent with the heart of what I explored in this study “The essence of a case study, and central tendency among all types of case study, is that [case study] tries to illuminate a set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what results” (p.254).

Portraiture Methodology

Portraiture is congruent with both qualitative case study methodology and systemic, multicultural and social justice theoretical perspectives due to the shared perception “that the only way to interpret people’s actions and perspectives is in context” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 11). Portraiture is a method of inquiry that seeks to illuminate and explore scientific and artistic intersections through a process of systematic investigation and holistic representation. My goal in using portraiture as a qualitative methodology was to explore, interpret, and represent the multi-layered and
relational nature of CITs cognitive complexity developmental processes through situating this development within the relational and cultural context and instructional learning environment in which it unfolds. Portraiture methodology has often been described as a type of qualitative case study methodology (Merriam, 1988, Yin, 2009). However, portraiture methodology diverges from other forms of qualitative case study research due to the way in which the researcher’s voice is intentionally intertwined with the participant’s voices to capture the relationship between researcher and participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Portraiture utilizes the metaphor of the process of interaction that takes place between an artist and subject in conceptualizing the essence of a person’s multidimensional reality and equates this to the meaning making process that unfolds between researcher and participants. Lawrence-Lightfoot recalls when she first saw portraits of herself that she viewed as shaped by her interactions and relationship with the artist who painted them.

In addition to portraying my image, the piece expressed the perspective of the artist and was shaped by the evolving relationship between the artist and myself. I also recognized that in searching for the essence, in moving beyond the surface image, the artist was both generous and tough, both skeptical and receptive. The interaction between the artist and the subject was rich with meaning and resonant and [this relationship was] crucial to the success and authenticity of the rendered piece. More than a decade later, when I was searching for a form of inquiry that might capture the complexity and aesthetics of human experiences, I had the benefit of those early experiences as an artist’s subject from which to develop my methodological tools. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 4)

Portraiture can be considered a qualitative methodology rather than a method as it comprises its own set of research methods, strategies of research design, data collection processes, analytic strategies, and approaches to representation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). While portraiture has substantial overlap with qualitative case study
methodology and narrative approaches it can be distinguished from qualitative case study
due to its central focus on goodness (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Goodness
promotes a wellness and strength based perspective by recognizing context and the
positive intentions of individuals and is consistent with core values of the counseling
profession (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). Starting with a foundation of goodness seemed
especially potent for my qualitative portraiture case study because it illuminates the
dialectic nature of the lifelong pursuit of growth and development, which allowed me to
uncover counter experiences of vulnerability and struggle. Paradoxically it is these
experiences of vulnerability and struggle which ultimately allow resilience and
perseverance to emerge so that the ‘goodness’ in CITs developmental journeys can
ultimately be held up higher in the process.

    The researcher who asks first ‘what is good here?’ is likely to absorb a very
different reality than the one that is on a mission to discover the sources of
failure…In examining the dimensionality and complexity of goodness there
will, of course, be ample evidence of vulnerability and weakness. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9)

Portraiture can be further distinguished from qualitative case study methodology
based on portraiture’s intentional utilization of metaphors and symbols and a focus on
evocative personal narratives in order to create resonance and reflexivity for the broadest
audience possible (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture methodology views
human nature through a lens of context and goodness and focuses on evocative personal
narratives, metaphors, and symbolism allowing researchers to distill meaning and deepen
relationships thereby igniting personal connections, reflexivity, discourse, and
development. I applied this focus on context and goodness, evocative personal narratives,
metaphors, and symbols to every layer of instructional design within the hybrid learning
environment in order to maximize opportunities for personal connection and resonance with diverse contextual intersections.

For example, when examining the content and structure of the online learning environment (http://www.counseling.education/counseling/theories/theories_class.html) symbolism, metaphor, and a focus on context can be observed heavily throughout the mind map and mini-lecture videos. Each theoretical force also has a context video designed to attend specifically to the historical, cultural, and systemic contexts in which the theory developed and evolved. The applied counseling demonstration sessions CITs engaged with in the online learning environment use symbolism through text to distill the essence of the meaning and intention of specific counseling skills as they are demonstrated and the question slides facilitate opportunities for ongoing self-reflexivity and evaluation of skill use paralleling techniques utilized in live Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role play demonstration sessions (Dollarhide et al., 2007). Lastly, the applied client scenario videos provided online versions of evocative personal narratives that foster exposure to diverse contextual intersections and allow CITs opportunities to assess the ‘fit’ of a theoretical approach at multiple levels frontloading them to participate at the meso-level during problem based experiential classroom learning. In other words, students move between the microsystems that comprise the student learning independently from a remote location and the microsystems that comprise small groups in the classroom.

**Context and Illuminating Emergent Themes**

There are five central element of portraiture methodology: context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole. Aesthetic whole will be further explored in Chapter IV through the case based themes and the ways in which each theme
clustering comes together to interact and influence one another through my interpretations and representations of student’s cognitive complexity developmental processes. Voice and relationship will be further explored through my researcher stance and again in Chapter V. However, context and data analysis strategies (i.e., illuminating emergent themes) will be expound upon now in order to further clarify my methods.

Context can be conceptualized as a rich, thick description of the setting in which the case takes place and involves multiple systemic levels and intersections. I have already contextualized the case as unfolding within the hybrid learning environment which was designed to operate through contextual critical constructivist pedagogy and the Recursive Superstructure. The theoretical perspectives (i.e., multicultural and social justice) encountered within the Recursive Superstructure were also contextualized within the historical, socio-political, and cultural exo and macro systems in which they developed and evolved. In the following section I will elaborate on the physical, geographical, and temporal context of the case.

**Framing of my Qualitative Portraiture Case Study**

My qualitative portraiture case study can be conceptualized as being bound by time, place, and location (Yin, 2009) as the participants were CITs enrolled in the counseling of theories course in the Spring 2016 semester. Counselors in training completed the theories course as part of a required sequence of courses within a CACREP accredited counseling master’s program housed within an extended campus program branch of a mid-size public university residing within the rocky mountain western region of the United States. The extended studies campus is located in a densely populated urban city. Counselors in training who attend classes at the extended campus
generally work full time while completing master’s degrees in counseling during nights and weekends. The internal setting of the case was the hybrid learning environment. The hybrid learning environment included both the online and in person elements of the counseling theories course, which were delivered over two weekends that were two weeks apart.

**Changes Between Pilot Study and Current Study**

The hybrid counseling theories course in the Spring 2016 semester was implemented in a very similar way to the pilot course (see Appendix K), however, each course had unique students enrolled at unique times, thus, in keeping with the constructivist foundation and the multicultural, ecological, and systemic framing of the Recursive Superstructure each iteration of the course was not expected to be a mirror image of the other. For example, the number of students enrolled in the counseling theories course for the spring 2016 semester was 16 compared to 23 in the fall 2015 pilot case. The number of students enrolled in the class changed the amount of air time that each counselor in training received in the large group during processing which potentially altered the way in which CIT experienced the course. Similarly, using techniques such as just in time teaching (Educause, 2012) means that courses cannot mirror one another. Also, I felt an ethical obligation to provide students with the highest quality learning experience possible. As such, I incorporated student feedback across weekends within the pilot course and I incorporated feedback from the pilot course into the spring 2016 course. This is consistent with the inductive nature of qualitative research.

The instructional structure for my qualitative portraiture case study followed a highly similar design to those which are detailed in the pilot study in Appendix K.
However, three primary changes were made to the course design for my current study. The first change was an adjustment to the required readings to be completed before the course. In the master’s program in which the case unfolded instructors could require CITs to complete eight hours of work prior to the onset of a course. Generally, this is in the form of readings that must be completed prior to the start of the course. For my current study the reading assignments have been cut down to key portions of the textbook that I determined to have the most relevant information about a specific theory. The readings that were trimmed down were then supplemented with videos. Counselors in training were asked to view the following videos prior to the start of class: (1) Psychoanalytic context video; (2) Behaviorism context video; (3) REBT context video; (4) CBT Context video. Additionally, counselors in training were asked to pick two journal prompt questions from two of the four videos and to journal for a total of thirty minutes across the two questions. These readings and videos were calculated to take under eight hours as extra time (2x the original length of the video) was allotted for each video. This adjustment to the required readings was made based on student feedback during the pilot study; they found the videos to be more efficient for their knowledge acquisition than the textbook and that they would have preferred to have access to videos prior to the onset of the course to accompany assigned readings.

The second change that occurred in the current study also involved the extra time that was determined to be needed for the videos, as the majority of participants from the pilot study reported pausing the videos to take notes and watching parts of the videos multiple times. I have addressed these time concerns in the current study through adjusting the calculations of the amount of time allotted for each video (x2) and thus the
number of videos that CITs were required to watch during the online Saturdays. Counselors in training were expected to engage with videos, reflections journaling, and small group discussions during the Saturdays for a total of 7.5 hours. If they did not use the full allotted time for the required videos they were able to use their extra time to watch additional videos, complete additional reflection journals, or provide additional responses to their peers’ reflection journals and discussion responses that were posted in their small group discussion boards. In this way counselors in training were able to set the pace for their online learning and had some control over their learning needs.

The third change that took place between the pilot and the current study involved spending less time (40 minutes) engaging with each Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role play and then allowing twenty-five minutes for CITs to role play. This was based on student feedback that following the Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role plays and client conceptualization activities for each theoretical perspective they wanted a chance to try out role playing the theory in their small groups. During the second Friday of the pilot study the primary instructor allotted time for the counselors in training to role play solution focused skills in their small groups while instructors walked around and provided feedback and CITs reported that they found this to be useful to their learning. Counselors in training who participated in the pilot study also requested additional role play time following the Transparent Counseling Pedagogy activity as they were starting to practice these skills aloud during session pauses and wanted more time to try out what they would say next as the counselor. As a result, in the current study additional time was allotted for CITs to experientially apply the theories in their small groups (3-4 students)
through additional small group role plays following Transparent Counseling Pedagogy demonstration sessions.

**Methods for Study**

The planning of the Spring 2016 hybrid theories course began with several meetings between the three instructors (i.e., the primary instructor, the co-instructor, and myself) in order to talk through the adjustments that would need to be made to the current course design based on the pilot study. I selected the primary instructor and co-instructor to serve as peer reviewers for my current study as they have both been trained as counselor educators, they both have had prior experience teaching counseling theories courses (including the pilot course), they are both familiar with qualitative research approaches, and because they were both intimately familiar with the unfolding of the case as co-instructors of the course. As peer reviewers they helped to examine my study by providing input on adjustments made throughout the process of teaching the course and by providing their perspectives on my tentative interpretations of the emergent themes from the pilot study, including how these might impact our teaching strategies utilized in the Spring 2016 course.

**Pre-Course Questionnaire**

The pre-course questionnaire included a set of questions related to CITs expectations for the course (see Appendix E), the theoretical orientation scale (Smith, 2010), and a photo elicitation activity where students were asked to select a photo and three words that they felt represent their thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others. The pre-course questionnaire provided rich data regarding CITs values, worldviews, and theoretical perspectives at the onset of the course which helped with understanding their processes of cognitive complexity development across time.
Reflection Journals and Discussion Responses

During the online Saturdays counselors in training watched videos and then selected and completed self-reflexivity journal prompts (See Appendix C). After completing reflection journal prompts, counselors in training shared their reflection journals in online small group discussion boards and responded to one another’s reflections in relation to the reflection journals and applied client scenario videos. In terms of understanding counselor cognitive complexity development, the reflection journals and discussion responses were valuable as they provided rich data detailing CITs ways of understanding and interacting with the theories across time as they begin to consider alternative perspectives and the influence of their own values and biases. These journals also captured changes in the process of how counselors in training think about applying theories to complex client cases, as they encountered more theories, unique client contexts and struggles, and differing peer perspectives across the duration of the course.

Mid-Course Questionnaire

The mid-course questionnaire was intended to follow up on the verbal ongoing check ins with CITs that the instructors conducted throughout the course in order to solicit student feedback on how to best meet their learning needs. The mid-course questionnaire included five questions. (1) What lingering questions do you have about the content from the first weekend? (2) What aspects of the course have worked well for you thus far? (3) What aspects of the course would you like to have changed? (4) What would you change about them? (5) Please tell us the name of a song that you feel represents the counseling process and briefly describe the reasons that you selected the song. The mid-
course questionnaire directly informed the just in time teaching mini-lectures designed to address gaps in student learning (Educause, 2012). For data analysis, the mid-course questionnaire provided valuable information, as it captured CITs experiences of face to face and online learning and perceptions of how these learning approaches are impacting their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity. It also illuminated areas of development that were not being fostered by revealing gaps in learning and understanding.

Post-Course Questionnaire

The post-course questionnaire included a set of questions related to counselor development in the course (see Appendix E), the theoretical orientation scale (Smith, 2010), and a photo elicitation activity where counselors in training were once again asked to select a photo and three words that they felt represent their thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others. Post-course questionnaires provided rich data regarding CITs experiences in the course as they detailed changes in their values, worldviews, and theoretical perspectives, which were useful in understanding CITs processes of cognitive complexity development. Data from the post-course questionnaire also helped in understanding face to face and online learning strategies that counselors in training viewed as impacting their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity.

Client Conceptualization and Treatment Plan Paper

The client conceptualization and treatment plan paper was an extension of the Applied Client Conceptualization & Treatment Planning Activities utilized in the course. The client conceptualization and treatment planning paper provided useful data regarding
CITs processes of applying counseling theories and identifying and evaluating theoretical lenses when presented with client cases involving diverse contexts and intersectional identity factors. Further the client conceptualization and treatment planning paper allowed counselors in training additional opportunities to demonstrate cognitive complexity development through articulating multiplistic or relativistic ways of thinking when considering complex client struggles in context.

**Final Reflection Paper**

The final reflection paper included opportunities for counselors in training to reflect on their theories pre and post-test results and to explore theoretical preferences based on personal values and worldviews. Further this assignment provided opportunities for counselors in training to consider how preferred theories may or may not interface with diverse client contexts and struggles. Data collected from participant’s final reflection papers were useful as they provided a synthesis of CITs experiences regarding the process of learning to applying counseling theories. It also provided specific information regarding CITs processes of identification and evaluation of theoretical lenses when considering client cases involving diverse context and intersectional identity factors, which gave insight into CIT processes of cognitive complexity development.

**Qualitative Interviews**

The individual and dyadic small group qualitative interviews provided additional useful participant data as they allowed opportunities for the researcher to clarify understanding of CIT experiences applying counseling theories and developing cognitive complexity within the hybrid counseling theories course. Further it also allowed opportunities for participants to practice talking through an applied hypothetical client scenario in relation to their ways of understanding and intervening with client struggles.
Lastly, it allowed for member checking and for counselors in training to elaborate on how they perceive face to face and online learning as impacting their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity.

Participants

Participants were counseling masters’ students who registered for the hybrid Theories of Counseling course in the spring of 2016 at an extended studies campus of a mid-size public university. Participants in this study were all over the age of 18 as they were graduate students pursuing masters’ degrees in counseling. Purposeful sampling, which was used in this study, is “based on…rare attributes or occurrences of the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 2009). The hybrid theories of counseling course from which participants were sampled is a rare occurrence as it involved three co-instructors teaching a hybrid course that was intentionally constructed to foster cognitive complexity development. Participants were introduced to the study during the first day first of class. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and would not impact on their final grade. Informed consent forms were provided for the students who agree to participate in the to sign. Qualitative case study and portraiture methodology emphasize descriptive presentation of data over transferability or external validity (Yin, 2009). Thus, the richness of data through the collection of rich descriptive data over time (including artifacts and interviews) was prioritized over the number of participants (Merriam, 2009). While I had hoped to sample the entire class, I was pleased that 15 out of the 16 students signed informed consents, which allowed me to analyze their reflection journals, discussion responses, and papers. Seven of the 15 participants participated in qualitative interviews.
As I served as both co-instructor and principal investigator, the students potentially felt that this was not a voluntary process. It was therefore necessary to build a firewall between my role as co-instructor and researcher as part of the data collection procedures. While it would have been ideal to have someone other than myself collect data for this study, it was not feasible as this was a novel approach to teaching and counselor education. I was not responsible for assigning student grades in the course and I did not serve as the primary instructor for the course. Further, participants were not identified, artifacts were not collected, and qualitative interviews were not scheduled until after final grades for the course were calculated and submitted.

After grades were submitted I requested the IRB consent forms from the department chair, who held them between the first day of class and the time when grades were due. Participation or lack of participation in this study had no impact on students’ final grades or any evaluation in the hybrid counseling theories course or their standing in the program. As I had completed nearly all of the requirements for my doctoral program at the time of the study, it was unlikely that I would teach or supervise any of these students again. Further, the primary instructor for the course did not have access to the participants’ names.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Data were collected in five ways: (1) pre, mid, and post questionnaires; (2) online reflection journals and discussion responses; (3) a final case study and treatment plan; (4) a final reflection paper; and (5) and individual or dyadic group qualitative interviews following the completion of the course. All participants were informed that participation in this study would have no impact on their final grade or their status in the program. The informed consent to collect and analyze the artifacts for the case study occurred the first
day of class. I announced the study on the first day of class when we (myself, the primary instructor, and the co-instructor) went over expectations for the course, the syllabus, ground rules for discussions, and netiquette. I explained the purpose of the study and stated that participation is voluntary.

We (myself, the primary instructor, and the other co-instructor) then left the classroom and allowed the students that were interested in participating to sign the informed consent and put it in a sealed manila envelope. Students that did not wish to sign the informed consent were also asked to place their blank consent forms into the pre-addressed envelope. The envelope was transported by one of the students to the main office where it was mailed through campus mail to the department chair’s office at main campus. The department chair stored the envelope in her office in a locked file cabinet. I waited to open the sealed manila envelope until after all student grades had been calculated and turned in. Once student grades were finalized and turned in I requested the envelope from the department chair.

I then sent a follow up email to students that agreed to participate asking them to confirm each portion of the data that they wanted me to include for data analysis and invited them to participate in individual or small dyadic group (2 students per group) interviews. Students who expressed interest in participating in the interviews received a second informed consent for the interview portion directly before their scheduled interview. I believe that these measures helped build a firewall that protected students and separated my role as a co-instructor from my role as a researcher.

All participant responses were kept confidential through the use pseudonyms. Each student completed a pre questionaire for the course that that took approximately 30
minutes to complete (Appendix E). After the questionnaires were completed online, course instruction continued as scheduled. Students completed the online portion of the course across two Saturdays and were required to complete reflection journals and discussion responses based on online videos and mini-lectures.

Upon completion of the course, an online post questionnaire was provided that took approximately 30 minutes to complete (Appendix E). Two weeks after the last day of class students were required to turn in their final papers. Following the end of the class and once final grades were turned in, pre-, mid- and post-questionnaires, reflection journals and discussion responses, case study and treatment plan papers, and final reflection papers of students wishing to participate in the study were included as artifacts. Artifacts were stored electronically on two encrypted USB drives in folders with the students selected pseudonyms. A code sheet linking pseudonyms to real names and contact information was also stored on the USB drives.

Data were also collected through individual and dyadic small group (two students) interviews. The interviews were scheduled and conducted after the course had ended and final grades had been turned in. No interviews were conducted or scheduled until after the final grades for the class were calculated. While it would be ideal to have someone other than the co-instructor conduct the qualitative interviews, it was not feasible as this is a novel approach to teaching and counselor education. Thus, prospective interviewers would need requisite knowledge regarding qualitative interviewing, counselor cognitive complexity development, and an in depth understanding of the design and scaffolding of targeted online counseling teaching approaches.
It is possible that students felt a need to respond in socially desirable ways to the interview questions, however, all research involving human subjects has the potential to produce a social desirability response bias in participants. Students who chose to participate in the interview component of the study were reassured that their constructive feedback about the course would be used to improve the course for future students and a majority of participants provided constructive feedback.

Qualitative interviews were conducted at either the main campus or the extended studies campus, depending on which location was more convenient for participants. Qualitative interviews occurred in private rooms and were audio recorded. Data from qualitative interviews was kept under students’ pseudonyms. Investigators reminded participants that participation in the study would have no impact on their standing in the counseling program and that data from the interview will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Dyadic small group interviews participants were asked to keep each other’s information confidential, however, participants were informed prior to agreeing to the small group interviews that confidentiality could be guaranteed in the small group interview format.

Deception was not used in this study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research beginning in the recruiting phase. Thus, participants had the option to decline participation with full knowledge of what was being studied. Participants were debriefed following their interviews. All participants were also provided with contact information for counseling services, in case they experienced distress.

**Data Analysis Methods: Illuminating Emergent Themes**

I began my analysis by evaluating participants’ demographic data across the course as a whole. I then began to analyze artifact data for each participant starting with
their pre-questionnaires reflective journals, and discussion responses, then their mid-course questionnaire, and ended with their post-questionnaire and final papers. Data were analyzed qualitatively to explore emergent themes regarding changes in counselor’s self-reflexivity, tolerance of ambiguity, openness to multiple perspectives, and critical evaluation of theory based on context. Data analysis in portraiture methodology begins with a clear theoretical framework. For this study the theoretical framework consisted of the Recursive Superstructure and my anticipatory template, which conceptualized CITs at various stages of cognitive complexity development. I also developed a guiding set of research questions. Portraiture data analysis involves an inductive prolonged engagement process leading to “more focused research questions and more grounded research design” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.186), as well as the use of a constant comparative methods, in which one moves between the concrete data and the abstract guiding theories and philosophies. During this process I continuously engaged in self reflexivity strategies to thoroughly examine my own beliefs, worldview, and biases, expectations, and anticipatory themes through research journaling. Research journals and discussion responses were also examined and coded using open coding as I engaged with each participant’s artifacts and data. The coding process was inductive and ongoing.

The next step of data analysis involved transcribing the audio recordings of participant interviews. I then analyzed the transcripts using open coding. Themes that emerged during the transcription process were enriched through comparing interview responses to emergent themes in participant artifacts. When analyzing the data, I utilized a constant comparative method starting with open coding to create tentative categories and then combined and expanded categories through inductive constant comparison.
Categories were developed out of an interaction between the data collected and the theoretical concepts guiding the investigation by tracing the emergent themes and connecting them with my anticipatory themes. During this process I kept an impressionistic record that detailed the way I connected themes and compared CITs experiences with my anticipatory template and theoretical framework.

As I traced the emergent themes I remained open to divergent experiences from my anticipatory themes, as I was equally interested in and curious about these experiences. What Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) term the *impressionistic record* is similar to an audit trail that also has ongoing data analysis notes regarding the intersections and convergence of phenomena, as well as ongoing coding for each participant. Data were represented in the form of developmental portraits for each participant. The emergent themes illuminated across participants in the study were then presented through case based themes (Merriam, 2009).
Credibility in qualitative research is somewhat analogous to internal validity in quantitative research, as credibility addresses the extent to which data collected during the research process are congruent with one another (if appropriate) and the extent to which data collected is congruent with the construct that I was exploring (i.e., cognitive complexity development). I sought to bolster credibility in the present study through the collection of multiple data types at various times before, during, and after the class, by
multiple investigators. In this way data collected throughout the study was triangulated multiple times.

Member checking is another technique used in qualitative research to bolster credibility. Member checking occurred throughout the class, as the instructional team clarified feedback and input with the CITs on an ongoing basis both online through assessments and emails and in-person. Another round of member checking took place during the qualitative interviews with participants. Credibility was likely further strengthened by my engagement with the data collection process. As I held dual roles of instructor and researcher I was able to be present to observe and record data that were constructed by students in the course while also serving as an active participant in this process. I actively engaged in reflexive journaling and recorded my impressionistic record throughout the process of planning and implementing the class.

I have taken a qualitative narrative class; in which I wrote an autoethnography reflecting on my own cognitive complexity development in the context of my relationships with four influential educators. The process of writing the autoethnography prior to engaging with the hybrid theories course as well as my ongoing journaling/impressionistic record keeping increased my awareness regarding my own biases and beliefs about counselor education, which prepared me to engage with participant data. Specifically, I feel that engagement with these processes allowed me to better sort through which interpretations are my own and which are from participants. The primary instructor and the co-instructor served as peer reviewers throughout the process of designing and implementing the course. They were well positioned to review
participant data, as they were present during the production and collection of the data, with the exception of the qualitative interviews.

Qualitative researchers generally do not seek external validity in the same way that quantitative researchers might. For example, a qualitative researcher may be more likely to leave judgments about the applicability of the research process to the reader than to suggest ways in which the data can be applied to others. As no two classes or groups of CITs are identical, it seemed inappropriate for me to assume that the outcomes associated with the course in the present study will generalize to all hybrid learning environments. Thus, instead of seeking external validity, I sought transferability, which is a set of strategies that qualitative researchers can use to better prepare readers to apply the findings of the research in their own lives. My primary means for increasing the transferability of this study were to provide the reader with rich, thick descriptions of CITs data and the process of designing and implementing the course, including the theoretical background. Maximum variation sampling is another method often used by qualitative researchers to bolster transferability, however, it was not implemented in the current study, as I purposefully chose to collect data on a pre-existing class of students who were likely to fit my selection criteria.

No two classes are identical and, as such, it seems unlikely that the present study could ever be replicated, as the values of intentionality and responsiveness are foundational to the course design. Thus, the concept of reliability is arguably largely inapplicable in the context of the present study. However, qualitative researches often seek dependability rather than reliability as dependability speaks to the extent to which the findings of a research project are consistent with the data collected as well as the
extent to which the results appear plausible and sensible to a reader. Using an impressionistic record throughout the process is a primary means for boosting dependability in qualitative research, as the impressionistic record helps readers to understand how decisions were made as well as how the voice of the researcher is audible in the final presentation. Further, strategies such as triangulation and peer review, which have been discussed earlier in this section, enhance the dependability of the findings.

Confirmability is a term used in qualitative research that refers to the extent to which a researcher holds themselves accountable for their personal values, biases and assumptions. I attempted to hold myself accountable in such a way through my autoethnography written prior to the course, by engaging in reflexive journaling, and also actively discussing the course with the primary instructor and the co-instructor. I have spent a substantial amount of time becoming familiar with my personal theoretical perspectives and philosophies and reflecting on the extent to which it is appropriate to generalize those perspectives to the counseling profession or to counseling students. As a result, I am better prepared to draw distinctions between participants and myself, to the extent that is possible given my role as a participant observer.

**Researcher Stance**

In portraiture methodology researcher stance and researcher reflexivity are interwoven and revealed throughout the research process and data representation. Therefore, much of my researcher stance was revealed as I made transparent the ways in which I was interpreting and making meaning of participant data in the final representation through moving between my reflection journals, participant data, and my impressionistic record. Lawrence Lightfoot & Davis (1997) describe researcher stance in terms of researcher voice in relation to participants. Voice can be understood as
researchers’ awareness of their impact on the way in which their voice and positionality shape how a study is constructed and unfolds. I found the concepts of voice and relationship useful as these concepts helped me to recognize power differentials in relational interactions, monitor my biases, correct for blindspots, and critically reflect on my assumptions regarding fostering of cognitive complexity development so that I could prioritize participant voices and recognize times when my own voice threatened to overpower participants.

Through my researcher journals I found that my voice tended to come from one of five primary positions/roles: voice as instructor, voice as researcher, voice as supervisor, voice as counselor, and voice as student. Each of these voices and relational positions has already been introduced. For example, my voice as instructor was introduced through my preferred pedagogical approaches (contextual and critical constructivist pedagogy) and the way that I approached relationships with students by attempting to foster a learning environment where everyone serves as teacher and learner. My voice as supervisor has been revealed in my desire to foster counselor development and clinical skill sets prior to the practicum and internship process in an effort to maximize opportunities for student success and to avoid client harm that can result when these skills are not developed prior to working with actual clients. My voice as counselor was revealed in the theoretical perspectives that I prioritize (systemic, multicultural, and social justice) and the theories that were selected for inclusion in the course. My voice as student was revealed through my focus on goodness as I reflected on the insecurity and vulnerability that are inherent to the process of development. Finally, my voice as researcher was revealed through the synthesis of these four voices and through the ways in which I held myself accountable
for ongoing critical self-reflexivity and ethical considerations to ensure that participant voices are understood and accurately represented in the research process.

In portraiture, the voice of the researcher is everywhere: in the assumptions, preoccupations, and framework she brings to the inquiry; in the questions she asks; in the data she gathers; in the choice of stories she tells; in the language, cadence, and rhythm of her narrative. Voice is the research instrument, echoing the self of the portraitist—her eyes, her ears, her insights, her aesthetic. Voice is omnipresent. (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 85)

Summary

In this chapter I presented an overview of qualitative research and constructivist epistemology, which were foundational to this study. I then discussed how ecological, multicultural, and social justice theories, were constructed upon the larger foundation to frame the current study. I also provided my anticipatory template, in which I described existing conceptualizations that influenced my assumptions of counselor cognitive complexity development. I then described portraiture methodology, which was used to develop the study and guide the methods. I concluded this chapter by describing the methods I used, including participant sampling, data collection and analysis, methods for addressing trustworthiness, and my researcher stance.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

There were sixteen students total in the counseling theories course, fifteen of which participated in the artifact component of the study. The artifact component included participant’s: (1) pre, mid, and post questionnaires; (2) online reflection journals and discussion responses; (3) final case study and treatment plan; and (4) final reflection paper. Additionally, seven of the fifteen students who participated in the artifact component also participated in qualitative interviews. Students were given the option to either participate in individual or dyadic group qualitative interviews. Three of the seven students elected to participate in individual qualitative interviews lasting approximately an hour to an hour and a half each. The remaining four elected to participate in dyadic group qualitative interviews that lasted approximately an hour and a half to two hours each.

The students who chose to participate in the dyadic group qualitative interviews were paired with a participant who was a member of their small learning group from the theories course. The interviews took place in a private location at either the main or extended campus depending on participant preference. During the interviews students were audio recorded while they talked through an additional client conceptualization. Students who participated in the interviews were asked a series of structured follow up questions regarding their perceptions of the class, their experiences engaging in self-reflection, the process they engaged in to make treatment decisions, and their fears
regarding working with the hypothetical client in the case scenario. Participants were also asked member checking questions and if they would like to share anything else regarding their experiences in the class or the qualitative interview.

Confidentiality of Participants

At the onset of data collection participants were each assigned a pseudonym through the use of a random name generator. Each participants’ data were then organized under their assigned pseudonym. I attempted to remove any information that would have the potential to identify participants including specifics regarding their place of employment and experiences in a helping related field. I also removed references to the names of other courses that they have completed in their program of study. Additionally, I reported compiled demographic information and did not attach it to individual participant’s descriptions in an effort to further protect participant confidentiality.

Participant Demographics

Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire at the onset of the course (see Appendix B). The questionnaire included questions regarding participant’s gender identity/preferred gender pronouns, ethnicity or ethnicities, and age. Additionally, it included information regarding their status as a full or part-time students, current employment, number of semesters completed in the program, track in the program, previous work or volunteer experiences in a helping field, preferred learning styles and level of comfort using technology to access online course material. Participants level of comfort with technology was reported on a Likert type five-point scale from not at all comfortable to very comfortable. All fifteen participants reported that they were full time students at either the main or extended campus. Table 1 summarizes participant information regarding reported gender, ethnicity or ethnicities, age, number of semesters.
completed in counseling program (or closely related program e.g., school psychology), track in program, and reported level of comfort using technology to access online course materials at the beginning and end of the course.

Table 1 *Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Ethnicity(ies)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Hispanic/Half Caucasian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-30 years’ old</td>
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<td>31-34 years’ old</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-46 years’ old</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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**Participant Developmental Portraits**

In the following section, I provide developmental portraits for each of the fifteen participants in my study. The developmental portraits represent the multi-layered and
relational nature of counselors developmental processes through situating individual participant development within the relational context of the hybrid learning environment in which it emerged. Through these participant developmental portraits, I sought to illuminate shifts in participant’s ways of knowing and understanding as they considered multiple contexts and contradictory perspectives while simultaneously remaining aware of and setting aside their own personal values and biases.

**Bessie Lyons**

Bessie is employed full time working with children in an elementary school setting. She reports having had experience in a helping field through an internship she completed during her undergraduate education at a mental health center where she had the opportunity to observe and participate in client counselor interactions. Bessie described experiential activities and lectures involving specific examples or demonstrations as being most useful to her learning. She also reported finding it helpful when her professors “broke up” lecture with activities or video examples. She compared her more experiential classes with “straight lecture” classes describing the latter as more challenging because they did not provide as many opportunities for her to connect the information she was learning to how she might apply the information to the process of giving counseling.

[Two of my classes] were pretty much straight lecture without any applied components. It was all just information. I think it was good information though. It just would have been good to also have some demonstrations or activities or something. Maybe that was because [the two classes] were not in the counseling department though. In our paper for [one of the classes] I tried to come up with an example related to counseling. But that is the only time in the class that I can think of that I applied what we were learning to how I might actually use that information in counseling.
Bessie was the most enthusiastic about the parts of the theories class that included experiential and applied elements, especially the applied client scenario videos and conceptualization activities. Bessie reported being very comfortable accessing course materials online and felt that having time to reflect on the videos on her own before meeting with her group was beneficial to her learning. She also described appreciating the “responsibility of managing her time” during the online days and being able to choose where she spent the most time focusing her learning during the reflective journal prompts.

It was nice to have some time to myself to watch the videos and really reflect. The videos are important to learning the theories and I'm glad that we didn't just watch them all as a group; this was beneficial because [during the in-person class days] we could really focus on meaning. I think the small group discussion and the videos, prompts, and case conceptualizations were very beneficial to my learning about the theories and applying them.

Throughout the course Bessie seemed to be most interested in becoming more aware of herself and the ways in which her feelings impacted her worldviews and interactions with others. She explained that she thought it was possible for people to temporarily avoid their emotions but eventually “you need to face your emotions in order to understand yourself on a deeper level”. Bessie reported connecting most with person centered and multicultural approaches to counseling and expressed a strong desire to be perceived as non-judgmental and multiculturally competent by her clients.

At the beginning of the course when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others she selected a picture of a person trying to balance on a train track while holding another person’s hand and paired the image with the words empathetic, helpful, and genuine. At the close of the course she selected an image of three cairns’ marking a trail on a rocky beach and once
again selected the words empathetic and genuine but replaced the word helpful with the word emotion. She described having had the knowledge that empathy, genuineness, and facing emotions were important to the counseling process at the onset of the class however she stated, “you can possess the knowledge about something being important without fully understanding the reasons behind such importance”.

**Vivian Flemming**

Vivian is employed part time in the health care industry. She reports that her prior experiences in a helping field have all been related to physical health as opposed to mental health. She described learning best through in person lectures that are interspersed with class discussions to “break apart some of the monotony of lectures”. While Vivian reported that she was “very comfortable” accessing course materials online she also initially reported feeling disappointed and worried about the online course components. She was especially concerned that online materials would mainly involve narrated PowerPoints and “discussion board type conversations that aren't as instant as real life”. Vivian was surprised to find that she enjoyed the online portions of the class and found it useful since the learning modules were comprised of videos rather than “one big PowerPoint”. She described appreciating that her group chose to utilize Google Hangouts to complete their online discussions because she felt this made their conversations more authentic. When asked follow up questions about her online learning experiences she reported that she found unexpectedly few limitations.

I really thought I was going to be bummed with the online [part of the course], especially not having direct contact with the instructors [and] not having natural discussions where students can interact. But it was actually really nice to kind of take a break from the classroom environment and have some time to reflect on my own while still being able to see and learn about different theories and their origins.
Vivian felt that the online videos provided a nice substitute for lectures. Mid-way through the course she described how the videos provided “a lot of important information” that she felt went “beyond” what a lecture could provide because she was able to see the original theorist talking about the background and development of the theory and then witness the theory in action.

I was able to see how every theory demonstrated would work with the same problem/same client. Since it was the same issue every time I became familiar with the client and could really focus in on paying attention to specific things the counselors were saying and doing.

Vivian described her understanding of the theories being ‘solidified’ during the in person components of the course when she got to try out theoretical application and observe the way her small group members approached theoretical application differently. She described the videos with Carl Rogers as being influential to her development and feeling like person-centered therapy “just really clicked with me and just made sense to me”. While she felt that a person centered approach most closely aligned with her worldviews and values she described being open to intentionally integrating other approaches with her person-centered foundation depending on the client’s needs and situation. “I think now that I am a little bit more knowledgeable and have a better understanding of more theories than before. I am more comfortable with more approaches”.

At the beginning of the course when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others she selected a picture of nine old fashioned keys and paired the image with the words unsure, scared, and hopeful. At the close of the course she selected an image of a large library filled with
books from floor to ceiling and once again selected the word hopeful but replaced the words scared and unsure with the words eager and in the moment.

**Becky Knight**

Becky is employed full time as a child care provider. She reports having had multiple experiences in a helping related field through volunteer opportunities with children in elementary school settings. Becky described herself as preferring more visual learning and hands on learning strategies. She also reported being very comfortable using technology to access online course materials at both the beginning and end of the theories course.

I like to change it up a bit so we aren’t doing the same thing the entire class time. This helps me to keep my attention… I am more of a visual and hands on learner and I need concrete examples to really understand a concept. I believe experiential activities, video, role play, and group work are all very beneficial to my learning.

Becky was excited about the online portion of the theories course and readily identified benefits to having portions of the course online in her pre, mid, and post surveys. She reported that online videos and activities were helpful to “mix it up a bit” which she felt kept her attention and made the course more interesting and engaging. She described being excited to have visual examples of both the original theorists and counseling sessions and felt they “helped tremendously” with her learning and retaining the material. She also reported preferring the autonomy to seek out additional theoretical information on her own when applying it to case scenarios “rather than having it given” to her through PowerPoint presentations or lectures because it forced her to “learn the content and actually engage with it” and “put more of a responsibility on us”.

She reported on multiple occasions that she wished that other professors would consider putting portions of their courses online, stating that she thought it would be
helpful “even if they would just consider videos to accompany reading assignments”. The only limitations to the online learning that Becky described were related to the small group portions of the online learning activities.

I loved our group work but sometimes I kind of just felt like I was ready to work by myself with no breaks and just engage in the content on my own. I would rather do less group work on our online days even if it added on more additional work. I think that since we are already working in our group when we are in class, I would like to have more time to work alone and really focus on what we are learning.

Becky seemed most interested in trying to clarify and understand her own values and worldviews throughout the class and especially appreciated the reflection journals. At the beginning of the course when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others Becky selected a picture of nine old fashioned keys and paired the image with the words hopeful, fulfilled, and ecstatic. At the close of the course she selected an image of a beach with a spectacular sunset and this time she selected the words accepted, intrigued, and encouraged.

Throughout the course Becky had difficulty choosing one theory that she felt most closely aligned with her values and worldviews. She felt that she agreed with “certain points of each theory” and saw truth and validity in all of theories simultaneously which at times made assessing theoretical fit in the applied case scenarios more challenging for her. As she strongly valued multiple perspectives she would often try to integrate aspects of “all the theories” when trying to understand hypothetical client struggles which sometimes led to contradictory thoughts, feelings, and uncertainty.

When describing the process of giving counseling, she stated, “you have to remain optimistic even when things feel frightening and continue to find the strength that exists within yourself”. Becky often returned to this idea of resilience and hope when she
would describe feeling less confident in herself and overwhelmed. While at times she
described finding her developmental process uncomfortable she also seemed to feel it
was necessary stating that the challenges that you face throughout life will be things “you
go through time and time again” and that even when things are challenging there will
eventually be a “brighter day”.

Tanya Thorton

Tanya has been employed full time at an adolescent residential mental health
treatment facility for the last four years. She described the primary functions of her job as
involving running counseling groups, creating/updating client treatment goals, crisis
management counseling, and enforcing boundaries and limit setting with residents. She
reported her experiences in a helping field have been primarily through her current
employment and referred to herself as an “already practicing counselor”. Tanya described
her experiences in the residential facility as providing her invaluable opportunities to
learn how to work with clients with a variety of mental and behavioral disorders. At the
onset of the course Tanya reported that she could not think of any benefits of having
portions of the course online and she voiced a number of concerns with the online
components of the course. Additionally, she reported that she was “not at all
comfortable” with accessing course materials online.

I personally prefer in person discussion based lectures and I am very
worried I will not get much out of this class. I am concerned that it will be
harder for me to remain focused on the course material when working from
home.

While Tanya’s expressed strong initial hesitations, mid-way through the course
she described feeling like the online content had “some benefits”. When she encountered
limitations with the online portions of the course she was communicative with her
instructors via email. For example, she reported that she was not feeling challenged by the reflection journal prompts and explained she had been primarily summarizing content information in her journal entries “to prove” that she “had completed the videos and readings”. I explained the journal prompts were intended to help her to reflect on her reactions to what she was learning about the theories and the extent to which what she was learning fit with her worldviews and values.

She reported that she thought that she could better utilize the reflection journals to explore this fit through comparing and contrasting the theories as she learned about them. I encouraged her to use a comparing and contrasting approach in conjunction with the journal prompts to meet her individual learning needs. Tanya reported that once she modified the reflection journals to allow more opportunities to compare and contrast theories she found them to be more useful to her learning. By the end of the class Tanya reported being “very comfortable” accessing online course materials and reported finding that she found the online learning format to be unexpectedly useful in meeting her learning needs.

I was initially worried about the online content and felt nervous that I would not get as much from the course with that format of learning. After seeing that the majority of the online day was watching sessions and discussing with our groups I was relieved and actually found that to be the most useful part of the course.

At the beginning of the course when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others Tanya selected a picture of two glass jars one of the jars was labeled dreams and the second jar was labeled wishes each jar had multiple pieces of colorful rolled up papers inside of them. Tanya paired the image of the jars with the words effective, empowerment, and worth. At the close of the course she selected an image of a large library filled with books from
floor to ceiling and this time she selected the words necessary, hope, and integrative. Tanya described feeling like the course helped her to be more open minded to theoretical approaches and that she had previously discounted. She felt that seeing them applied in session changed her mind about their ability to be useful with some clients in some situations. Tanya also felt that the class helped her to have “a clearer idea of what theories and techniques” she found “intriguing and what therapeutic styles” she “responded to best”. Tanya reported that her values most closely aligned with social justice, strength based and integrative lenses.

This lens fits well with my view of the self in relation to others and the crucial importance that should be placed on context. When thinking of what approach to use with a specific client it feels natural to use their contextual factors to make a choice that will have the best fit with their personality and worldview. I think it is important to normalize distressing issues and choose the method that will work best for you to get through to [the client]. A problem is only a problem if [a client] thinks it is and they are in control of finding their own happiness, it may just take a little guidance.

**Larry Howard**

Larry reports that he is currently employed part time through a graduate assistantship. His prior experiences in a helping field have primarily related to providing behavioral interventions and assessments in day treatment facilities and intensive autism programs. Larry described himself as a visual learner and stated that he felt that the online components of the course would allow more opportunities for visual learning and provide “much needed flexibility” in how he could approach the material as a learner. He also reported feeling that he had more time to watch the videos and engage with the course materials because he did not have to commute to and from class. He stated that some of the information and activities “grew on me as I had more time to process them”.
At the onset of the course Larry reported being “comfortable” accessing course materials online. He felt that the primary limitations of online learning would be ensuring his technology was working and not having anyone “right next to you to help figure out a problem you're having”. As Larry engaged with the online learning materials he described finding them to be accessible and easy to use. Larry reported that the small group discussions were especially beneficial to his learning and that having an opportunity to check in with his group members in person after the online learning sessions helped him to feel like they were all on the same page and prepared for the in class activities. Larry seemed to especially appreciate the flexibility that the online learning environment provided in terms of allowing him to incorporate “self-care” throughout his day.

Any kind of limitation I encountered with the online learning was quickly covered up by the time spent discussing opinions and confusions within my group. This helped me to clarify any questions I had and to hear other points of view. I liked that the online content offered so much flexibility for how I chose to lay out the day. If I wanted to get up at 7:00am and be done early I could. If I wanted to sleep in till 11:00am and work later in the day, there were no negative repercussions as long as I communicated and met with my small group.

Larry came into the course primarily valuing behavioral and cognitive behavioral approaches to counseling and stated that he felt that “having to be cognizant of emotions, behaviors, and thoughts all at the same time seemed like a difficult task”. However, at the close of the course he described feeling that his personal values and worldviews fit best with postmodern and humanistic approaches to counseling. He resonated with the idea of multiple truths and helping people move towards self-actualization. He also described increasingly valuing counselor “authenticity” and “awareness of emotions and context”. He described finding the “microskills and reflections” to be particularly useful during the
practice role plays. At times Larry seemed uncertain about how to integrate his humanistic values with the behavioral perspectives and interventions that he continued to perceive as somewhat useful, especially in the context of his previous work with children with autism. He stated, “it seems to me that a more integrative approach is one that will come with more expertise in counseling”.

At the beginning of the course when asked to select three words and a picture that he felt captured his thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others Larry selected a picture of ten people working together to untangle a fishing net on the beach. Larry paired the image with the words connection, assessment, and solution. At the close of the course he selected an image of a person trying to balance on a train track while holding another person’s hand and once again selected the word connection but this time replaced the words assessment and solution with the words flexibility and awareness.

**Bertha Page**

Bertha reports she is currently employed full time in a high school setting as a paraprofessional. She describes having had multiple years of experiences in a helping related field through her work as both a teacher and paraprofessional. Bertha reported being “very comfortable” accessing course materials online and reported that online learning was one of her preferred learning formats in addition to lecture, group work, and seminars. She described having taken a variety of online courses and trainings over the years in order to “stay current with changing information” and appreciated the online learning provided access to new information and opportunities for discussion without the “constraints” of everyone having to be in the same physical location. She reported some limitations in her previous experiences with online learning environments included “not
being face to face” and the risk of information being “miscommunicated during online discussions”.

The course was well put together and thoroughly thought out. The in person and online combination has worked well for me. I also appreciated how the content was broken down for each theory into manageable chunks. I liked both the online portion and the in class portion of the class. I also liked that the instructors seem most concerned about students using class time to understand the content and how it is applied in counseling sessions. The online portion of the class provided me with materials I can come back to after this class has ended and made theoretical information more easily accessible and easier to absorb and understand. I have taken online classes before and by far this one surpasses any previous classes taken.

Bertha described experiencing her theoretical preferences as shifting substantially as she had opportunities to observe and apply the theories in the hybrid learning environment. At the end of the course Bertha reported primarily favoring person-centered and multicultural approaches to counseling. She described wanting to “present as collaborative and more equalitarian” when forming relationships with clients. She also described finding factors such as “family, relational values, cultural traditions, and gender role expectations” to be especially important in terms of understanding clients and avoiding “pathologizing client struggles”.

At the beginning of the course when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others Bertha selected a picture of a family walking along a beach at sunset. Bertha paired the image with the words caring, helpful, and comfort. At the close of the course she selected an image of three cairns marking a trail on a rocky beach and once again selected the word helpful but this time replaced the words caring and comfort with the words engaged and trust.
**Emma Briggs**

Emma is employed full time working as a director of student services at the elementary and middle school levels. Her primary responsibilities include managing special education and gifted and talented departments and coordinating mental health services for students. She reports that she has worked in a helping field teaching special education and that she currently works with mental health providers in her school district to plan, implement, and co-lead groups to support students’ mental health and academic success. She describes her learning style as “visual, hand on”, and active” and reports retaining information more effectively when she can “discuss and manipulate it rather than simply hearing or reading about it”. Emma described herself as an independent and self-motivated learner and stated that she only found group work to be enjoyable when “the group dynamic is essential to the purpose activity”.

Emma reported that she found the hybrid structure of the class to be “cool and unique” compared other hybrid courses she had taken because of all of the “hands on pieces”. She described the way in which the videos and activities were structured and sequenced helped to generally keep her engaged and interested in what she was learning throughout the day. She compared the online portion of the course to other hybrid models, stating “I liked that this model held me accountable but still had some flexibility”.

Watching the same client in several different sessions was helpful because you could compare and contrast how each theory approached the same issue. On the flip side, after watching the same client again and again things began to feel a little bit monotonous. The case conceptualization activities helped to switch it up and they were very useful to being able to understand the ground work that goes into counseling. Each [client] story was engaging and that made for engaging and interesting conversations while practicing applying theory.
Emma reported appreciating all of the hands on role plays and group activities utilized in the face-to-face learning environment, however, she stated that she also liked the mini-lectures and “more direct instructional time” because the lectures and instructor role-plays gave her more “concrete steps to grab on to”.

I don’t love lecture but I wouldn’t mind if we had a few more lectures or slide shows for each force to refer back to…Watching the live [instructor] role-plays were useful because it was easier to focus in on all the different aspects of counseling (e.g., ways of being, understanding, and intervening) which were harder to focus on when we were role playing in our groups. The immediate debriefs [during the instructor role plays] also helped me recognize which of my noticing’s were meaningful based on theory and which ones were maybe based more in counselor preference/personality.

At the beginning of the course when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others Emma selected a picture of a close up of two people holding hands. Emma paired the image with the words purpose, mutually beneficial, and healing. At the close of the course she selected an image of three trees in a mossy forest with light cascading down between them and this time selected the words hope, progress, and collaboration.

Emma expressed that she was surprised to “find that there are so many practical and philosophical practices that come into play” when thinking about counseling others and seemed to find aspects of multiple theories simultaneously useful. She described finding value in strength based and solution focused approaches stating, “I find any sort of interaction should be rooted in one’s strengths and finding ways to capitalize upon those”. However, she also found existential theories to align well with her worldview and viewed purpose and meaning in life as being necessary to tackling “deeper issues” and fostering long term client success. “Establishing a purpose in life allows one to fight through almost anything. Without meaning in life, a client has no reason to improve and
will stay stuck”. Emma was intentional about critically reflecting on and examining each theoretical approach in relation to her worldview and values to try to better understand the way that she would use and integrate these approaches in her work with clients.

I am still struggling with the idea that we must believe in all the values and fully endorse every aspect of a theory in order to use it. Is there room to only buy into certain aspects of a theory as opposed to the whole thing? [For example,] If we're trying to solve [the client’s] specific, short term problem is focusing on her difficulties from a solution focused approach the place to start? Because I also think that it would be important to address [the client’s] deeper existential fears. I wondered which one you prioritize and address first? Or if you can do it concurrently.

**Cecilia Norton**

Cecilia reports that she has been employed full time as an academic advisor and coach at the college level for the past ten years. She described becoming interested in becoming a counselor because she found her role as an advisor and coach “overlapped” with many aspects of counseling. In her role she described building relationships with her students/athletes, providing support based on “academic stressors and pressures”, and also helping them with time management and long term career goals. At the onset of the theories course, Cecilia stated that she was “open” to other learning approaches but felt she learned best through face-to-face lecture and large group discussions. She described being unsure about the online format because it was “unfamiliar” and she “wasn’t sure what to expect”. Even though Cecilia described being “nervous” about the hybrid structure of the course, she reported she was “very comfortable” using technology to access the online course materials and that she was “hopeful that in the end” the online learning would be “a beneficial experience”.

It has just been so long since I was in college. And it was like the big lecture hall. So I didn’t think I would like the online part or the small groups and all of the activities. But I ended up finding it all really helpful. The material was interesting and engaging. So that made it kind of easier to get
conversations going. [And] it was just good to hear other people’s perspectives. Especially when you are used to just talking to your group of friends that you have known forever and you all kind of think the same way. It was good to get to hear other people’s perspectives and have all of the discussions. It is important because it is hard to relate sometimes when you don’t ever see different views. Because you think, well everyone thinks this way. And then you find out that is not the case.

Cecilia came into the class believing that she most closely aligned with a cognitive behavioral theoretical perspective, however as she gained more exposure to this theoretical approach through the lectures, videos, discussions, and role plays she reported realizing that while she “found CBT techniques to be effective” and something that she would “consider using”, she also “found the theories overall goal of changing dysfunctional thinking and disputing core beliefs to be far too limited”. Cecilia described counseling as being about “finding a safe space when you need it most”.

This course helped me to realize that I have a significant inclination towards client-focused, humanistic, and existential approaches and a distaste towards more formula based treatments. Connection, being able to grasp who you truly are, and finding value and purpose are an essential part of life. Before this class I did not fully grasp how important empathy, congruency, and unconditional positive regard are to the client’s success.

Cecilia described the theories course as a “good introduction to counseling overall” and felt it helped her to get a “backdrop and pinpoint more of how it is all connected and linked together.” At the beginning of the course when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others Cecilia selected a picture of ten people working together to untangle a fishing net on the beach. Cecilia paired the image with the words empathy, hopeful, and genuine. At the close of the course she selected an image looking up at a large tree growing toward the sky and once again selected the words empathy and genuine, however, she made a slight change in her word choice by replacing the word hopeful with the word hope.
Beatrice Terry

Beatrice reports being currently employed full time in a large financial institution. She also reports past experiences in a helping related field based on her background in math and engineering, including previous work as a teacher and tutor in those fields. Beatrice stated that her primary ways of learning involved reading, lecture, video, and discussions. She reported never having taken a hybrid course before but being excited to “try out this format” and “comfortable” accessing course materials online. Throughout the course Beatrice seemed most interested in discovering which theories fit best with her values and worldview and was actively engaged with her own self-reflection process in both the online and face-to-face learning environment. While she described finding the self-reflection process during the online learning to be “fulfilling”, she also described it as “challenging” and “draining”. She considered the applied client scenarios to be especially “emotionally intense” and “overwhelming”. She felt that the client struggles presented in the videos were “tough to watch” and reflect on and explained that she had not had many opportunities to be exposed to other people’s emotional struggles or to reflect on her own emotional reactions.

I come from a family that is very non-emotional. Showing emotion was actually considered a sign of weakness and would be met with ridicule… I found that I needed to build in more breaks throughout my day.

Despite the challenges Beatrice faced as a result of the ongoing self-reflexivity required by the hybrid learning environment she felt the online days provided a “nice change from the traditional classroom setting” and felt the experiential activities and role plays were “refreshing” and “led to additional learning”.

I loved watching the demo sessions [online] and I will seek out more of those for the theories I'm most interested in! I really liked the fact that we got to see multiple theories with the same client. For me, this really helped
me see the similarities and differences between the theories. It was also really helpful to compare and contrast the theories. This showed me how my own biases influenced which theories I thought worked best and helped to prepare me for the in person group activities and discussions… Even though it was scary and a little challenging, I really enjoyed the role plays that we did in our groups. They gave me a chance to practice applying what I had learned with the support of my group members.

Beatrice entered the course with the idea that she primarily preferred cognitive behavioral approaches to counseling, however, she was surprised to find that she also had a strong preference for the “emotion-based approaches” including humanistic, person-centered, existential, and multicultural theories. She described a strong desire to better understand her emotions and to work towards emotional congruence and yet also found this process to be painful and arduous. Throughout the course she seemed to feel conflicted and indecisive about which theoretical approaches would be most helpful for her on both a personal level and when working with clients.

Entering this class, I think I had a pre-conceived notion that the cognitive-behavioral therapies were more effective than other therapies, although I don’t think I was consciously aware of that bias. I had read more about this approach and how much research-based evidence there was regarding its effectiveness. CBT is also something I had done on myself in the past and I felt like was a good fit. In addition, I come from a “hard science” based environment and so it is more difficult for me to be comfortable expressing emotions. I think these factors played in to my pre-conceived bias toward the cognitive theories. However, the emotion-focused therapies aren’t what I thought they would be and I ended up feeling very drawn to those theories as well. I believe that people should be viewed holistically, we all have a tendency to work toward self-actualization, and especially that we all have free will and are able to make our own choices and that this comes with personal responsibility. I also like the idea of working towards becoming more congruent and authentic with others. Yet for some reason, I still feel very drawn to cognitive-behavioral therapy especially for anxiety and depression.

At the beginning of the course, when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others, Beatrice selected a picture of a person trying to balance on a train track while holding another person’s
hand and paired the image with the words excited, nervous, and happy. At the close of the course she selected an image of a woman looking up at the sky with her arms thrown wide open. The woman was smiling with the sun shining down radiating over her face and body. Once again Beatrice selected the words excited and happy however, she replaced the word nervous with the word fulfilled.

**Heidi Fox**

Heidi reports she is currently employed full time at a mental health agency where she works with detained youth. In her role at the agency she described primarily running psychoeducational groups and providing brief counseling services. Heidi also reported having past opportunities to engage in “counseling related” work through several jobs where she led groups and provided individual support for adolescents in residential treatment centers. She reported being “very comfortable” accessing course materials online and stated that she had taken online courses in the past and has found online classes to be “generally helpful” to her learning style. She was excited that the course had both a face-to-face and online component and felt hybrid classes were especially valuable for students who work full time because they meant “a little less commuting”, which she felt allowed for “more time for self-care throughout the day”. Heidi was enthusiastic about the activities and role plays in the face-to-face learning environment and described herself as an “active” and “hands on learner”.

I tend to learn best through examples and discussions as well as online videos and experiential activities. I liked that there were a lot of activities and hands on chances to practice both online and face-to-face. I feel that I learned a lot from this theories class. The videos allowed me to learn the information at my own pace and the activities allowed me to think through, apply and role play different theories in counseling and learn which one fits with myself best so I can apply it to my current work with clients.
Although Heidi described the practice role plays in her small group as an important component in her learning process she also described wishing that she could have had an opportunity, towards the end of the theories class, to pick a theory and role play for longer in her group. She suggested that this final role play could involve a “real issue” which she felt would make the role plays more realistic and would provide students with additional “actual opportunities to practice doing counseling”.

We did role-plays in [another class] too which was also good. And I really liked that we did kind of a real scenario role play. So [when we were playing the client] we picked something real from our personal lives. I really liked that because then I was actually counseling a real issue and a person’s real problem. And we got to do a thirty-minute long session. I think picking a problem you actually have and sticking with it for thirty minutes could help to make that part feel even more real and give everyone a little more practice.

Heidi described entering the class feeling that humanistic and person-centered approaches most closely aligned with her personality and worldview. She stated that she felt the videos and experiential activities in the course “reinforced and boosted my preference for person centered therapy”. She described person-centered as being congruent with her values based on the importance that she places on the therapeutic alliance and the idea that the client is the expert in their own life which she conceptualized as central to her current work with clients. Although Heidi strongly preferred humanistic and person-centered theories she stated that she “could see how some of the other theories might be useful to integrate in certain situations.”

Although I believe that person centered therapy fits best with my personality and worldview and is central to counseling relationships, I realize that some of my clients are facing situations that may eventually require me to integrate other theoretical interventions into my counseling. I feel that this class provided me with resources [e.g., videos, handouts, and notes] to continue to learn more about the theories that I do not prefer as much so that I can be a better counselor for a wide variety of clients.
At the beginning of the course, when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others, Heidi selected a picture of ten people working together to untangle a fishing net on the beach and paired the image with the words helpful, appreciated, and accomplished. At the close of the course she selected an image of Japanese garden with a bridge overarching a pond in the center of the photo. Once again Heidi selected the word helpful but this time replaced the words appreciated and accomplished with the words exciting and rewarding.

**Lola Simon**

Lola reports working full time as a paraprofessional in a behavioral disorder department at a middle school. She described additional experiences in helping related field outside of the school setting, through her work at a summer camp with children with differing levels of physical ability. Lola reported that this was her first online course and that she was initially “unsure” about the hybrid learning format, however, she reported being “comfortable” accessing course materials online. She described the small group work as the most meaningful part of the course and stated that she felt that one benefit of the online learning environment was related to being able to have group discussions that were “more private” and “not face-to-face”.

I was happy with my learning experience. As this is my first grad school class, I have really enjoyed the hybrid structure. The videos helped me see how [the same client] responded to different therapies and theories and the way different counselors created a relationship with [the client]. It doesn't feel as though discussions or lectures drag on and there a lot of chances to apply what we are learning. There have been different experiences shared from my group members that have made me consider other viewpoints.

Throughout the course Lola seemed most interested in understanding how the counseling relationship, theories, and techniques could translate to a school setting. She described appreciating the applied case scenarios that focused on “high school and
middle school aged kids” and especially liked the “school role play” where each group member had the opportunity to take on a role within the school system (e.g., school counselor, school psychologist, teacher, and principal) as part of a team meeting to foster the student’s success. She described feeling that a limitation of the theories course was that it was sometimes hard to relate the theories directly to school counseling. Lola was motivated to find ways that she could modify her learning to better fit with her goal of theoretical application within a school setting and actively communicated with her instructors about this goal.

I am wondering if would be possible during the role play to manipulate the client a bit? I am planning on working with middle/high schoolers, so it may be helpful for me to modify the circumstances some in the role plays… I am also wondering if I was only able to get 15-20 min with a client/student do you think CBT is the way to go? I am asking because of school counseling. Do you think you can get to the root cause and get the student regulated quickly enough with that theory?

By the end of the course Lola stated that she had a “clearer understanding of the umbrella concepts that underlie each of the theoretical forces.” She felt that connection and social support were important factors for client’s to be able to improve and also felt that it was important that counselors help to provide clients “relief in the present moment”. She described resonating with person-centered and solution focused theories and especially liked that solution focused therapy “can be used as needed if and when a life change or problem arises”. Lola reported finding it frustrating during the school role play when the school psychologist ignored potential client strengths and solutions and instead kept going back to “behavioral interventions” and bringing up student “attendance and grades”.

I am a believer in early interventions and when something does not work to problem-solve in order to create more positive outcomes. I would rather focus on building on the strengths and the resources the students already
have. I thought the demonstration of Solution Based Counseling was really beneficial to my learning. Solution focused was a process that really spoke to me especially as a school counselor.

At the beginning of the course, when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others, Lola selected a picture of a person submerged in water with their body outstretched and paired the image with the words problem-solving, stuck, and resolution. At the close of the course she selected an image of three trees in a mossy forest with light cascading down between them. Once again Lola selected the word problem solving but this time replaced the words stuck and resolution with the words acceptance and empathy.

**Vanessa Bass**

Vanessa reports that she is not currently employed. She described past experiences in a helping related field through her work as a “mental health counselor” with children and adolescents in a residential treatment facility. Vanessa also reported having recently left a non-accredited counseling program where she took several courses that she felt did not adequately meet her learning needs. She described her learning needs being best met through a variety of modalities including: “taking notes during lectures, participating in experiential activities, discussing concepts and theories with classmates and completing written essay type exams”. Vanessa reported being “very comfortable” accessing course materials online, however, initially she also reported being “slightly concerned” with the hybrid structure of the course.

I worry that I may become tired, bored or burnt out from spending too much time online. I think that the break outs and group exercises in class will help keep my mind stimulated and engaged. I am hoping that I am able to stay engaged and open to learning while working through the online material.
Following the first weekend and throughout the remainder of the course, Vanessa described the hybrid structure as being beneficial in meeting her learning needs and stated that it was “more rigorous” and “more of what I expected” when comparing the theories course to the courses in her previous program. She described finding the demonstrations and discussions both online and face-to-face to be especially helpful to learning how to apply the theories stating, it has been “extremely helpful to see how the theories are actually used in therapy sessions.” Vanessa described feeling relieved that she had made the “right choice” in switching counseling programs and reported “relatively few limitations” in her experiences with hybrid learning.

The only limitations that I experienced were because of my personal life. [During the online portion of the class] it was difficult to find space to work without being interrupted from others I live with. However, I made it work and was able to find ‘exceptions to the problem’.

Vanessa stated that she felt the therapeutic relationship is the strongest agent in promoting change within the client and described her values as most closely aligning with multicultural and person centered counseling approaches. She described wanting to become a counselor “that allows my clients to feel truly seen, understood, and accepted for who they are.” She felt that creating this safety would allow clients to acknowledge and “work through their fears because they know I see them as inherently good and capable of change.” While Vanessa described the importance of utilizing a person-centered foundation to build a strong therapeutic relationship she felt that in some situations she would need to alter her approach and integrate aspects of other theories depending on the client’s needs and context.

Through this course I was able to think more clearly about viewing clients through a contextual, positive, and optimistic lens rather than through a problem-oriented deterministic lens that I have been taught in past courses. In order for a counseling relationship to be positive it must include the core
conditions of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy. I believe that people experiencing oppression need to believe their counselor has a strong desire to understand the hardship that oppression can bring to an individual and that the client needs to believe that the counselor views the client’s truth as a reality.

At the beginning of the course, when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others, Vanessa selected a picture of three sunflowers stretching up towards a blue sky and paired the image with the words compassion, positive regard, and empathy. At the close of the course she again selected the image of the three sunflowers and kept the word empathy but this time replaced the words compassion and positive regard with the words context and integration.

**Mae Bowman**

Mae reports working full time for a county office where her primary role is in the area of emergency planning to help the county in responding to “natural and man-made disasters”. She reports prior experiences in a helping related field through leading wilderness outdoor educational retreats to help “build character and leadership”. She also reports that she is a veteran who served in the military for eight years.

Some people may not think of the [military] as a helping field, and it doesn't always work out that way for others, but I found a lot of opportunities to help people in a wide variety of ways. That portion of [my service] was quite rewarding.

Despite reporting being “comfortable” accessing course materials online Mae described being skeptical of the hybrid format of the theories course and initially felt that there were very few benefits to online learning. She described commuting a far distance to campus and reported she was disappointed that she would need to complete the online
components of the course from a hotel. Mae stated that her “favorite ways to learn” were through in person experiential activities and group discussions.

I have never taken a class or a portion of a class online, so I am not certain what to expect. The only potential benefits that I see are convenience and maybe slightly less burn out, but I think that convenience is likely only felt by those who live near [campus]. Concerning the burn out, I could see how maybe not physically attending class all weekend could be less taxing than being physically present for all three classes in the weekend format. However, I also think a good amount of learning happens in a group rather than us all on individual computers.

After the first weekend Mae reported being significantly more comfortable with hybrid learning and stated that logistically “she had a better understanding” of why it was “necessary” to have the online portions so she could more fully prepare for the face-to-face experiential activities and discussions during the face-to-face learning days.

Initially I was not sure how I would feel about the online portion, but I did enjoy it. I was able to go at my own pace, and then it was great to discuss with the small group the next day to see their perspective and get their take on the process. Being able to watch the theories in action, both through videos and class examples, where very helpful in identifying the use of different theories. I very much enjoyed the videos that had a consistent client. It helped me see the subtle differences between theories. The fact that we did several applied client conceptualizations helped me feel more comfortable with applying the theories through treatment plans. Most of the activities, discussions, and demonstrations were fantastic! I think the class discussion on where different theories are focused, has really helped me hone in on similarities and differences between theories. This has also helped me focus my readings.

Mae seemed to be a highly motivated learner and she was especially strong in advocating for and taking initiative in meeting her own learning needs. When asked about gaps in her learning Mae identified and was communicative with her instructors about areas of her learning that she felt could be improved upon throughout the course. For example, she reported that she had a more in depth understanding of the theories that were accompanied by face-to-face activities and in class discussions and stated that she
felt “slightly less comfortable” with the theories that were observed and discussed exclusively online. When she had questions or wanted additional feedback she reached out to her instructors and expressed her learning needs. Although Mae readily reached out for instructor support she was also consistently proactive in coming up with ways that she felt she could address gaps in her learning independently.

I don't think I feel as comfortable with Analytic Psychology, probably because I watched and did my reflection journals on the Adler video instead of the Jung video. I may go ahead and watch the Jung video and re-read this section of the textbook this week for more perspective.

Mae identified multicultural and social justice approaches as aligning most closely with her values and worldviews and reported that this was consistent with her view that context and culture matters when understanding and approaching client struggles and her belief that you cannot ignore one’s context and simply “see the world in black and white” terms.

I believe so strongly that culture can create such a different outlook for people. This was a lesson that I learned while deployed to Iraq. To be brief, while I was there, are large part of our mission was improving basic services and infrastructure within Baghdad. We completed projects to improve hospitals, water treatment plants, etc., but we did this through our own cultural lens. Long story short we were not nearly as effective as we could have been because we did not take the time to consider their cultural lens. They had fundamentally different ways of operating that wasn’t wrong but was different enough that we couldn’t adequately accommodate.

At the beginning of the course, when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others, Mae selected a picture of three cairns’ marking a trail on a rocky beach and paired the image with the words excited, helping, and positive influence. At the close of the course she again selected the image of the of three cairns’ and kept the word helping but this time replaced the words excited and positive influence with the words important and useful.
Lillian Patrick

Lillian reports that her current job is related to the online grocery industry. She described liking her job because it provides her with a high level of flexibility in the number of hours she works per week, ultimately allowing her to work less hours on weeks that she has class. Lillian also reported a number of years in a helping related field through her experiences as a child care provider. Lillian described learning best through lecture, discussions, group work, and activities. She also stated that videos “work for me as long as they are engaging”. She reported being “comfortable” accessing course materials online and despite reporting “a fair amount of anxiety” regarding the online component of the course she felt that having time to process on her own would be advantageous to her learning.

Since I have never taken an online course before, I don't know what to expect as far as my motivation and success. [However,] I foresee myself having the ability to think more clearly while taking this course online, because there will be no external pressure of an audience listening to me. I find that when I am alone, I do my best and clearest thinking, which ultimately works better for my instruction, my classmates, and me.

Lillian seemed to have a strong desire to be successful in the course and wanted to ensure that she got as much as possible out of her learning time. Lillian was highly motivated to complete each of the assignments and activities “correctly” and reached out for clarification and support via email consistently during online learning days and throughout the weeks between class. She emailed her instructors to ask for feedback and clarification an average of six times per day during online learning. Lillian described herself as “a perfectionist” and often asked her instructors to look over her posts and assignments to double check she “was doing everything right”. Lillian seemed to have a high motivation to perform well in front of her educators and peers. At times she seemed
frustrated by the constructivist learning environment and seemed to want her instructors to provide her with more concrete directives and factual information that would help her to determine a more linear step by step guide to engage in the counseling process.

I am a little unsure of what aspects of [the theories] are crucial for my understanding and applying them, both in terms of being able to write the papers and in terms of what we need to know about [the theories] to decide which is the best to use in counseling. What are the specific things you wanted us to take away from the class? I’m a very structured person, and I value lectures and direction. There was a lot of time spent discussing that I felt we could have moved on from.

While Lillian expressed comparatively more uncertainty and anxiety, she was not the only student who struggled with the constructivist learning environment and a shift from primarily lecture based learning where instructors take a more expert role. In response we (the two other instructors and I) tried to find ways to utilize the organizational tools to provide structure and scaffolding for students who found this transition to be uncomfortable. Group activities were constructed that would allow students to practice organizing concrete knowledge about the theories while still allowing space for students to construct their own meaning and learning. Lillian reported finding the four forces handouts and compare and contrast activity across multiple theories as helpful in providing more of the factual lecture type information she was looking for. While Lillian continued to describe a preference for face-to-face instruction and lecture, half way through the course she also began expressing significantly less frustration with the online and face-to-face discussions and activities.

At first I wasn’t sure about the group discussions but discussing in our groups has been helpful. This has allowed me to hear other people's perspective, while also hearing questions that I didn't think to ask. The groups have really allowed the content of the class to start to sink into my brain, which overall will help me remember more. The online content was great, because it allowed me to visualize many theories in the counseling
setting. I really enjoyed watching all of the different theories used with [the same client] and then comparing and contrasting them in class.

Lillian had a strong positive intention to reflect on and understand her own worldviews and beliefs in relation to the different theoretical perspectives. At times throughout the course she seemed to make statements that indicated she was experiencing uncertainty and cognitive dissonance regarding her theoretical preferences and values. She described finding that some of her values were consistent with person-centered theory, especially in terms of building rapport with clients and felt that the “combination of the readings, group discussions, and the compare/contrast exercises reinforced these preferences”. She stated that, “counseling should include a great deal of empathy, authenticity, understanding, and flexibility.” She also described a strong preference for cognitive behavioral theory which she felt was helpful because it “does not require clients to share as much intimate information [and] is also very structured which allows the clients to follow the treatment more easily”.

I see benefits in most of theories learned in class. Because no two stories are alike, it is impossible for me to choose just one that best fits my worldview. I am easily adaptable, and I will use the best theory to suite the client’s needs. I believe life is a continuum and we have to have the awareness that change happens. It is my belief that much of our culture’s suffering is due to our cognitions, and that we have the full ability to prevent and end any cognitive distress. I support the idea of neutrality. So long as we can accept and remain neutral over any circumstance in our lives, we will not experience distress.

At the beginning of the course, when asked to select three words and a picture that she felt captured her thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others, Lillian selected a picture of three cairns’ marking a trail on a rocky beach and paired the image with the words compassion, empathy, and self-awareness. At the close of the course she selected a
picture of a close up of two people holding hands and kept the word empathy but replaced the words compassion and self-awareness with reflection and open-minded.

**Adam Vaughn**

Adam reports working full time in an inpatient treatment center and specializes in drug and alcohol rehabilitation. He described working in addictions field for the last year and a half and stated that he is in the process of applying for his CAC II credential. He reported that the majority of his experiences in counseling have occurred through internship experiences where he primarily co-facilitated counseling groups. Adam stated that recently he has had more “chances to practice individual and family counseling” at his job. Adam reported being “comfortable” accessing course materials online and was generally enthusiastic from the onset of the course about participating in the hybrid structure. He described appreciating when his instructors broke up face-to-face lecture with activities and discussions to help “space the information out”. After the first weekend Adam reported that hybrid learning “exceeded his expectations”.

The online portion was much more useful than I expected. I took a theories course in undergrad and was nervous that this would be a repeat. I have been pleasantly surprised that the focus of the class is on critical analysis of the theoretical approaches in action. I think that the online format offers some benefits regarding group discussion by allowing all students the opportunity for more participation. I also think it is a more efficient means of utilizing our time. I believe that this course in particular is useful as a partial online class because of the large amount of information that we need to cover.

Adam seemed to have a strong desire to understand his “personal counseling style”. He seemed most interested in identifying specific ways that he could become more effective when addressing a diverse range of client needs and was eager to apply what he was learning to his current clinical practice. He often asked questions related to what makes counseling effective at both the client and counselor levels and was particularly
interested in integration of evidence based practice and how it could be reconciled with a counselor’s “natural style”. Adam described finding the online and face-to-face counseling demonstrations sessions as the most useful components of the hybrid learning environment in helping him to begin to better explore these questions.

The online sessions with [the same client] provided a clear understanding of how each approach is implemented and how the therapists view of a client's presenting problem can range dramatically depending on which theory they are using. The opportunity to participate in the counseling role plays with some of the theories was the most useful activity for me. Acting as the counselor and applying techniques from the theories helped me to gain an experiential understanding of what it would be like to approach therapy from a given perspective. These activities were the most beneficial in allowing me to begin understanding my own unique counseling style.

Adam described his personality and worldview as most closely aligning with humanistic and existential theories. He resonated with person-centered theory in terms of building the therapeutic alliance and felt that existential theory was an especially good fit with his personal values and worldview.

Existentialism is the most compatible theory with my worldview. I agree that individuals are driven toward growth and that counseling should be a collaborative process that emphasizes a client’s strengths and resources. However, existential questions regarding the nature of self, how to create meaning in life, and the nature of freedom or choice must be explored more critically with regard to contextual issues salient in a client’s life. I believe existentialism needs to be adapted to work with clients who endorse more collectivist worldviews. The humanistic framework inherently supports individualism and choice and it would be insensitive to impose these values onto a client.

At the beginning of the course, when asked to select three words and a picture that he felt captured his thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others, Adam selected a picture of ten people working together to untangle a fishing net on the beach and paired the image with the words compassion, connection, and change. At the close of the course he selected an image looking up at a large tree growing and branching out toward the sky...
he kept the word connection but replaced the words compassion and change with the words awareness and growth. He stated, counseling others is “about awareness, continual growth, and perseverance it incorporates a combination of sorrow and joy, which I believe represents the difficult yet beautiful process of counseling.”

**Interweaving an Aesthetic Whole: Case Based Themes**

There were a number of case based themes which consistently emerged across participant portraits and further illuminated participant’s experiences of cognitive complexity development in the hybrid learning environment. The themes clustered around each of my three primary research questions. Each set of case based themes is presented below and include a description of each theme followed by participant quotes that support the theme. The theme clustering’s are then represented in relation to one another through a visual representation.

**Impact of a Hybrid Learning Environment**

The first set of case based themes that emerged from the data were connected to research question number one and were specific to the counselors in training (CITs) descriptions of how the face to face and online learning environments’ impacted their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity. Participants identified three primary factors in the hybrid learning environment that they felt significantly impacted their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity. These factors included: observing theories in action, additional time to process and reflect on new information, and additional opportunities to practice theoretical application. Participants indicated that these three factors impacted their cognitive complexity development in two primary ways. They described these factors as first leading to increased awareness of their personal values,
worldviews, and preferred ways of knowing and understanding. Secondly they described these factors as leading to increased exposure to multiple perspectives that challenged their preferred worldviews and epistemological ways of knowing and understanding.

**Direct Observation of Theories**

The first factor that participants identified as significantly impacting their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity was directly related to their observing the theories in action through both the online counseling demonstration session videos and the in class face-to-face instructor and peer role play sessions. They described the observation of the theories in action as meaningful to their learning because they felt that it allowed for more in depth understanding and absorption of the theoretical information.

**Bertha:** Witnessing how a theory was used was much more meaningful to me than just reading or hearing lectures about it.

**Emma:** I am a visual learner so seeing the theories in action allowed me to internalize them more than reading about the different theories. Given how much time we spent watching the theories in action, it didn't make sense to use class time for a lot of lecture which freed up time for hands on activities.

**Larry:** I liked observing the online counseling sessions and the [in person] role plays because it allowed me to see more real examples of how theories are applied in session and understand the theories more in depth.

**Tanya:** I found observing the counseling sessions using different theories to be some of the most helpful parts of this course. Understanding the history and techniques of a theory from text and lectures is far different from seeing how the theories and techniques are used and applied in a session.

**Heidi:** I liked the online video demonstration sessions because they gave me the opportunity to see how a counselor would actually approach a session using a certain theory. Seeing each of the theories in session is way different than just reading about or learning about a theory.

**Vivian:** Observing the [instructor] role plays were the most useful in my learning. Seeing a counselor in action was just very enlightening in just basic micro skills as well as seeing individual theories put to use.
Additional Time to Process and Contemplate Information

The second factor that participants identified as significantly impacting their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity was attributed primarily to the online learning environment and directly related to having additional time to process information, go at their own pace, and contemplate and reflect on new information. Some participants noted that they also felt that they had more time to discuss and reflect on information in the in person face-to-face learning environment and attributed the additional class time to the efficiency of obtaining the theoretical information during the online learning days.

Adam: The online portion of the class allowed me to learn at my own pace and explore theories that I am less familiar with. I had already taken a theories of counseling course during my undergraduate studies, so the opportunity to choose my own focus and spend more time with theories that I was less familiar with was invaluable.

Vanessa: I enjoyed working from home and being able to move through material at my own pace. I thought it was helpful to be able to take my time studying parts of the material in depth. Then I could go back to my notes and parts of the reading for my journal entries. I found that all of the videos reinforced what I was reading in the text and in some cases, the videos helped me to understand parts of the theories that I didn't understand while reading. I believe that I was better able to learn the material from this class by having time to read, watch and reflect on my own. Having a good understanding of the material from the online content allowed me to better interact with my small group and the entire class. It helped me to feel more prepared and knowledgeable when discussing the material with others.

Lola: I like the flexibility of the online videos because they gave me the ability to think about things on my own and then I could rewind and re-watch as needed. This offered me more time to reflect because I was able to watch and then go back and pause to take notes and journal.

Vivian: I thought the online content was beneficial because I was able to move at my own pace and take a second to reflect on my own thoughts and then meeting with my group afterwards was much more meaningful when hearing everyone else's thoughts.
**Heidi:** The online content allowed me to learn in my own environment and go at my own pace. I liked when the counseling demonstration sessions would pause to ask about a skill, technique, or value related to what the counselor was saying or doing so I could practice identifying the skills/techniques related to the theories. This allowed me to really dig into the concrete details of each theory.

**Cecilia:** [The online learning environment] gives you the ability to take your time in processing the information on your own, rather than feeling restricted in a class room setting. It allowed me more time with the material and a private environment to contemplate and process the material without rushing.

**Bertha:** I found it useful that the videos were cut down to the point. I also appreciated that we were able to do them at our own pace and choice.

**Mae:** I felt that the online learning provided a more convenient and less time intensive environment - I could start at any time, I didn't have to get ready and travel anywhere, I could go back and re-watch parts of the video that I wasn’t understanding right away, etc.

**Opportunities to Practice**

**Theoretical Application**

The third factor that participants identified as significantly impacting their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity was attributed primarily to the face-to-face learning environment and was directly related to additional opportunities to practice theoretical application through the applied client scenarios and the small group role plays. Participants described experiential and problem based learning as being more engaging and felt it had more practical implications for preparing them to engage in the counseling process during practicum, internship, and for some participants at their current place of employment.

**Lola:** I have really appreciated all of the applied parts of the class. It has been helpful to see all the different counseling styles and to get to role play. It has been so much more valuable to practice applying what we are learning rather than being lectured at all day.
Becky: I feel that hands on applied activities are a lot more helpful than staring at a PowerPoint and taking notes. It grabs my attention more and I am able to remember the material much better than if it was just presented in a lecture or through reading assignments. I also thought it was very helpful to do the case conceptualization activities as a group. I had never gone through one before, so I found it to be very beneficial talking about applying theory and discussing the cases as a group.

Vanessa: Watching the role plays performed by [the instructors], and then role-playing within our groups really helped me to get a better understanding of how the theories are actually executed.

Bessie: It was nice to meet with my group and discuss our opinions when answering the questions for the client conceptualizations. This helped me to understand more of the different values behind each theory and encouraged me to evaluate how I would use each theory when coming up with treatment goals.

Heidi: All of the actual applied parts with the role-plays and the client scenarios were definitely my favorite part! I really liked the in class role plays because they gave me the opportunity to try it out myself. I was then able to go back to work on Monday and apply what I had learned when working with my clients and I had two very good sessions.

Vivian: I have really liked applying the theories to the client cases and I feel like I could use more practice putting treatment goals into the languages of different theories and trying to understand how that works.

**Increased Awareness of Values and Worldviews**

Participants indicated that direct observation of the theories in action, additional time to contemplate and reflect on the material they were learning, and opportunities to apply the theories through role play and client conceptualization activities increased their awareness of their personal worldview, values, and biases. Participants primarily attributed increased self-awareness to having additional time to reflect on course materials through the self-reflection journals that they completed during the online learning process. Many of the participants then went on to describe how this self-
awareness was then further expanded upon in the face-to-face learning environment through the experiential activities and discussions within their small groups. Participants described this self-awareness as necessary to understanding how their personal perspectives and experiences influenced theoretical preference and application.

**Mae:** I know that I have biases, but they are rarely at the forefront of my mind... [And] it is really easy to dismiss personal biases or not take the time to examine one’s actions and thoughts. So it helps me to see how what maybe I am doing, or thinking, or saying is being influenced by my biases. Talking about them and thinking about them gives me a chance to more fully examine my thoughts and actions and how those might affect my counseling practice. It served as a fantastic reminder that in order to be an effective counselor, I need to consistently remember what my biases are.

**Lillian:** Before this class I had never given the theories much thought in terms of applying them to my personal beliefs or values. The reflection journals and group discussions helped me to see how my values influence the way I see the world and how that could spill over into my preferred way of counseling others.

**Adam:** Working in the field of addictions, it is often expected that one will approach counseling from the cognitive or behavioral model and that these approaches are superior... The opportunity to explore counseling theories in a less biased manner allowed me the freedom to accept some of my reservations toward cognitive theory and helped me to more fully explore my personal worldview.

**Emma:** As I begin this journey to becoming a counselor, I am realizing I am going to have to constantly explore my own belief system and develop new ideas about what it takes to effectively counsel someone else.

**Bertha:** I believe that personal views and values play a part in the theories I preferred or favored over other theories. I preferred person-centered and multicultural theories and I think that may be partially a result of my belief in the power of developing strong relationships and my multicultural family background. I believe that as a counselor I will need to be culturally sensitive and not make assumptions in order to form strong relationships, like I would want someone to do with me. To do this, I would need to be in tune with multiple contextual levels and work to put aside any of my biases and judgments toward clients.

**Vivian:** I’ve always been pretty feminist... I felt like the gestalt session was kind of hard to watch. Dr. Perl’s method just seemed so counterintuitive to
me. He was extremely cold and pompous. While I was watching the video I found myself thinking ‘what a dick’ the whole time. I guess I got so defensive because I probably would’ve reacted the same way as Gloria did to his questioning. If you consider the time period and the prevalence of sexism it is understandable the statements that she makes. I felt somewhat differently about the gentler gestalt role play we watched [the instructors do] in class. I think my personal values about feminism and sexism colored the way I feel about this theory. This made me think that maybe in a setting where you already have rapport with the client you could use some of this kind of immediacy to challenge a client or make them more aware of their body language but I would not come out the gate with this approach.

**Increased Exposure to Multiple Perspectives**

Participants described direct observation of the theories in action, additional time to contemplate and reflect on the material they were learning, and opportunities to apply the theories through role play, client conceptualizations, and experiential activities as increasing their exposure to multiple perspectives and diverse experiences. Participants primarily attributed increased exposure to multiple perspectives to the in class role plays, client conceptualizations, small group discussions, and experiential activities completed in the face to face learning environment. Many of the participants connected this theme to their increased self-awareness which also fostered increased awareness of self in relation to others. Participant’s exposure to multiple perspectives often lead to the idea that multiple theories are simultaneously useful and the usefulness of a given theory is dependent on the client’s unique situation and salient identity factors.

**Tanya:** I had previously thought that CBT would not be useful with clients because of its narrow focus but after hearing more about why Beck felt this was necessary and applying it to our case, I could think of many situations or groups of people that could benefit from this approach. I had also previously viewed person-centered theory as too non-directive and thought that such a philosophical approach did not fit well with my personal style. However, after reading about this theory, watching a session where it was utilized, and talking with my group members I changed my mind. The importance of rapport was incredibly apparent and I became more open
minded about this approach and its techniques (e.g., warmth, genuineness, positive regard).

**Bessie:** In [one of the] client conceptualizations, I was able to see how a humanistic counselor would be beneficial in helping [the client] with her presenting concerns. At first, when watching the video [online], I thought about how multicultural and/or social justice would work best for her; however, after discussing [face-to-face] in class, I was able to see the benefits of a humanistic lens as well. This helped me to see how different approaches to counseling can work just as well as others, but that it really depends on the specific client and their situation.

**Vanessa:** I got so much out of the small group discussions and exercises. I found it really enjoyable to learn by building off of each other's input and experiences. I especially enjoyed talking with my small group about the client conceptualization plans and coming up with treatment goals and interventions based on the client case and theory. It helped me to expand my understanding of the theories by talking through the potential fit of a theory and hearing the different perspectives of my group members.

**Bertha:** During the role plays and client scenario activities, I learned a lot from the comments and feedback from my peers. I was able to see how each person approaches counseling situation differently.

**Cecilia:** I was not sure about the small group work at first… But I think it has been very helpful in this class. It was beneficial to discuss our reactions and ideas with the other students. It helped me to recognize how many interpretations there are for the same thing. It was a definitely a good reminder to keep an open mind at all times.

**Larry:** When talking with my group members about the client scenarios they had such good points. It helped me to consider some of the strengths and draw backs of applying theories with specific clients. I liked hearing my group members’ perspectives because it helped me to consider aspects of the client’s situation that I hadn’t thought about before.

**Mae:** Since this is my first class in the program, coming in I had a pretty narrow view of counseling techniques and theories. I was surprised to see so many different theories, and we didn’t even scratch the surface. I think spending two weekends discussing our perspectives on topics such as human nature really helped me to think more critically in those areas. I can now see positive aspects in all of the theories and believe that while theories can be useful for understanding a client the delivery and the therapeutic relationship are much more important factors.
This visual representation illustrates the themes described by participants regarding the ways in which the hybrid learning environment impacted their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity.

**Learning to Apply Theories and Developing Cognitive Complexity**

The second set of case based themes that emerged from the data were connected to research question number two and were specific to CITs descriptions of their experiences applying counseling theories and developing cognitive complexity. Participants consistently described two necessary conditions and two primary emotional experiences that were salient when reflecting on their process of learning to apply theory and developing cognitive complexity in the hybrid learning environment. First participants described this process as requiring trust and support and second they described the process as requiring a willingness to keep an open mind and step outside of...
one’s comfort zone. Participants then described this process as at times feeling uncomfortable and overwhelming but also feeling worthwhile, empowering, and rewarding overall.

**Requires Trust and Support**

The necessary condition of trust and support was often related to participant’s ability to share and begin to critically examine their own lived experiences, worldviews, biases, and beliefs with others, most commonly face-to-face within their small group. However, a few students described feeling it was easier to first share differing perspectives with their group member during online discussions that were not face-to-face. When describing this theme, participants often used words and phrases like: felt safe, non-judgmental, responsive, listened to, cared about, supported, able to be more genuine, accepted, connected, and invested in.

**Beatrice:** I was really comfortable with my group. I think that was due to the fact that we spent so much time together during the course. We sat together for several days and were very supportive of each other and were able to become comfortable with each other before we went in to the role plays. The small groups felt much safer than being in front of a class of mostly strangers. Not only were we comfortable in our role plays, the use of the small groups allowed us to create some real relationships and support for the class and the program as a whole. I think four was the perfect number. We all really were supportive of each other and I think we each felt invested in the other members of the group.

**Cecilia:** I think everyone was coming from the same place in that we were all really interested in learning how to do counseling. So we knew we all had that same goal which allowed people to talk and discuss things and be more open than they might be in other classes. And everyone was supportive and could share, even when we disagreed, because it wasn’t ever judgmental… I did not think I would enjoy role playing but since it was within our small group I found it to be very helpful. I was able to gain confidence from [the instructors’] and my group members’ suggestions after my first role play and I felt a lot more comfortable the second time around.
**Tanya:** I did not find many limitations with the online portion of the class because my group was really understanding. We were available to one another to talk through different ideas and we were able to compromise and be sensitive to each member’s needs and time management difficulties.

**Becky:** I am not saying you guys [the instructors] just took our hands or anything. But you were willing to actually show us how to do it and you were like it is okay we are here to help you. So then we weren’t afraid to ask you. Because it felt more safe. Instead of [you] acting like we should somehow already know how to do it. You guys made it feel like it was okay to just try it out and then you would be available when we needed more guidance.

**Vanessa:** I have really enjoyed all the role playing done within our groups. It has been very helpful to have professors who take the time to support and guide our group along by giving us feedback during the role plays. During one of the role plays I was able to get some good practice in my ‘ways of being’ and I really valued [the instructor’s] input and guidance during that activity.

**Requires Stepping Outside of Comfort Zone**

The necessary condition of remaining open minded and being willing to step outside of one’s comfort zone was often directly related to participants’ feelings of connection and trust with one another and a desire to understand other’s differing perspectives and worldviews. When describing this theme, participants often used words and phrases like: being open to other ideas, being capable of change, and a willingness to be flexible. Participants also described the ability to stay open to and explore other perspectives as requiring persistence, continual growth, and perseverance.

**Bessie:** Taking this class made me open my mind up to different theoretical approaches and helped me to recognize the usefulness and importance of multiple theories depending on the client’s situation… It helped me to kind of feel what seemed more natural to me… But then also forced me to be like okay, no, today we are going to try multiculturalism or existentialism, or whatever. So then it would make me go out of my box so I really liked that too. Like it pushed us outside of our comfort zones and forced us to think about it in other ways.
Becky: Staying in a comfortable zone won’t help you in the end; it will only help you in the meantime.

Lola: I think that we all brought really different viewpoints which helps you to consider new ideas. We also could bounce our ideas off of each other. This helped me see other points of view and ways of looking at counseling and also made some of my opinions change.

Emma: [I realized that] trying to force a client’s situation to fit what I find comfortable is based on what is good for me instead of what is best for them.

Lillian: Discussing in our groups allowed me to hear other peoples’ perspectives... This class broadened my mind in understanding the importance of finding the theories that work best on a personal level [for the counselor] while also being prepared to incorporate elements of other theories depending on the client. This skill will be invaluable for me as a counselor to be able to connect with and help a wide range of people.

Larry: When people would ask me where my theoretical framework is grounded from, I generally would say cognitive/behavioral. After all, much of my training has centered around [these approaches] so they were the most comfortable to me. However, after getting more exposure to the more recent forces in counseling like postmodern, multicultural, social justice, existential, and humanistic, I feel like my grounding is starting to shift. The more recent forces seem to provide more contextual information, and allow for more emphasis on human potential. This standpoint is more appealing for those of us with faith in humanity!

Can Feel Overwhelming and Uncomfortable

Participants sometimes described the process of learning to apply theories and developing cognitive complexity as feeling uncomfortable and overwhelming. These emotional experiences were primarily described in two contexts. They were first described in the context of challenging personal beliefs and values by stepping outside of one’s comfort zones and were again expressed in the context of exploring personal reactions to the idea of working with hypothetical clients during the applied conceptualization activities. Participants used words and phrases like: it shakes you up,
it’s a lot of pressure, challenging, overwhelming, nervous, scared, insecure, flustered difficult, and makes you feel vulnerable.

**Beatrice:** The [first online portion of the course] was tougher than I thought it would be. It was a long emotional day with a lot of self-reflection. I felt overwhelmed and drained at the end of the day… [And] initially I think I am going to have a lot of fears working with everybody! I just want so badly to help them. And I mean you guys have been doing it for a while so you may feel more comfortable with it. But my biggest fear is am I going to fail? You know…And I am thinking am I going to be good enough to help them? And so it is really vulnerable.

**Becky:** I think it is just really complicated and there are a lot of layers… I mean if I wouldn’t have had the theories class I would have been so scared. Even just thinking about how complicated it is to do this with a client I am feeling a bit overwhelmed right now. Because I feel like the other professors… Not that they are being harsh I guess but they are not always as understanding about how scary it can feel.

**Vivian:** [When doing one of the applied client conceptualization activities] I found myself having a strong reaction to [the client]. I felt afraid that I might hurt her. I also felt insecure not having had the same experiences as her because I worry she will think that I can’t understand or relate to her situation.

**Cecilia:** [When doing one of the applied client conceptualization activities] I definitely had a lot of compassion and empathy for [the client] and his situation but would be very nervous to have him as a client at this time. His issues are so far from anything I have ever personally experienced or been around so I would need to learn a lot more about the process and the important aspects of coming out as transgender. It’s incredibly difficult for me to see the pain he is in.

**Bertha:** [When doing one of the applied client conceptualization activities] I really had to hold back my emotions. I think that hard part of this scenario is that it shook me up and hit home for me. It was very hard to separate out my personal experiences. I immediately thought that counseling her would be difficult for me.
Can Feel Worthwhile and Empowering

When asked to describe the general process of learning to apply theories and developing cognitive complexity participants overwhelmingly described the process in positive emotional terms. At times when I was conducting member checks participants who had originally described uncomfortable and overwhelming emotions would deny these emotional reactions and ensure me that the process felt more rewarding and empowering overall than uncomfortable or scary. Some participants clarified that the process felt challenging in specific moments when they were stuck, however they seemed to describe the sensation of becoming unstuck, seeing more options, and reaching more of a synthesis as liberating, intrinsically rewarding, and almost addictive. When describing emotional experiences related to learning to apply theories, they used words and phrases like: fulfilling, encouraging, optimistic, motivating, helpful, necessary, important, meaningful, and mutually beneficial.

Cecilia: I just got a lot out of the theories class because sometimes [during the discussions] I would be like thinking I totally disagree with this person! Not in a disrespectful way. But I just see it completely differently and it was good for me to feel that way. Because then I got to just listen and hear people out. And try to understand where they are coming from. So it was good to be put in that position. And I think you can always find something to connect with and that part feels really good. Then if you know more about the person you can probably find out more about why they think the way that they think. That is what I like about counseling. I love just trying to understand people. It is fascinating! Just getting to know people and hearing their stories and connecting with them on that.

Mae: I feel like I walked away from the class much more comfortable with the theories. And the whole process [of exploring my own biases] was liberating in a way I guess. I enjoyed taking the time to examine myself and start to see areas where I can continue to grow or improve.

Beatrice: The cognitive therapies can feel very non-emotional which can be very reassuring to someone like myself who isn’t very comfortable expressing emotion… [However] my eureka moment really came when I
watched the existential session. As I watched the session, I knew that this therapy was the one that ‘felt’ like a real fit for me and who I am at my core. The values and beliefs of the emotion-focused theories all fit really well with my beliefs…I really connected with this whole process.

**Bessie:** Well I want you to know that theories really helped me to feel more confident in myself. Because if I were to have done this [conceptualized a client scenario through multiple theoretical lenses] before theories I don’t think I would have been able to do it at all… Before I would have had far less of this. So even though it is complicated it gives me a little more hope that maybe I can do this.

**Heidi:** This whole class was awesome and just really motivated me! At first I thought it was a little too ambitious but then the way you guys set up the online part. It was crazy how helpful it was. Especially for my first class too. When we were using the conceptualization cards [to talk through a client scenario] I was like damn! We are talking about this for a long time and really diving into every detail of it. I am just glad I had the theories class first because that definitely will help to have it as the foundation for the other classes.

![Figure 15. Participant Experiences of Cognitive Complexity Development](image)

This visual representation illustrates participants’ descriptions of their experiences during the process of learning to apply counseling theories and developing cognitive complexity.
Cognitive Complexity Demonstrated by Participants

The third set of case based themes that emerged from the data were connected to research question number three and were specific to how CITs demonstrate cognitive complexity when considering client struggles. Participants’ cognitive complexity development was most clearly evident within the domain of theoretical assessment and application in relation to the applied client conceptualization activities completed online and in the face-to-face learning environment. Participants’ cognitive complexity built upon three previously identified factors: increased ongoing self-reflection, increased awareness of self in relation to others, and increased exposure to multiple perspectives and ways of knowing. These factors were recursively interrelated. Participants demonstrated cognitive complexity through an increased ability to monitor their personal reactions, increased awareness of multiple perspectives, more accurate evaluations of their own strengths and limitations, and attempts to correct for personal biases and limitations through seeking out alternative perspectives and ways of knowing.

Increased Ability to Monitor Personal Reactions

Participants demonstrated cognitive complexity when considering client struggles through an increasing ability to monitor and report their personal reactions in the moment. As participants developed cognitive complexity they became increasingly aware of how their own contexts, experiences, values, biases, and worldviews impacted the way that they understood and planned to intervene with client struggles.

Cecilia: I feel like it would just be hard for me to counsel [this client] … it just seems really challenging. Because even if he is connecting with me he might not show it or he might just sort of seem angry or distant. And sometimes with me… I guess that is something that I need to work on more… But sometimes I want to just keep pushing for that connection with people. Because I just want so badly to feel like this is a positive thing we
have going. And so I will go extra, extra, and keep trying to draw that in to feel like we are connecting. So for me I would have to be like okay no. This is just where he is at right now and it might just take some time for him to feel that trust and connection. And so it would be tough for me just being there with that and staying with that you know? But I think it would be really rewarding. I just think it would take a lot longer to get there with him.

**Heidi:** I worry that I would try and solve [the client’s] problems too quickly. Because I really want to help him. So I worry I would go into- okay well you need to do this. Or we need to use a technique to help you to quit doing that. You know that kind of thing. And I mean I think depending on the relationship some of the interventions we talked about later down the road would be good. But at first, right off the bat, not so much. So trying to not jump into solution focused or CBT right away. Really staying with the humanistic and taking the time to build that rapport first. Especially with his difficulty trusting others. You would need to fight the instinct to fix it and put more of the trust in the relationship and trying to just understand him and empathize with him. I mean just that would take a fair number of sessions. So making sure I am not jumping the gun.

**Mae:** I think the thing that really concerns me about working with [this client] is that he clearly needs family counseling. So working with a group of four people at once. Just making sure I am not taking sides and maintaining that balance. And I think I would be able to but I think that would be something that I would have to be constantly thinking about and reflecting on. So being like okay how is this one thing that I am saying to this person right now being perceived by the other three in the room? And just making sure that I am keeping on top of it and I’m not coming off judgmental towards any of them. There is just a lot more to think about all at once and it becomes more complicated.

**More Accurate Evaluation of Strengths and Limitations**

As participants became better able to monitor their personal reactions to client struggles they became increasingly aware of potential areas of countertransference and were more accurately able to identify their own potential strengths and limitations when working with specific clients in specific situations. They also became increasingly able to identify when personal limitations would require them to seek additional perspectives, further training, consultation, and supervision.
**Emma:** I immediately felt that counseling [this client] would be incredibly challenging. I imagine that is something as counselors we will have to deal with all the time. Clients may share things with us that we have struggled with or that we are struggling with. Part of me feels like it has the potential to be a strength in our relationship building with a client because we can empathize and understand. At the same time, I think it could make it difficult not to project my experiences on to the client. Although she reports being at a 1 or 2 regarding suicidal ideation now, that could change in an instant if [her husband’s] condition worsens. That said, I think that counseling would be crucial to her safety and quality of life as she deals with her husband's illness and impending death. Because of my personal experiences compassion fatigue could be a significant issue. I found myself wondering how a counselor prepares for sessions with a client with these sorts of immediate needs.

**Becky:** I think I would want to check in with my supervisors more and talk it all through like we just did before working with [this client]. Because then I feel more confident about what I’m planning on doing. I am just feeling a little in over my head. I think my biggest fear would be making it worse… Just because of the suicide thing. I don’t feel like I have had enough training to know how to deal with that. I guess that is something that I am kind of afraid of because you just don’t know if he is going to hurt himself or if he would try to kill himself. So if he did something to harm himself I would be really hurt. That would be really hard for me.

**Bertha:** I think it would be very hard to keep my emotions together but I think to actually help [the client] I would need to try to stop [judging the client’s father]. So just trying to see what it is like from a different perspective would be helpful. Just like the exercise with the items on the table in class. Everyone sees different things from different angles, and we need to place ourselves in different places and see the different aspects of the situation. Almost like trying to get a 360-degree view of things.

**Inductively Altering Approach in Response to Alternative Perspectives**

Participants demonstrated cognitive complexity when considering client struggles by recognizing the usefulness of multiple perspectives and through altering their approaches in response to exposure to new perspectives and new information. When considering a broad range of client struggles they began to articulate that there was not a single correct way to approach counseling. Participants also began to demonstrate shifts
in their cognitive perceptions by articulating their epistemological assumptions, for example, by endorsing the idea that multiple truths could exist simultaneously. Additionally, participants’ use of language became more tentative indicating that they were less certain regarding the degree to which anything could be fully known. They seemed to make statements that indicated that they were more aware that counseling would need to be approached inductively and they were better able to tolerate the uncomfortable feelings associated with the high level of ambiguity present in the hypothetical client scenarios. The ‘best’ theory in any given situation began to be conceptualized as contextual, and decisions were made based on the best available knowledge about a client at that time with a recognition, that in some cases, more information would be needed to make an informed treatment decision.

**Vivian:** I think the most important thing I learned from this class was the emphasis on the client/counselor relationship and how it necessitates empathy and unconditional positive regard, which I fully recognize with some clients may be extremely difficult for me. However, it is logical to me that these factors must be the base of the therapeutic relationship in order for counseling to be effective. I like the idea of having a more person-centered base because I think a client should find warmth and safety with their counselor. From there the counselor can select a theory and tailor a combination of its techniques to fit a specific client’s needs and situation. When selecting an approach, it is important to remember that theories are not one size fits all. I see every individual and every situation as unique and I feel like a lot of counselors are too soon to jump the gun and come to conclusions about people without actually taking the time to build a relationship with them and get their background so they can view them in context. I think when tailoring an approach to fit a client it is important to take your time and be intentional because just bouncing around between too many theories and techniques could become confusing and unhelpful to the client and therefore ineffective.

**Emma:** After my experience in the theories course it became evident that there is no one ‘right’ theory in any situation. Common factors research is a perfect example of how the theories overlap and intertwine. Given that reality, I think it would be irresponsible to ascribe to just one theory… The types of questions and strategies I would use in a session will vary
depending on the client’s situation, but I think it will always be important to seek out and acknowledge the things that my client is already doing well. I also think it is important to consider context and individual needs when determining what approach to use and what strategies to implement with a client. People are ever-changing creatures that exist in an ever-changing world. As a counselor I think it is so important that we are able to adjust and intentionally tailor our approach to match the needs of our clients.

Adam: The humanistic perspective is an obvious fit for me because of my optimistic view of human nature and belief that individuals possess an inherent drive towards growth. However, I do not fully agree with Rogers’s assertion that the core-conditions of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence are sufficient for client growth. In other words, the therapeutic alliance is a necessary but not automatically sufficient condition for change in every situation. The emphasis on the idea that all theories are concurrently valid and limited contributed to my development and helped me to articulate a more personally authentic viewpoint. The notion that there is no one correct way of viewing client problems, human nature, healthy functioning, or the counseling relationship was a critical component of my development and learning experience.

Vanessa: I believe even more firmly now that no one theory is better than others. Before taking the course I held a mostly negative view of psychodynamic, cognitive, and behavioral theories. I actually believe that I have more respect for these theories than I did before taking this course. I have more of an appreciation for the ideas these theories have contributed to the field of counseling because I can see how they impacted the development of the more recent forces. I now believe that each theory is beneficial and has made great contributions to the field of counseling. As a future counselor, I will choose to build relationships with my clients through a person-centered lens, but will integrate techniques from several theories based on what I believe to be most useful for the client. I believe every client has the ability to change and grow when they feel supported and accepted by their counselor. However, in some cases, I do not think person-centered theory can serve as the only type of counseling. I imagine that some clients may need a more direct approach. The focus on emotions in humanistic theories may lead some clients to feel uncomfortable during a session. I believe counselors need to remain aware of a client’s cultural context, and acknowledge that a heavy emphasis on verbalizing and expressing emotions may not be the best fit for everyone.
Figure 16. Participants’ Process of Cognitive Complexity Development

Figure 16 is a visual representation that illustrates the ways in which participants demonstrated cognitive complexity development in the process of learning to apply counseling theories in the hybrid learning environment. Practicing ongoing self-reflection led to participants having an increased awareness of their own personal contexts and an increased ability to monitor their personal reactions. This led to increased awareness of self in relation to others and increased awareness of multiple perspectives which in turn led to participants being better able to evaluate their own strengths and limitations. The ability to recognize personal limitations prompted participants to attempt to correct for personal biases through seeking out alternative perspectives and ways of knowing. In the process of seeking to integrate and assess a broader range of perspectives and
epistemological assumptions participants once again engaged in self-reflexive practices thus starting the cycle over once again.

Figure 16 also illustrates the significant overlap and parallel pathways’ that this process seems to follow in relation to the recursive superstructure. The primary difference observed in this sequence was that cognitive complexity development seemed to almost always begin with counselors in training engaging in self-reflection and exploring personal contexts while the process of evaluating theoretical fit in the context of client conceptualizations seemed to begin with exploring client context with an awareness of self in relation to the client.

A Recursive Process of Identifying and Evaluating Theoretical Lenses

The last set of case based themes that emerged from the data were connected to research sub-question 3a and were specific to CITs descriptions of the recursive process of identifying and evaluating applying theoretical lenses when presented with client cases involving diverse contexts and client intersectional identity factors. During the individual qualitative interviews some participants provided additional descriptions of the framework and steps that they followed during the applied hypothetical client conceptualization activity to identify and evaluate theoretical lenses. Participant descriptions of this process were of particular interest because cognitive complexity development was most visible in the domain of theoretical assessment and application in relation to the applied client conceptualization scenarios. Words that participants used to characterize this process included: complicated, complex, repetitive, overlapping, interconnected, and linking. They also tended to describe starting with a number of
specific details and then organizing the details into larger, broader, or more general categories.

**Mae:** I guess I would describe the process as getting the background information and presenting problem through the video and the written client case. And from that pulling out significant themes that kept coming up again and again throughout the case study. And using those themes to really think about in detail how they relate and who my client is and what is effecting their world. And I think picking out the significant themes it helps you to move towards kind of like the broader key words or themes that you want to continue to key in on because these tend to be the things that you think are most important. And so it helps you to match the most important factors affecting the client’s world to more general things like goals or objectives… And then that allows you to start to come up with an overall strategy concerning the four forces in terms of sort of figuring out the best theoretical fit… And that kind of starts to organize it. I think. Or it makes it more apparent how you would go about interacting with a client and kind of understanding more of what their world looks like for them so you can figure out how you could best adapt your approach and work with them based on that.

**Cecilia:** I just got some basic knowledge about the client from the video and then I brainstormed about the different things that I saw come up in the video as red flags or markers or whatever you want to call them. And then just kind of thinking about this person needing help in the context of all these overlapping markers. So based on the way they all come together kind of going with your instinct about what would be the most helpful way to start untangling it. So it might not be correct or anything. But usually that provides you with enough understanding about the person that you have a strong intuition about how you might approach them. And then based on that just trying to think through each theoretical lens to assess the fit for them. So how would it benefit them and in what ways does it fit with the rest of the markers? So yeah. The markers help you come at it first with a way of being and so how would I generally kind of conduct myself in the counseling session with this person and then thinking about based on my understanding of them what general theoretical approach would be the most useful to kind of help with the details or to intervene with some of the specific markers within each situation.

Notice that both participant quotes follow a similar pattern. They describe utilizing the information in the video and the written client conceptualization to gather background information about the client and their situation in general. Next they both
describe deconstructing the information in the client case scenario to differentiate significant themes or markers. Once they have differentiated the themes/markers they describe exploring how the themes/markers relate or overlap with one another in an effort to better understand the client’s perspective, worldview, and context.

Once they have constructed their working hypotheses about the client’s way of understanding and interacting in the world they both describe returning to their own personal contexts and personal interpretations to fill gaps in understanding and make meaning. This personal meaning making process allows them to integrate and reduce the themes/markers into broader categorical dimensions while simultaneously remaining aware that their interpretation may not be fully correct and that they will need to be fluidly alter their approach according to the client’s responses. Interestingly, Cecilia refers to this as an intuitive or instinctual process while Mae describes it as deciding and keying in on what she thinks is most important. From there they both describe coming up with a general strategy to assess the fit of multiple theories based on the extent that each theoretical force matches with their conceptual understandings of the integrated themes/markers. Lastly they describe how their conceptual ways of understanding would inform their interpersonal ways being with the client in session and how that process would create a baseline for ongoing identification, integration, and refinement of the themes/markers which would ultimately inform how they would work with the client through technical ways of intervening.
Figure 17. *Participants’ Framework for Client Conceptualization*

This visual representation illustrates the ways in which participants described the framework and steps that they followed during the applied hypothetical client conceptualization activities to identify and evaluate theoretical lenses for a given client scenario. It is congruent with the steps outlined in the recursive superstructure and in many ways parallels the pathways that participants occupy during cognitive complexity development with the primary difference being the point of entry as they started with exploring the client’s context rather than their own personal context.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: How do counselors in training describe face-to-face and online learning as impacting their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity?</td>
<td>Through observing theories in action&lt;br&gt;Through additional time to process &amp; reflect on new information&lt;br&gt;Through additional opportunities to practice theoretical application&lt;br&gt;Led to increased awareness of personal worldviews and values and increased exposure to multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: How do counselors in training who are enrolled in a hybrid theories of counseling course describe the process of applying counseling theories and developing cognitive complexity?</td>
<td>Requires trust &amp; support&lt;br&gt;Willingness to have an open mind &amp; to step outside of one’s comfort zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: How do counselors in training demonstrate cognitive complexity through multiplistic or relativistic ways of thinking when considering client struggles?</td>
<td>Increased ability to monitor personal reactions&lt;br&gt;Increased awareness of multiple perspectives&lt;br&gt;Increasingly accurate evaluations of their strengths and limitations&lt;br&gt;Attempts to correct for personal biases and limitations by seeking alternative perspectives and ways of knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3a: How do counselors in training describe the recursive process of identifying and evaluating theoretical lenses when presented with client cases involving diverse contexts and intersectional identity factors</td>
<td>Overlapping, cyclical, complicated, complex, repetitive, interconnected, and linking&lt;br&gt;Starting with specific markers and then organizing them into more broad or general categories</td>
</tr>
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Summary

In this chapter I presented participants’ demographic data across the course as a whole. I then presented fifteen individual participant developmental portraits. Each developmental portrait began by providing context for each participant through detailing their previous and current experiences in helping related fields, their preferred ways of learning, and their comfort engaging with the hybrid learning environment at the onset of the course. Next, participant portraits provided information regarding participant’s experiences engaging with the hybrid learning environment throughout the course including the ways that they perceived the hybrid learning environment as influencing their understanding of theoretical application and cognitive complexity development. Participant portraits concluded with illustrations of participant development through changes in self-reflexivity, openness to multiple perspectives, tolerance of ambiguity, and critical evaluation of theory based on context.

Case based themes which consistently emerged across participant portraits were then presented to create an aesthetic whole and further illuminate participant’s experiences of cognitive complexity development in the hybrid learning environment. The first set of case based themes were specific to CITs descriptions of how face to face and online learning environments impacted their understanding of theoretical application and their development of cognitive complexity. Three primary factors were identified as impacting this developmental process and included: observing theories in action, additional time to process and reflect on new information, and additional opportunities to practice theoretical application. Participants indicated that these three factors impacted their cognitive complexity development in two primary ways. First, they led to increased awareness of participant values, worldviews, and preferred ways of knowing and
understanding. Second, they led to increased exposure to multiple perspectives that challenged participant’s preferred worldviews and epistemological ways of knowing and understanding.

The second set of case based themes were specific to CITs descriptions of their experiences applying counseling theories and developing cognitive complexity. First, participants described the developmental process as requiring trust and support. Second, they described it as requiring a willingness to keep an open mind and step outside of one’s comfort zone. Participants then described this developmental process as at times feeling uncomfortable and overwhelming and feeling worthwhile, empowering, and rewarding overall.

The third set of case based themes were specific to how counselors in training demonstrated cognitive complexity when considering client struggles. Participants’ demonstrations of cognitive complexity built upon three previously identified factors: increased ongoing self-reflection, increased awareness of self in relation to others, and increased exposure to multiple perspectives and ways of knowing. These factors were recursively interrelated. Participants demonstrated cognitive complexity through an increased ability to monitor their personal reactions, increased awareness of multiple perspectives, more accurate evaluations of their own strengths and limitations, and attempts to correct for personal biases and limitations through seeking out alternative perspectives and ways of knowing.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Participants’ individual developmental portraits and the case based themes that emerged from my research provided a thick and rich description of counselors in training (CITs) cognitive complexity development, grounded in participant engagement with one another and with the hybrid learning environment. Participants described their experiences of becoming more self-reflexive and open to multiple perspectives which ultimately allowed them to challenge their preferred ways of knowing and understanding. Additionally, CITs demonstrated cognitive complexity development by selecting, applying, and tailoring counseling theories in the context of hypothetical client scenarios with unique intersecting socio-cultural, developmental, and relational factors.

Participants shared their struggles as they sought to better understand how to meet the needs of diverse clients with differing beliefs, values, attitudes, and worldviews from their own. Next, participants demonstrated cognitive complexity development through: (1) an increased ability to monitor their personal reactions, (2) increased awareness of multiple perspectives, (3) more accurate evaluations of their own strengths and limitations, and (4) attempts to correct for personal biases and limitations by seeking alternative perspectives and ways of knowing. The results of this study could be used to inform the intentional design, structuring, and scaffolding of reflective practices, interactive online videos and discussions, and experiential face-to-face activities for counseling theories courses. The results of this study could also benefit counselor
educators and supervisors by helping them to better understand how CITs develop cognitive complexity and how educators and supervisors can construct learning environments that may encourage ongoing self-reflexivity and cognitive complexity development across an interwoven curriculum of counseling courses.

**Hybrid Approaches Impact on Development**

My study shared some findings with Moran and Milsom’s (2015) study on flipped classroom approaches in counselor education. For example, participants in Moran and Milsom’s (2015) study reported that completing online activities (i.e., assigned reading paired with blackboard discussions) prior to class helped them feel more prepared to engage in class activities and discussions. Participants in my qualitative portraiture case study also reported that pre-class and online class activities, including the assigned readings, online videos, reflection journals, and small group discussion responses, helped them feel more prepared to meaningfully engage during the face-to-face experiential activities and discussions. Through requiring students to watch assigned videos and complete reflection journals outside of class time as well as during the online portions of the course, participants were exposed to a greater range of theoretical information (Mason et al., 2013), which allowed for additional face-to-face time engaging in experiential activities that helped to solidify learning.

**Beatrice:** I've really liked the way we would do the readings, then watch the videos, then answer the reflection questions because they build on each other. It prepares you to try each theory out through the case conceptualizations and role plays. This really made me think about how to apply the theories we learned by going through the process and also made me see where I might still have questions about some concepts or techniques.

All fifteen participants in my study reported that they found the online videos to be useful to their learning. Moreover, participants reported experiencing the majority of
videos as engaging. Participants described finding the counseling demonstration videos, which showed the theories being applied in session, to be more engaging and useful to their learning when compared to the theoretical context videos which provided background information on the development and tenets of the major theoretical clustering’s. While participants found the theoretical context videos to be less valuable to their learning when compared with the counseling demonstration videos, the majority of participants reported that they still felt the theoretical context videos were worthwhile in terms of seeing the original theorists describing their perspectives and values and in terms of understanding the socio-cultural context in which a theory emerged.

**Tanya:** During the 1960’s in the United States there was a push towards validating free thinkers. The emergence of Humanistic approaches mirrored this new type of person. It defines a fully functional person as one that is honest, aware, free, and trusting, not only in the way that they relate to others but of how they relate to themselves and their environment. One who is “free” is described as being in the moment and spontaneous, who is not acting for an audience. In this era that was a new and exciting position to take, one that defied previous socially driven roles. People were more willing to discuss their feelings and desires. Humanists also emphasized genuineness and promoted self-actualization that was individualized and accepting. It is now easy for me to see how this cultural shift in the US impacted the creation of this force of therapy.

Participants in my study overwhelming expressed a preference for the videos when compared with the assigned course readings and reported that the videos were more engaging, efficient, and more facilitative of their learning. Participants primarily attributed the usefulness of the videos to seeing the theories in action, in the context of an actual counseling session. Some participants described finding the assigned readings more valuable after watching the videos, which they reported helped to clarify and expand upon the readings. Interestingly, participants in my study who had taken previous online or hybrid courses tended to express dislike for online learning environments that
primarily utilized a combination of assigned readings, narrated PowerPoints, and/or discussion board posts, and described these formats of online learning as significantly less facilitative of their development compared to interactive video based approaches.

It seems likely that participants experienced a majority of videos utilized in the online learning environment as engaging, because of the way in which they were intentionally edited and structured. Specifically, the videos were intentionally modified to be concise (between 15-25 minutes total) while maintaining what I identified as the most meaningful elements of the video to facilitate CITs development. The on screen text and skill/value question slides used in the online videos, in combination with the online reflection journals and online small group discussions were specifically intended to make the online learning environment more interactive. The primary purpose of the on screen text and skill/value slides was to build in consistent elements that encouraged participants to begin to procedurally recognizing both the use of the microskills across theories as well as skills/techniques related to specific theories.

Adding transparent text elements to videos seemed to facilitate and concretize the process of moving between abstract theoretical hypotheses and applied counseling interventions for counselors in training during beginning stages of development. Through providing opportunities for CITs to observe counselors utilizing a skill in the moment, allowing them to observe the client’s response to the skill, and then prompting them to reflect and write about what they observed the counselor saying and doing in the session, participants seemed to construct their own understandings and come to more meaningful realizations about the use and impact of a skill or technique than if they had simply been given this information through reading or lecture.
Lillian: [When watching one of the counseling demonstration videos] I found myself trying to understand the difference between open and closed questions. Throughout the video, there were captions that pointed out when each was being used. From what I could tell from the video, it seemed that closed questions were more along the lines of a yes/no answer, and open questions were the ones provoking a broader/more fluid answer from the client.

The skill/value slides interspersed throughout the counseling demonstration session videos gave CITs a chance to practice skill and value identification while encouraging them to actively engage with the video. This was partially in response to Moran and Milsom’s (2015) finding that participants rated their online pre-class reading and discussion board posts as only moderately or somewhat facilitative of their learning, and several of the participants in their study specifically indicated that more interactive online components would have been more useful to their learning and development.

Only a handful of participants in my study explicitly discussed the ways in which they felt the on screen text and question slides impacted their learning. However, the majority of participants referenced portions of the on screen text and the skill/value slides in their reflection journals when describing their observations related to the counselor’s personal style and what they saw the counselor saying and doing in the video. A few participants made comments that indicated that they were unaware that these components did not come standard with the videos. For example, one participant reported that, when seeking out other counseling session demonstration videos through the library, that she found “the subtitles on the other videos weren’t working correctly”. The majority of participants who explicitly mentioned these components of the videos did so through describing them in the context of being able to re-watch a skill or technique and then pausing and take notes for their journal entries.
**Lola:** The video with Ellis and Gloria stands out as one that was most useful to my learning. I remember watching it and seeing the text come across the screen and then I would rewind and watch each segment again to analyze the techniques he was using and to see the way Gloria was reacting. I thought that he challenged her just enough and she was able to feel a sense of growth in that short period of time. I was then able go back, watch again, and pause to take notes.

Participants that chose to spend extra time watching videos and completing reflection journals described being particularly excited about trying the theories out either through the role play activities or with their own clients at their place of employment, and they felt that the videos were useful in helping them to understand how to give counseling. It seems probable that the extra time that some participants spent engaging with the online learning environment directly benefited not only themselves personally, but also their group members, as these participants likely drew on their additional learning, sharing it during the small group discussions and demonstrating and modeling it during the role plays. It also seems likely that the videos were especially compelling for CITs in early developmental stages because many of them were learning what counseling was and how to do it for the first time.

It is common for counselors in training at this developmental stage to idealize and attempt to imitate counseling experts and then engage in self-reflective and self-evaluative behaviors as they try to organize and understand the dynamic and inductive nature of the counseling relationship and process (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010). The counseling demonstration videos allowed counselors in training to have direct access to experts that they could repeatedly observe and then imitate until they felt more confidence and mastery over counseling micro-skills and inductive processes of theoretical conceptualization and application.
Beatrice: I think because [the client] was connecting so much with [the counselor in the video], I would try to mimic [the counselor’s] way of being with [the client] because that has been working for [the client]. So I would be trying to see how I could copy that style a little bit until [the client] has some more trust with me.

Participants in my study reported finding the applied client scenario videos useful for learning to apply theories to client cases and assessing theoretical fit. Participants described the applied client scenario videos as engaging and emotionally evocative. Compared with the other videos utilized in the online learning environment, the client scenario videos tended to existentially trigger participants’ producing stronger countertransference and emotional reactions as they engaged with the online discussions and conceptualization and treatment planning activities associated with these videos. The evocative nature of the client scenario videos in conjunction with the small group discussions seemed to lead to additional opportunities for CITs to practice monitoring their personal reactions, which helped them identify the ways in which their personal experiences influenced the way that they understood clients’ situations and approached theoretical application. One of the primary goals of the applied client scenarios was to help participants bridge the theory to practice gap by beginning to transfer their learning especially related to connecting process observations of how theory was applied in the counseling demonstration session to a novel client scenario.

Lola: I have especially liked the client scenario stories which put us in the shoes of the counselor. It allowed us to reflect on content we had learned and watched earlier in the day and practice applying it to a real situation.

Another comparable finding between my study and Moran and Milsom’s (2015) study related to participants reporting that the online learning activities held them more accountable and forced them to be more responsible and participative within their individual learning process. In my study participants described being held accountable
through time management, online reflection journals and online small group discussions because they were aware that active online participation made up a substantial portion of their course grade. Many participants also reported feeling connected to their group members and wanting to ensure that they were each actively contributing to the exercises and to the co-construction of meaning that was occurring through the online discussions and problem based learning within the small groups.

**Adam**: The partial online format encourages me to take a more active role in my learning because of the increased expectation for individual participation within the groups.

Participants also described feeling responsible for their learning based on the expectation that they would practice applying the theories during the face-to-face experiential activities. They described this learning as necessary because it directly related to becoming a counselor and being able to perform counseling. Some participants reported initially feeling high levels of anxiety related to their instructors observing and providing feedback during their small group role plays and described being motivated to perform well in front of their peers and instructors, which they felt necessitated fully engaging with the videos and online activities. This reaction seems developmentally typical, as CITs in early stages of development often experience high levels of anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, and increased motivation to perform well in front of others (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010).

Anxiety and fear were seen as a positive sign of development and anticipated when participants stepped outside their comfort zones and tried on new perspectives and skills sets, especially since they were aware they were being observed and were becoming increasingly more observant and aware of their own values, worldviews, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors through the reflection journals and course activities. It
seems that the negative emotions associated with typical development (e.g., anxiety, fear, self-doubt) can be capitalized upon to ignite investment and motivation through hybrid and/or flipped approaches in counselor education because they necessitate high level of experiential engagement.

This observation was consistent with Milman (2012), who found that hybrid learning approaches tended to increase the number of interactions among students and instructors while simultaneously increasing educators’ opportunities to provide CITs with individualized feedback during face-to-face experiential activities and discussions. While participants in my study described this process as, at times, feeling uncomfortable, they reported that overall they found it to be intrinsically rewarding, worthwhile, and validating and described getting a great deal out of the additional opportunities for interactions with peers and instructors. This finding was consistent with Granello’s (2000) hypothesis that counselor educators who create developmentally responsive learning environments that encourage ongoing self-reflexivity and allow opportunities for modeling and practicing of applied clinical skills are more likely to lead to cognitive complexity development.

When asked to describe the online videos that participants found to be most useful to their learning, participants’ preferences varied. Four of the participants reported that they found all of the videos equally useful to their learning and felt that they could not select just one video. Some participants selected entire categories of videos, for example “all of the counseling demonstration videos” or “all of the applied client scenario videos”, and some participants selected two to three specific videos. Overall, participants reported that they found the counseling demonstration videos to be the most useful videos to their
learning, with the majority of participants preferring the more recent five forces Annie videos (Ratts, 2012) compared with the Gloria videos (Shostrom, 1965). All of the participants also reported finding the applied client scenario videos to be useful to their learning, however, they reported finding them to be slightly less useful in comparison to the counseling demonstration session videos. Participants particularly reported resonating with Omarina’s applied client scenario which was specific to applying person-centered and existential approaches with an adolescent female struggling with racism and classism within her school system.

When asked what limitations participants experienced when engaging with the online portion of the class, five of the fifteen participants reported that they experienced some limitations based on not being able to have conversations with their instructors and group members face to face. Participants that engaged in synchronous online discussions through platforms that included video (e.g., Google Hangouts) reported less limitations with online learning overall. Specifically, participants that utilized synchronous online discussions tended to describe their discussions as more meaningful and authentic compared to participants that utilized online discussion boards.

**Emma:** Having some portions online decreased the amount of face time I had with other students and the professors. When engaged in an online discussion, there were some nuances that were lost by not being physically present with each other. My group chose to do the online discussions [through posts] on Blackboard. It made for a very disjointed conversation because you had to continuously refresh the page to see the most recent comments. It felt very impersonal.

On the other hand, three participants reported that they preferred completing their online small group discussions in chat applications that involved written responses, as opposed to video or audio responses, because they felt that there was benefit to not having to be face to face, which provided privacy and allowed them to more comfortably
discuss their perspectives and differences of opinion. One participant indicated that she experienced some limitations based on not having a private space to engage in online learning and being interrupted by people she lived with. Another participant reported that she experienced some limitations based on her eyes feeling strained from looking at the computer screen for an extended time period. Another participant reported experiencing some limitations during the online learning based on needing more breaks, due to the emotional intensity of the applied client scenario videos and activities. Seven participants reported that they did not encounter any limitations while engaging with the online portion of the course.

When asked to describe the face-to-face activities, discussions, demonstrations, and/or mini-lectures that participants found to be most useful to their learning, participants’ responses once again varied. Three of the participants reported that they found all of the face-to-face activities to be equally useful to their learning and felt that they could not select any one aspect of the face-to-face learning environment that was more useful than any other. The majority of participants reported that they found the role plays to be more useful to their learning than any other aspect of the face-to-face portion of the course. Participants disagreed about whether the live instructor role plays or the small group role plays were more useful to their learning, with slightly more participants preferring the small group role plays to the live instructor role plays. All fifteen participants were enthusiastic about both the instructor and small group role plays and at times made opposing recommendations for how the role plays could be made even more useful to their learning. For example, Heidi expressed wanting to observe one less instructor role play and instead engage in a final small group role play for a longer period.
of time (e.g., thirty minutes) so she could pick out a theory and try it for longer with a real client issue. Alternately, Mae and Emma felt that less face to face time should be allocated to the small group role plays and more time should be allocated to observing and processing the instructor role plays.

Mae: Though the exercises that we did where [the instructors] modeled theories in a session were a little time intensive, I think they were very valuable and wish we could have done more of the theories in that way. As a way to save time, I think we could do more of those exercises by not always doing our own practice role plays in our groups. Those were extremely valuable portions of the exercise as well, but I don't think I would have to do it with every single theory. Watching [the instructors] was more helpful in understanding theories, doing it myself I think helps with overall counseling micro skills and less with understanding theories.

While participants preferred the applied client scenario conceptualization and treatment planning activities less than the role playing activities, all participants still reported that the applied client scenario activities were useful to their learning. Participants reported especially liking being able to talk through the scenarios using the conceptualization cards in their small groups. The majority of participants reported that they had never engaged in a client conceptualization before, and they found the small groups to be especially helpful when talking through client cases and attempting to apply theory. Participants specifically described these activities as being useful in the context of their small group through helping them to: reflect on their own values, biases and worldviews, become more aware of their preferences in relation to their group members’ preferences, consider multiple perspectives, and build on one another’s ideas. This finding is similar to Moran and Milsom (2015), who found that participants felt that small group work allowed them to learn from one another, build on each other’s ideas, and consider alternative perspectives. Participants in my study were more likely to report the
small groups as being valuable for the face to face portions of the applied client scenario activities than the online discussion portions.

Some participants also selected individual activities completed throughout the course that they found to be particularly useful to learning, in addition to the role plays and applied client scenarios. For example, two participants reported that they felt that the kinesthetic values clustering continuum activity was especially useful to their learning.

**Becky:** I really enjoyed one of the very first activities where we basically put ourselves on a continuum scale related to the different values of the theories, which helped us to determine what we believed and how we related with others. It was really interesting because it helped me to clarify what I believed and to see how I related or differed from everyone else in the class.

Two other participants reported that they found the photo elicitation exercise, where they selected a client that they would like to work with and a client that they would like to work with less, to be especially impactful and useful to their learning, because they felt that it helped them practice monitoring their personal reactions, identify some of their hidden biases, and practice talking about how biases may impact the way that they approach working with clients and applying theory. Two participants described the activity in which they observed still objects on a table from two specific locations, while writing their observations as one of the most useful activities to their learning because it helped them reflect on the ways that they made meaning based on their own personal experiences and worldviews, become more aware of themselves in relation to others, and recognize multiple perspectives.

**Vivian:** I found the activity with the table and the objects to be really useful to my learning, it gave me an understanding that everyone looks at things and makes meaning out of them differently even though the objects are the same.
Some participants reported initially finding the constructivist nature of the hybrid learning environment to be somewhat uncomfortable and described wanting more concrete directives and factual information presented through lecture. This was congruent with descriptions of beginning stages of counselor development (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010) as well as Moran and Milsom’s (2015) findings that some students wanted to hear more direct lecture type information from their instructors. However, as the course progressed and students who wanted additional factual information were presented with activities, such as the compare and contrast theories jigsaw, which allowed them to practice accessing this information and the just in time teaching mini lectures, which addressed gaps in learning, they articulated increasing appreciation for the experiential activities and problem based learning strategies and expressed a diminishing desire for lectures.

At the close of the course, only one participant reported that they wanted more lecture interspersed throughout the course. The remaining 14 participants expressed wanting their future classes to be set up in a similar format to the hybrid learning environment, as they felt that it accelerated their learning and development. This finding was consistent with Auxier et al.’s (2003) finding that, as students develop over the course of their programs, they increasingly value experiential approaches and eventually value them over lecture based approaches.

Some participants described the structure of taking classes in an intensive weekend format (i.e., over two weekends across six days) as a limitation to their learning and development.
**Emma:** There is a lot of instructional time with the weekend format, which is tough in terms of retaining all the information. In the classes that are more lecture heavy it can make it hard to stay engaged.

**Becky:** Being in a classroom for the long hours that the weekend program requires can be brutal and when you have a building with no windows, by Sunday it is absolutely appalling. We have to sit so long in that building that it becomes tiring and you find yourself having a hard time paying attention and just wanting to leave. The online content offered to break the course up a bit and give us a bit of a breather but still actively learn and get our work done.

Participants that were especially enthusiastic about the hybrid learning format reported that they perceived it as especially valuable in the weekend format, because they felt it allowed for additional instructional time, which could be completed flexibly throughout the week in conjunction with their full time jobs. Some participants recommended that their learning and development could be further maximized in the hybrid theories course if it used a full flipped learning approach (i.e., all online elements would be required outside of face-to-face class time and students would need to attend all six days of the weekend course face-to-face for experiential course elements). Alternatively, another participant recommended that the class could be expanded over more than two weekends.

**Beatrice:** I really liked that the online activities reinforced what we're learning in the classroom and broke up the in-person learning days. And I wished that the theories class could be longer and over more than just the two weekends. With the classes normally being three days in a row, it was really nice to mix up the format in this way. I've done one of the weekend classes before and paying attention during the Sunday afternoon sessions was a lot more difficult after sitting in the same room for three days!

Taken together, the emergent themes from my research have implications for intentionally scaffolding counseling courses to maximize cognitive complexity development, both internally and in relation to interconnected counseling curriculum as a
whole. By integrating and layering many ingredients of the counseling process (e.g., practicing self-reflection skills, micro skills, and case conceptualization skills) in the context of learning to apply theories, counselors in training appeared to be able to better synthesize this information and understand the ways in which these aspects link together in a holistic counseling process.

**Implications for Multicultural and Social Justice Competency**

The case based themes related to participants’ cognitive complexity development suggested a strong relationship between CITs development of cognitive complexity and their development of multicultural and social justice counseling competencies. Many of the case based themes matched with the multicultural and social justice competences across the four domains (i.e., counselor self-awareness, client worldview, counseling relationship, and counseling and advocacy interventions) outlined in the revised multicultural and social justice counseling competencies (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullogh, 2015). Participants’ cognitive complexity development appeared to parallel multicultural and social justice counseling competency development in this particular case in five primary ways.

First, participants reported and demonstrated increased awareness of personal values, worldviews, and preferred ways of knowing and understanding and explored the ways in which their worldviews and preferred perspectives had the potential to influence their counseling practice. Second, participants reported and demonstrated an increased awareness of self in relation to others and displayed a willingness to be open to divergent perspectives and to stepping outside of their comfort zones, even when they felt uncomfortable. Third, participants reported and demonstrated increased awareness of
multiple perspectives that challenged their preferred worldviews and epistemological ways of knowing and understanding, which helped them identify the ways in which these perspectives could be useful for some clients, in some contexts. Fourth, participants demonstrated an increased ability to engage in ongoing self-reflexivity, monitor their personal reactions, and accurately evaluate personal strengths and limitations, which had the potential to impact their ways of being, understanding, and intervening with clients. Fifth, participants attempted to correct for personal biases and limitations by seeking alternative perspectives and ways of knowing and demonstrated a willingness to alter their theoretical approach in response to diverse contexts and client needs.

All fifteen participants in the study expressed a strong desire to be multiculturally sensitive and to avoid imposing their personal values onto their clients. Participants also consistently verbalized wanting to understand and empathize with their clients’ experiences and worldview and to be affirming of their clients intersecting socio-cultural identities. Participants described feeling that it was necessary to explore the multiple systems that clients found themselves embedded in and to use this knowledge to better understand their clients’ worldviews and perspectives. In many instances participants’ cognitive complexity development appeared to be emerging in tandem with multi-systemic awareness and multicultural and social justice competency.

Adam: The multicultural video session was the most useful for me because that was the approach that I had the most difficulty understanding. Initially, the multicultural approach didn't seem like a cohesive "theory", it seemed to only emphasize the importance of context and culture in the construction of the client's worldview. However, the video allowed for a more detailed understanding of how multiculturalism is actually applied in a session and I ended up finding this theoretical approach very useful. Similar to the person-centered clinician, the multicultural counselor was empathetic, displayed unconditional positive regard, and encouraged the client to remain the expert on herself. Next, the counselor utilized a systemic
framework to conceptualize and help the client to understand her social identities, while developing awareness into the impact and influence of external forces in her life. The counselor empowered the client by helping her to recognize that her thoughts and feelings were a normal reaction to systemic influences.

Adam described observing the multicultural counselor building a collaborative relationship with the client and using systemic assessment skills to explore intersecting social and cultural factors identified by the client as most salient to her lived experiences. He then explains how this process allowed the client to gain understanding of her situation in the context of external systemic influences.

**Vanessa:** I strongly believe that counselors need to be more culturally competent when applying theories. Counselors should view clients within their entire context, paying specific attention to the ways in which clients are influenced by social and cultural factors. Counselors should also work to become aware of the ways in which their own culture and context effects their worldview and values. Without obtaining this important contextual and cultural information about yourself and your clients, it seems that you could unintentionally cause harm.

Vanessa described the importance of counselors exploring clients’ contexts and cultures to better understand the ways in which clients lived experiences have influenced their perspectives, values, and way of being and interacting with others in the world. She also described the importance of counselors developing awareness of self in relation to their clients, so that counselors can identify ways in which their lived experiences, values, beliefs, biases and worldviews impact their preferred ways of understanding and intervening with client struggles and avoid imposing their biases onto clients.

**Mae:** I try to consider factors like culture, gender, sexual orientation, and race, when approaching life because otherwise it is easy to assume everyone operates that same way I do. After all, my own experience is my best evidence since I live it every day, but it is also what will make me lose perspective the fastest. One might be tempted to say that multicultural counseling would not be good for a privileged individual (e.g., white, adult, straight, male), but I would argue it could be used to help them understand themselves in context, identify challenges based on their privilege (e.g.,
male gender role expectations), and help them gain perspective on how their world differs significantly from those with less privileges. That said, I think there may be limitations implementing this theory based on the counselor and or the client. A counselor who is unable to acknowledge how the world becomes different because of contextual factors and privilege is going to have a hard time implementing multicultural theory, and a client who is persistently resistant to recognizing contextual factors in the world is going to be hard to treat using multicultural theory.

Mae described the importance of seeking to continually remain aware of her intersecting social and cultural factors, which she identified as influencing the way that she approaches situations and operates in the world. She demonstrated awareness that her lived experiences and preferred way of operating in the world have the potential to create blind spots that, at times, may cause her to impose her experiences onto client’s situations and lose sight of alternative perspectives which may more appropriately match with her clients’ experiences. She recognized that becoming more conscious of her personal biases and blind spots is both a goal and lifelong developmental process. She then went on to explain her perspective that multicultural counseling approaches are not only useful for clients experiencing oppression as a result of marginalized social identities but also for clients experiencing privilege. She recognized that clients with privileged social identities may experience hidden costs as a result of working to maintain their empowered social status, which hinders their mental wellness, growth and development.

Becky: I wasn’t at all familiar with multicultural theory prior to this class and I find myself having a hard time connecting with this theory. I think that is partially because I haven’t really been able to relate as much on a personal level with this theory as I have with the others. I also think it might be more out of fear than anything else. I feel like I need to understand diverse clients well enough to be able to connect, help, and benefit them. At this point in my life, I don’t have a diverse enough background with different types of people. I think if I were to take this approach, I would feel uncomfortable and uneducated. I think I will need to complete more research and training to be able to successfully build rapport with clients who are experiencing oppressions.
While Becky admitted to having a difficult time connecting with multicultural approaches to counseling her quote also illustrates an awareness of herself in relation to others, as well as an ability to monitor her personal reactions and accurately evaluate her personal limitations and biases that she sees as having the potential to impact her ability to connect with, understand, and effectively intervene with clients with marginalized social identities. She recognizes that these barriers are related to her personal life experiences, her privileged social status, and a lack of exposure to diversity. She bravely recognized and communicated her fear and discomfort and then identified this as a growth edge that she will need to continue to remain aware of and actively address throughout her training. Lastly, she identified actions she will need to take (e.g., research, training, and exposure) to successfully navigate this barrier to developing multicultural competence.

**Tanya:** I found the social justice counseling demonstration session to be most useful because, after learning about the theory initially, it was not one that I was drawn to. However, after watching the session and seeing how it used a more integrative, hands on approach I was surprised to find that this was my favorite session of all the ones we watched. Throughout the session [the counselor] circles back to the client’s cultural expectations... The advocacy counseling portion of the session was also surprising to me in that the counselor maintains an egalitarian position by allowing [the client] to organize the meeting and ask about starting a social support group. [The counselor] intervenes only when the meeting seems to be going in a direction [the client] is uncomfortable with. This helped foster my growth because it made me see the importance of being open minded when choosing which theories to implement and when considering which theories might fit best for a client.

Tanya described observing the social justice counselor as building an egalitarian relationship with the client and non-judgmentally balancing the client’s collective values with her individual needs. She also described appreciating how the counselor continuously circled back to most salient theme identified by the client and helped the
client explore this theme across individual, group, and universal dimensions. This process allowed additional opportunities for the client to identify environmental and social factors impacting her current struggle, which could become targets for social justice interventions. Once the client identified the environmental and social factors that are hindering her growth and development, the counselor assisted the client with developing self-advocacy strategies to address and remove systemic barriers.

**Bessie**: [When doing one of the client conceptualization activities Bessie identifies an opportunity to use social advocacy to remove systemic barriers experienced by the client at school]. I was surprised that they didn’t have the school counselor in the video talking about how they were supporting [the client] with his relationships at school and about addressing bullying. Because I think we would need to be advocating for [the client] and talking more with his school counselor and teacher about how we could all work together to change the social interactions happening in the classroom.

Bessie demonstrated her awareness of barriers to the client’s success within the context of the school system and examined the relationships that the client has with peers that may be sources of non-support, discrimination, and bullying. She then sought to employ advocacy strategies to connect the client with supportive individuals within the school system, who are able to intervene and help alter inequities within the classroom that impede the client’s academic success and his ability to access social support.

**Beatrice**: [When doing one of the applied client conceptualization activities Beatrice recognizes an opportunity to collaborate and empower family members who serve as a source of support for the client by connecting them with community counseling resources]. I think his parents are just in a really tough situation and they are doing the best they can to be supportive of [the client]. But I think they could use a little extra support as well. So I would even consider recommending a parents’ group that would help his parents to connect with other parents who have kids going through similar things. Because it has got to be really hard for parents to not be able to attach to their kids and I think [the group] could help normalize some of that and make them less frustrated with [the client].
Beatrice identified the impact of the struggles the client is facing at the familial level and advocated for the client’s parents to receive additional support through attending a parents group that she feels has the potential to foster relationships with other families experiencing similar struggles, normalize some of the parent’s feelings and concerns, and increase the families access to social support in the community.

When doing one of the applied client conceptualization activities specific to a client who identifies as transgender and is struggling with the transition process in the context of his family’s religious belief system Emma, Larry, and Bertha worked together and demonstrated multi-systemic thinking and awareness They used this awareness to inform their ways of intervening at multiple systemic levels.

**Larry:** I feel like [the client] needs more social support. Approaching him from a multicultural/social justice lens fits because social and cultural contexts are effecting him by his father's resistance to his transition [being grounded from a Christian perspective], and alienation at school. We will need to advocate for the client at school.

**Emma:** I agree. I also wondered if inviting [the client’s] parents to some couple’s sessions might be helpful down the road. [The client] feels guilt related to impacting his parents’ marriage, so I wonder if it would be effective to have his parents work through their marital issues as a couple. And then for them to also attend family counseling separately with [the client].

**Bertha:** I think as far as family counseling the most salient factors would be relational patterns, gender expectations, and religious beliefs. I think that the fact that [the client] displays such resiliency and that he has support from his mother, shows that he is capable of developing a healthier relationship with his father.

**Larry:** Oh yes, it is fantastic that no one in the family is withholding love or refusing to talk about it. Even though his dad is clearly struggling to fully accept [the client’s] transition, he still clearly loves his son [the client]. I don't know the timeframe, but to me... it seems fair to stop and contemplate such a big transition as a parent.

**Emma:** I agree and the multicultural/social justice approach works on externalizing problems, and the problem is definitely outside of [the client] and outside of the family. And then they can focus on confronting the transgender oppression [the client] is facing as a family unit. So family
counseling could focus on how they can work together to retain parts of their Christian belief system, while also supporting their son’s identity.

Emma, Larry, and Bertha demonstrated multi-systemic awareness through first identifying the separate environmental contexts (i.e., family and school) in which the client is struggling to access social support and is therefore being most impacted by the problem. They identified that advocacy interventions may be necessary at the client’s school. Next, they zoom in on the familial sub-systems and hypothesize that they may benefit from separate interventions. Specifically, they seem to believe that it would be important to remove the client from his triangulated position in his parents’ marriage by advocating for addressing the couple’s marital struggles through couples rather than family counseling.

Next, they identified the factors within the family that they would hone in on as a part of family counseling (i.e., relational patterns, gender expectations, and religious beliefs). They also balanced identifying the family’s struggles and strength and resilience, which they believe they can build upon in family counseling. They recognized transgender oppression as the true source of the client’s problems and place this struggle outside of the client and outside of the family. They identified the context of discriminatory values at the meso and macro systemic levels that have been potentially perpetuated through the family’s religious community. Specifically, they identified that certain aspects of Christian norms, values, and regulations are oppressive to the family’s growth, development, mental wellness and ability to access one another for social support. Lastly, they sought to identify ways in which the family may be able to both preserve parts of their religious belief system and simultaneously affirm their son’s gender identity and expression.
Training Counselors to Avoid Imposing Personal Values

In 2009 a school counseling student at Eastern Michigan University named Julea Ward sought to refer a client based on her religious belief that “homosexual conduct is immoral sexual behavior” (Ward v. Wilbanks, 2009, Compl. at 3-4 as cited in Kaplan, 2014). Eastern Michigan University’s counseling program provided Ms. Ward with formative feedback that refusing to see a client based on their sexual orientation is discriminatory and is incompatible with the American Counseling Association code of ethics (2005). Eastern Michigan University provided Ms. Ward with a remediation plan that was intended to support her in reflecting on her own values, beliefs, and biases and the ways she might set those aside when working with clients with differing religious values and belief systems (Kaplan, 2014). Despite Eastern Michigan University’s efforts to provide Ms. Ward with due process and opportunities for remediation, she refused to collaboratively participate in the remediation plan as she felt that affirming same sex relationships was fundamentally incompatible with her religious belief system and worldview (Ward v. Wilbanks, 2009, Compl 8, as cited in Kaplan, 2014).

After failed remediation attempts, Eastern Michigan University dismissed Ms. Ward from the school counseling program, and she responded by filing a lawsuit claiming her first amendment rights had been violated. In 2010 a judge ruled in favor of Eastern Michigan University, however the case was later appealed by Ms. Ward and settled outside the court system in 2012 (Kaplan, 2014). This landmark case led to clarification of social justice values in the counseling profession, including the stance that it is discriminatory to refuse counseling services to clients based upon sexual orientation, that diversity is a core value in the counseling profession, and that referrals should be made based on skills-based competency, as opposed to counselor values (e.g., an
individual counselor who refers clients to a couples counselor as the individual counselor recognizes they do not have the training or skills to provide couples counseling; Kaplan, 2014). This stance was further clarified in the American Counseling Association (2014) code of ethics in section A.11.b. *Values within termination and referral.*

In 2013 the American Counseling Association put out an official statement regarding conversion therapy, clarifying that counselors do not view people who experience same sex attraction, identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or engage in sexual behaviors with those of the same sex as mentally disordered. The American Counseling Association also clarified that counselors do not engage in conversion therapy and that counselors recognize and inform clients seeking conversion therapy that there is no scientific evidence to support the use of conversion therapy (Whitman, Glossoff, Kocet, & Tarvydas, 2013). Further, the American Counseling Association goes on to clarify that conversion therapy is often harmful and constitutes a religious rather than a counseling practice (Whitman et al., 2013). In 2014, the American School Counseling Association clarified that “professional school counselors do not support efforts by licensed mental health professionals to change a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity as these practices have been proven ineffective and harmful” (p.38).

In 2015 an adolescent female named Leelah Alcorn, who identified as transgender, committed suicide after being forced to attend conversion therapy and being rejected by her family who insisted she was male. The impact of her suicide and the current socio-political context led to legislative efforts to ban conversion therapy for individuals who identify as transgender. Leelah’s law was supported by the American Counseling Association. The oppressive mental health professionals that Leelah Alcorn
was forced to work with caused her serious harm and likely contributed to her decision to commit suicide, thereby providing a salient real world example of the need for counselors to be trained to be aware of and avoid imposing their personal values onto their clients.

Some U.S. states including Mississippi (H.B. 1523), Indiana (S.B. 101), North Carolina (H.B. 2) and potentially Tennessee (H.B. 1840) have passed or are attempting to pass legislation that would enable counselors to decline services to LGBTQ individuals based on the counselor’s religious beliefs. These bills directly contradict the changes in the American Counseling Association (2014) Code of Ethics, which resulted from the Ward case (Ward v. Wilbanks, 2009) by either ensuring that sexual orientation and gender identity are not protected statuses or by directly stating that counselors can refer LGBTQ clients. Thus, training multiculturally competent counselors is a critical step in mitigating the potentially harmful impact of these laws on members of the LGBTQ community. Developing training environments that enable CITs to understand and set aside their own worldviews while exposing them to diverse perspectives are an important component in training cognitively complex and multiculturally sensitive counselors who are able to engage in social justice advocacy and support individuals, couples, families, and communities to stand up to oppressive environmental forces that impede human health and development. The results of this study show substantial promise for the use of critical and contextual constructivist pedagogy in combination with hybrid format courses to train counselors to develop cognitive complexity and multicultural/social justice counseling competencies.

**Researcher Voice and Ongoing Self Reflexivity**

I found it particularly interesting that the majority of participants in my study reported going back and re-watching segments of the videos that they found the most
useful to their learning. Some participants reported that they chose to engage with the online videos and reflection journals for much longer than the allotted time before and between class meetings, as well as during the online learning days, although they were not directly instructed to do so. This finding was congruent with the pilot study, as participants in the pilot study also reported prolonged engagement and repetitive watching of the counseling session demonstration videos. Some participants were observed re-watching portions of the counseling demonstration videos before class and showing video segments to their group members while discussing application of the theories to applied client scenarios.

It was noteworthy that several participants also inquired about continued access to the videos. More than half of the participants reported wanting to be able to re-visit the videos before starting their practicum experience, while studying for comps, and again when seeing clients during internship. I thought it was interesting that participants preemptively identified critical events in their development when they felt that re-visiting the counseling demonstration session videos would be most necessary and useful. This finding seems to have developmental implications related to counselors becoming aware of their own personal process of development and wanting to address potential knowledge and skill gaps by actively seeking out information and resources to inform their practice.

As I reflected upon the CITs desires to repetitively watch and engage with the counseling demonstration videos I found that this strongly reminded me of personal experiences in my own life. I was significantly older than both of my younger siblings (seven years older than my sister and twelve years older than my brother), and, as a
result, I had more opportunities to observe and reflect upon their development. I recalled both my sister and brother going through a stage where they wanted to repetitively watch educational children’s television programming. For my sister it was Barney, and for my brother it was Teletubbies and Blues Clues. As an older child/adolescent I remember being perplexed and annoyed by this stage of my siblings’ development. I wondered how they could possibly be so fascinated by the same show, one that, at my developmental stage, I found to be repetitive and boring, yet they wanted to watch it again and again.

Interestingly, this is actually the way in which many of these shows are intentionally designed (Anderson et al., 2000). All three of these shows have repetitive elements that occur in every episode to help structure and scaffold children’s experiences and let them know what to expect. For example, every episode of Blues Clues involves a puzzle, such as figuring out Blue’s favorite snack. In every episode Blue, the dog, puts her paw print on three clues, which are intended to create a meaningful marker that helps children identify and remember the clues, so they can work towards solving the puzzle. Throughout the episode the host makes his metaling transparent as he works through the clues. The host models aloud the way he is problem solving and asks viewers direct questions to help them reflect on new knowledge and begin to talk a loud through their hypotheses about how the clues are overlapping and coming together to form meaning. The host also sings songs and tells stories to help children connect experiences across episodes and construct ways of knowing and understanding that transfer problem solving strategies to situations outside of the show. The show also airs multiple times per week, so that preschool aged children can watch it over and over again, gaining more mastery and understanding with each re-watching.
This process mirrored the hybrid learning environment in the theories class in many ways. Students were introduced to a consistent structure and scaffolding. First they read about the theories, then they watched the theoretical context videos and completed reflection journals. Next they watched the theory in action through the counseling demonstration videos, which provided them with concrete and transparent modeling of the skills the counselors were using and asked direct questions to help them reflect on new knowledge they were gaining and begin to talk a loud through there hypotheses about how the theory is being used to create meaning in the context of a specific client’s situation. Students also live observed the instructors’ role playing theories and were allowed opportunities to pause and process their observations and understandings, thereby co-constructing meaning about the ways (e.g., way of being, understanding, and intervening) in which the counselor was approaching the client’s situation through a given theory.

The role plays and client conceptualization scenario activities provided students with opportunities to try out these skills on their own and transfer procedural knowledge to novel situations. The case conceptualization cards served as the clues/paw prints that helped students to go back to a set of factors/meaningful markers that assisted students in identifying and remembering the key themes that they would need to repeatedly return to in order to move towards a synthesis or a more nuanced understanding of the conceptual puzzle. While we did not sing to the students, we gave them metaphors (camera and lenses, GPS, learning to cook, and the cake) and experiential activities (kinesthetic values clustering continuum, still objects on a table, compare and contrast theories jigsaw activity, and pick a client photo elicitation activity) that linked together the procedural
knowledge related to understanding and approaching client struggles in context and sought to help them transfer this procedural knowledge to diverse client situations outside of the classroom.

Throughout the research process I also found myself reflecting extensively upon the way in which participants transferred their procedural knowledge onto the novel client scenarios. They began by exploring the client’s context and differentiating the salient identity factors and contextual markers that they saw as most relevant to the client’s values, worldview, and presenting problem. During this stage, participants often shared personal experiences from their own life and personal context as a way of monitoring their countertransference reactions in the moment and to gain an awareness of self in relation to the client. This helped them to more accurately reflect upon and evaluate their own strengths and limitations and to correct for their personal biases and limitations through actively seeking out alternative perspectives, ways of knowing, and understanding. I found this particular aspect to be the most meaningful in relation to participant cognitive complexity development because the awareness of a need to seek out of alternative perspectives to correct for their personal experiences and biases ultimately allowed them to inductively alter their approach to better fit with a specific client needs in a particular situation.

As I reflected and journaled on this particular developmental milestone, I found myself once again reflecting on child development and having flashbacks, this time to my undergraduate lifespan class. I specifically remembered learning about the concept of theory of mind, which is essentially a point in development when a child first understands that their experiences and perspectives are different from other people’s experiences and
perspectives. I specifically recalled watching a video of a little boy being presented with a juice box. When asked what he thought was in the box he confidently answered “juice”. Next the researcher opened the juice box and, to the boy’s surprise, revealed that the box was actually filled with multicolored ribbons. The researcher then asks him again what he thinks is in the juice box, and he confidently answers “ropes”. Next the researcher tells the little boy that another child (e.g., Jessie) is about to come into the room and be given the exact same box of juice. The researcher then asks the little boy what do you think Jessie will say is in the box? To which the little boy confidently responds with complete certainty “ropes”. He has failed the theory of mind test because he believes that his experiences and knowledge automatically transfer and will be known and understood by Jessie. The little boy is completely certain that based on his experience there is one correct interpretation of what is to be found in the juice box, and at this developmental stage he views his truth as a global reality, void of context, that can be understood declaratively and with absolute confidence.

The dualistic stage of cognitive complexity development might be conceptualized as an adult version of temporarily failing the theory of mind test, when presented with either a novel intersection or an intersection that evokes countertransference reactions that make it difficult to correct for one’s biases based on personal experiences. After completing this research, now more than ever, I believe that we are all capable of finding ourselves temporarily in situations where our judgment is clouded by our own values and experiences, and we lose sight of the validity and truth of alternative perspectives which can hinder us from recognizing an angle or approach that might be a better fit for a client, supervisee, or student. I believe that this anchoring can occur even with the best of
intentions and years of experience. Despite my best efforts I observed this anchoring occurring for myself at points throughout this research process as I reflected on the ways in which I tried to balance and represent participant’s sometimes divergent experiences and attempted to correct for the ways in which my biases colored the interpretations and meanings that I made through my interactions with my participants and their data. It appears that the uncomfortable process of ongoing self-reflection, stepping outside of our comfort zones, considering alternative perspectives, becoming more aware of ourselves in relation to others, evaluating our personal strengths and limitations, and altering our approaches based on new ways of knowing and understanding is what ultimately ignites growth and development.

Change and transition are challenging processes, which I often find myself trying to resist. Participants in this study attested to how uncomfortable and painful it can be to step outside of one’s comfort zone to approach a situation or problem in a new way. As higher education in general, and counselor education in particular, transitions to hybrid and blended online approaches, it makes sense that there will be resistance, challenges, and obstacles that educators will have to overcome. Prior to taking on this course, I thought with absolute certainty that online approaches to teaching were inferior compared with face to face learning environments. I couldn’t possibly see how something that I am so passionate about and that I find so personally worthwhile could ever wholly transfer to an online domain. Truthfully, I saw intentional construction of the online learning environment as a means to an end. A way to buy extra time and increase student participation in the face-to-face experiential activities and discussions during the in person learning time that I found to be most valuable. Before I tried out this approach to
teaching, I knew for a fact that online learning could never be as valuable as face-to-face interpersonal interactions. Now I am less sure about this fact. It seems possible that both the online and face-to-face learning environments were significantly valuable to student’s development in differing ways.

I want to be the kind of educator that practices what I preach. If I expect my students to step outside of their comfort zones, consider alternative perspectives, and inductively alter their approaches to be more useful to their client’s needs, growth, and development, I want to be willing to do the same for my students. As Emma so wisely stated, “trying to force a [student’s learning needs] to fit what I find comfortable is based on what is good for me instead of what is best for them.”

All of the participants in my study reported that the online learning environment was a critical component to their development and reported that they wished their other instructors would consider adding similar online components to their classes. Hybrid, flipped, and online education is like anything else, it has strengths and limitations, benefits and drawbacks. I believe online education can be constructed in less than ideal ways that hinder development, and I also believe that it can be approached as an opportunity to foster cognitive complexity for both educators and students while critically transforming counseling pedagogy and the architecture of the very learning environments in which we engage.

I was surprised to find that a small number of participants reported that the online learning environment was actually more useful than the face-to-face learning environment for their personal learning needs. Although, these participants still reported finding the face-to-face learning environment to be necessary and useful. I was also
surprised that a majority of participants preferred the counseling session demonstration videos to the applied conceptualization scenarios. This surprise seems to be rooted in my own preferences and development, as I personally find the process of solving a conceptual puzzle through assessing theoretical fit in the context of diverse client scenarios to be a more engaging and rewarding activity.

The idea of continuing with this line of research and continuing to create hybrid and flipped learning environments is one that I find exciting and terrifying. I never believed that I would want to learn video editing and creative software, let alone that I could learn to use these tools. I still have much to learn about the use of technology in teaching, however, I believe that this learning process is worthwhile, as integrating technology and online teaching strategies with face-to-face learning seemingly provides benefits that go beyond traditional pedagogical approaches. My experience with this theories of counseling course has helped me to realize the importance of being a dynamic and responsive educator, in order to maximize cognitive complexity development and meet the needs of diverse students.

**Developmental Markers of Cognitive Complexity**

Results from this study may have useful implications for counselor educators who want to construct hybrid learning environments that are intentionally designed to maximize cognitive complexity development. Educators can design interrelated videos, experiential activities, and discussions that build in opportunities for active engagement with ongoing self-reflexivity, provide exposure to multiple perspectives, intentionally evoke emotional/existential reactivity, allow for the transfer and application of knowledge to new situations, and provide opportunities for active identification of process rather than content knowledge. Educators can then evaluate and expand upon
these learning environments through assessing for the presence of concrete
developmental markers that students exhibit as they develop cognitive complexity during
the early stages of their counselor training programs. The cognitive complexity
developmental markers that I observed and used to understand and make meaning of
participants’ developmental trajectories for the current study included the following:

1. Students actively attend to and become fully immersed in their learning process.

2. Students articulate strong emotional resonance with their learning, a felt sense of
   experiential salience, and a belief that what they are learning has practical value in
   their personal lives and the real world.

3. Students describe a sense of increased control, freedom, and motivation within
   their learning experience. They autonomously identify personal learning needs
   and structure meaningful activities and interactions within the learning
   environment in order to best meet those needs.

4. Students fully engage with their learning process for extended time periods
   without a break in attention or a desire to disengage with their learning process.
   Students and instructors find themselves in a state of flow, describe learning as
   fun, and time seems to pass more quickly.

5. Students become more reflective and able to process their emotional reactions and
   metalog aloud with one another. They feel increasingly emotionally connected
   and able to be vulnerable as a result.

6. Students verbalize a preference for theoretical approaches that most closely match
   their values and perspectives and they identify and reflect on personal experiences
   that have shaped their values and worldviews.
7. Students are willing to take risks and try out alternative perspectives. They actively discuss their reactions and discomforts as they take these risks together.

8. Students are able to more accurately identify their personal strengths and limitations depending upon context. They no longer believe there is one “correct” way to approach counseling and the “best” way to approach counseling is viewed as situation dependent.

9. Students repeat organizational tools, symbols, images, metaphors, and narratives across experiential activities and discussions. They use these organizational tools to help them to create a recursive meta-framework that allows them to move between client contexts, personal experiences, and theoretical perspectives. Counselors in training value opportunities to repeatedly apply this framework and the counseling ingredients in flexible ways to differing real life situations. As they repeatedly practice transferring their learning to new situations they construct increasingly flexible, complex, and responsive cognitive maps.

10. Students begin to rely less on educators to point out the most important factors in theoretical approaches or client scenarios and they begin to independently identify these factors on their own. They are increasingly able to articulate the way that salient factors relate to and reciprocally impact one another. Students are able to organize this understanding to construct meaningful patterns and categories that inform their ways of interacting and intervening with clients.

11. Students endorse the idea that multiple seemingly contradictory perspectives can be true and useful. They attempt to take a 360-degree view of client struggles from multiple angles and vantage points.
12. Students conceptual maps for organizing and engaging in the counseling process develop rapidly and can be observed through their descriptions of how they would intentionally and inductively select and tailor the route they will follow within a counseling relationship.

13. Students shift from wanting to observe their instructors to wanting their instructors to observe them. Students want to increasingly try out counseling skills and theoretical application independently and they want their instructors to be there to offer guidance when they get stuck, validate their strengths, and provide constructive growth oriented feedback.

**Suggestions for Educators**

Based on my experience with this study and the data that were gathered from participants, I have five suggestions for educators. First, it is important to ground experiential learning environments’ in pedagogical theories, such as constructivist, critical, and contextual approaches to teaching. This grounding provides a foundation for understanding students’ learning trajectories and can be used in combination with concrete developmental markers related to cognitive complexity development in order to intentionally scaffold individual courses as well as entire counseling curricula. In this study, theoretical perspectives in counseling informed CITs’ ways of being and interacting with their clients, their ways of understanding client struggles, and their ways of intervening with clients through creating structure for the map and route that counseling might follow.

In a parallel fashion, theoretical approaches to pedagogy informed instructors ways of being and interacting with students, ways of understanding student’s struggles to develop cognitive complexity, and ways of intervening through creating structure for the
map and route that the learning experience might follow in order to maximize cognitive complexity development. When constructing the learning environment is critical that concepts within and across courses repeat, overlap, and build on each other in an inductive and experiential ways. Without a unifying pedagogical framework concepts can become artificially separated, which can make it difficult for students to synthesize information and bridge the gap between knowledge/theory and practice.

Second constructivist approaches to teaching require shifts in educator’s ways of being and interacting with students. It is important for educators to acknowledge the inherent power hierarchy in a student instructor relationship and to actively work to mitigate this power differential. Counselor educators can communicate their belief that students are in the best position to identify their unique learning needs and are experts on their own experiences and worldviews. Counselors in training who experience educators as student centered and who present as facilitators and scaffolders of student’s learning may be more likely to take a parallel stance with their clients. As CITs in early developmental stages seem to benefit from opportunities to observe counseling skills in action it is useful for counselor educators to transparently model these skills in their classroom. Group facilitation skills such as setting clear expectations, co-constructing ground rules, slowing down interactions among participants, linking responses, communicating unconditional positive regard, and making process comments (Erford, 2011; Yalom, 2005) may be especially useful in fostering self-awareness and reflexivity while creating safety among students. Counselor Educators use of interpersonal skills, validation, and relational monitoring in the classroom may also help to create an
environment of trust and support among students while countering fears and defensive reactions that have the potential to impede learning.

Third, it is important to address and be open to hearing student concerns about online and flipped classroom approaches from the onset of a course. Many participants in my study initially expressed concerns about online learning. They reported experiences in which online learning environments involved nothing more than guided reading of textbooks and posting of reading summaries onto discussion boards, which they did not find particularly engaging or useful to their learning. Participants were relieved to find instructors who were open to their feedback and wanted to ensure the online learning process was useful, engaging, and had as much applied practical value as possible. We (the instructors and I) left time for students to practice accessing the online learning materials by spending the last thirty minutes of the first day of the course in the computer lab. We had students sit in their small learning groups and walked around to make sure everyone was able to understand the online course expectations and how to access the videos. We also ensured that we were available for any questions that students had throughout the online learning days and made sure to respond to student emails within five to ten minutes of receiving them. Instructors also remained actively engaged with the students learning throughout the online days by monitoring student reflection journals and posts and using these to inductively inform the ways we approached the discussions and activities completed during face-to-face learning time in order to try to best meet individual student learning needs. We also used just in time teaching mini-lectures (Educause, 2012) to address gaps in learning identified through both the mid-course survey and through student’s reflection journals. Instructor responsiveness, small group
member support, and the structured activity sequences with links and time allocations for each video, journal, and discussion seemed to significantly decreased student anxiety throughout their engagement with the online learning environment.

Fourth, competence with technology and hybrid and flipped approaches to learning will likely be a requirement for future generations of counselor educators. Thus, it is important for counselor education doctoral programs to capitalize on opportunities for doctoral students to learn to use technology as a teaching tool. It seems it would be mutually beneficial for current generations of counselor educators to include their doctoral students in their journeys toward integrating technology with teaching.

Fifth, for current counselor educators, it doesn’t have to be all or nothing. Consider starting to incorporate experiential and technology based learning strategies by adding a single experiential or applied activity into every lecture. Practice creating simple videos or using existing videos that students can watch and journal on outside of class time as a foundation for face-to-face discussions. Over time, one can integrate increasing amounts of technology based and experiential activities into a class. Remember, each individual activity, video, or experience you create can be used for future iterations of a course, so over time small interrelated pieces can add up to entire courses. I have found that frustration is a normal part of learning to use technology, and persistence through initial frustration is a critical part of learning to use new hardware and software. As with most things, the more one engages with technology, the faster and more fluid it becomes. Going through this process has given me a new means to express myself and develop my personal voice as an educator. I have learned that technology can provide an outlet and a
vehicle for my creativity, which has been liberating and worthwhile overall despite initial challenges. What was once frustrating has become a novel means for self-expression.

**Potential Limitations of Research Study**

Four primary limitations were identified related to my study. The first limitation relates to generalizability of my research findings, the second limitation relates to the format and number of instructors for the course, the third limitation relates to the time commitment to analyze multiple sources of data for multiple participants, and the fourth limitation relates to navigating ethical hurdles that arise as a result of taking a participant observer role in the research process.

Generalizability could be considered a limitation in this study, as I focused on a single case (i.e. one iteration of a hybrid counseling theories course). However, qualitative portraiture case study researchers often leave judgments about the applicability of the research process to the reader, rather than suggesting ways in which the data can be applied to others (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Merriam, 2009). Thus, instead of seeking external validity, I sought transferability, which is a set of strategies that qualitative researchers can use to better prepare readers to apply the findings of the research in their own lives. My primary means for increasing the transferability of this study were to provide the reader with rich, thick descriptions of CITs data and the process of designing and implementing the course, including the theoretical background.

The weekend format of the course and the use of three instructors may also be considered a limitation to the generalizability of my study. Some of the participants in the study spoke specifically to the challenges inherent in taking courses in a condensed weekend format and reported that it was difficult to remain actively engaged with their
learning over extended time periods (e.g., seven to eight hours of instructional time). It is possible that counselors in training benefitted more from the hybrid learning environment in the context of a weekend format course, as it allowed them a break from traditional classroom learning and provided opportunities to return to the videos and activities so they could reflect on them throughout the week. For some students, the hybrid learning environment extended the length of the course itself by allowing for prolonged engagement with the course materials across a longer period of time (e.g., between weeks and after the course ended). It is unknown if students in the more traditional sixteen-week semester format would experience similar benefits. As I plan to continue with this line of research, it will be interesting to look at participant responses over multiple iterations of this course in differing formats (e.g., sixteen-week full on flipped classroom approach), which I hope will eventually lead to a grounded theory.

Similarly, the generalizability of my findings may be limited as there were three instructors in the course and only sixteen students which allowed for the use of live instructor demonstration role plays as well as individualized feedback to each learning group as they engaged with their own small group role plays and conceptualization activities. Having three instructors to serve as group facilitators while modeling counseling skills/theories and providing ongoing feedback seemed to be especially meaningful and beneficial to the student’s learning and development as student’s reported feeling more personally invested in by their instructors. In some situations, it may not be possible or feasible to have three instructors and class sizes may be large (e.g., there were twenty-three students in the pilot study of the course). From my experience in both the pilot and current study, larger class sizes impacted individual student air time in the large
group processing, discussions, and activities which could impact student development. Conversely, opportunities for individual participation seem to be enhanced through the small learning groups and the online portions of the course. Counselor educators who are wanting to study this approach to teaching theories and who are unable to have the assistance of other instructors/doctoral students or who have particularly large class sizes, will need to intentionally modify some of the course activities and group facilitation skills. For example, CITs may be asked to record and transcribe their small group role plays and provide a written reflection regarding their ways of being, understanding, and intervening based on a given theory in relation to their transcript. The instructor could then provide each student with individualized feedback based on the assignment. While future research is needed, I believe that with modifications a single instructor could effectively run a similar course.

The time commitment related to analyzing so many sources of data for each participant presented challenges related to having one researcher analyze all sources of data. The amount of data produced by my case study design was somewhat overwhelming and it took significantly longer to analyze than I expected. This limitation was reduced to some extent by the fact that, with the exception of the qualitative interviews, I did not have to transcribe participant responses as they were submitted electronically and therefore already typed up by the participants. This limitation was also somewhat mitigated by my prolonged engagement with participants as a co-instructor in the course. However, my role as co-instructor and participant observer created other ethical considerations and limitations.
The question of ethics in participant observation is ambiguous and multi-layered, especially in my case because I co-designed the hybrid learning environment and served as a co-instructor in the course. In order to separate these roles, to the extent that was possible, I engaged in ongoing self-reflexivity strategies to examine of my biases, beliefs, and assumptions and their potential to influence the way that CITs responded to me as both an instructor and researcher. My relationship with participants was formed through a teacher student interaction, in which we (the instructors and I) tried to foster an environment that was less hierarchical, as everyone was expected to serve as teacher and learner in the course and student feedback directly shaped the way in which the course unfolded. This aspect of my relationship likely carried over to my participant researcher relationship with students as I communicated that participants’ perspectives are instrumental to shaping and defining the problem to be studied, in collecting and analyzing the data, and in constructing and representing the research findings (Merriam, 2009).

I attempted to separate teacher student relationships from participant researcher relationships by ensuring that my role as an instructor/perceived evaluator remained separate from my role as a researcher/participant observer. This ethical concern was mitigated through my informed consent procedures. Specifically, I did not know who consented to participate until after final grades were turned in for the course, thereby creating an extra layer of separation in these roles. That being said, ethical considerations related to my role as a participant observer were explored in an ongoing and inductive way throughout data collection and data analysis, so that I remained accountable for and aware of the ways my dual role as instructor and researcher potentially impacted
participants’ responses. However, I believe there are also potential benefits to having a dual relationship, as my engaging with students in the role of educator enabled me to build trust and strong relationships, which enabled students to practice providing me with constructive feedback throughout the course. Participants may have ultimately provided more rich and candid data as a result of this trust and experience. Thus, there are likely strengths and limitations to the dual researcher/educator relationship.

As I will be the primary instructor for the course moving forward, future research could involve mentoring doctoral students to engage in co-instruction, data collection, interviewing, and helping with data analysis. This approach will necessitate ongoing discussions and reflections about ethically managing dual roles in research and education which would likely be mutually beneficial to my future doctoral students and my master students simultaneously. While I think that every effort must be made to ensure that ethical research standards are closely followed and to protect students, I do not believe it is possible to evaluate teaching approaches and their effectiveness for diverse learners without encountering some dual role relationships within that research process. Dual role relationships will likely be ones that counselors and counselor educators will have to navigate throughout their careers and additional practice in attempting to separate these roles to the extent that is possible seems likely to be advantageous for students.

In qualitative research where the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, subjectivity and interaction are assumed. The interdependency between the observer and the observed may bring about changes in both parties’ behaviors. The question, then, is not whether the process of observing affects what is observed but how the researcher can identify those effects and account for them in interpreting the data. (Merriam, 2009, p. 127)
Future Research Directions

There are many potential future directions for this line of research. First, engaging in research to better understand how counselor educators can be trained to implement hybrid or flipped classroom approaches designed to maximize cognitive complexity development will be valuable as universities increasingly pressure faculty to utilize technology to reach diverse learners. The results of this study suggest that cognitive complexity development may be closely related to the development of multicultural and social justice competency and a CITs ability to set aside their own values when working with clients with differing perspectives and worldviews. As a result, new and more efficient ways of fostering cognitive complexity development may be especially timely given the current socio-political climate and the debate in the counseling profession regarding the ethics of value based referrals. Additionally, this line of research would also provide opportunities to explore students’ cognitive complexity development in the context of diverse educators.

There is also a need for ongoing research regarding the effectiveness of hybrid and flipped approaches to counselor education, and higher education in general. Additional research could focus on understanding how to use media to actively engage students. For example, many of my participants who had taken other online courses indicated they preferred the interactive videos to narrated PowerPoint presentations. Students could be randomly assigned to different forms of online media and their cognitive complexity development and comprehension could be measured. In this way we can continue to refine online education to maximize engagement, development, and applied knowledge.
Similarly, I would like to explore the convergent validity between existing measures of cognitive complexity and the applied client scenario videos, talk aloud conceptualizations, and the socio-cultural conceptualization factor cards that I used for this study. This exploration could take place in the context of a longitudinal study tracking students’ cognitive complexity development from the beginning of a counseling master’s program through internship and beyond. A longitudinal study would provide additional data on students’ interactions with more educators and would thus would overcome some of the dual role limitation of this study.

Lastly, there is a need to refine, co-construct, and research measures of cognitive complexity development for educators to use in conjunction with their teaching in order to assess students’ cognitive complexity development levels across multiple domains. Information from a refined measure would allow educators to target students gaps in understanding while intentionally improving and expanding upon the content and activities utilized within hybrid and flipped learning environments. Educators who wish to measure changing levels of student cognitive complexity across the duration of their courses and/or their programs will need to provide students with multiple opportunities (e.g., pre, mid, and post course) to organize and connect theoretical principles and client contextual factors together to form coherent and holistic working hypotheses. The use of hypothetical client scenarios as a component of the assessment process can provide opportunities for more applied, genuine and complex interactions with realistic client situations. Educators can structure client scenarios so they include emotionally evocative and existentially triggering material, potentially ambiguous ethical dilemmas, and situations where counselors in training are asked to construct working hypotheses and
assess theoretical fit. By intentionally layering hypothetical client scenarios with these ingredients it may be easier to transparently identify and track the ways that CITs restructure salient factors into meaningful patterns while simultaneously engaging in self evaluative behaviors that allow them to make treatment decisions based on their ways of knowing/understanding, theoretical principles, and professional ethical standards.

This line of research could potentially provide valuable information regarding the creation of evidenced based teaching strategies through helping educators to distill the common ingredients that may be necessary for igniting cognitive complexity development and allowing opportunities to combine these ingredients in new ways across various intersecting domains (e.g., interpersonal assessment, counseling micro-skills, client conceptualization, treatment planning/goals, theoretical application, counseling interventions/techniques, multicultural and social justice competency development, and professional ethics). This is valuable information for counselor educators to have in order to better understand student development and tailor their pedagogical approaches to walk CITs through the developmentally expected steps of higher order thinking skills necessary to comprehend, select, synthesize, apply, and evaluate information in context.

**Summary**

I began this chapter by discussing the impact of hybrid and flipped classroom approaches to teaching on counselor development. I then discussed the implications of these learning approaches regarding multicultural and social justice development, which appears to be closely related to cognitive complexity and is a key component of counselor identity. Implications that arise when counselors in training inadvertently impose their values onto their clients were then explored. After exploring the relationship between multicultural and social justice competency development and cognitive complexity
development, I presented my researcher voice and the unique way in which I came to conceptualize CITs development based on my own personal context and life experiences. Through sharing these personal experiences, I attempted to provide a window to my self-reflexivity, which I made efforts to engage with throughout the design and implementation of my study.

After presenting my voice and self-reflexivity I tied together what I have learned from this project by providing brief suggestions for counselor educators who are interested in using technology and experience based approaches to teaching. These suggestions included utilizing pedagogy and theories to inform teaching, training doctoral students so they are prepared to use technology when they step into the role of educators, and integrating experiential and technology based learning one step at a time. This was followed by an overview of the limitations for my study, some of which I would like to address in future research projects. After concluding my discussion of my study by talking about the limitations, I summarized a number of future research directions that developed from my study.

I found the process of designing the hybrid counseling theories course to be immensely challenging and rewarding. I was surprised by the extent to which students demonstrated cognitive complexity development, including awareness of self and others, as well as the extent to which students reported enjoying the online portions of the course. I look forward to continuing my development as an educator and a researcher and to engaging in future research projects that will help me to better understand how I can construct learning environments that support students in challenging themselves and each other to become the best counselors they can be.
REFERENCES


Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs


Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs


Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs


doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2012.01.003


APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
DATE: December 22, 2015
TO: Ashley Branson, M.A.
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNC) IRB
PROJECT TITLE: [M1670-2] Increasing cognitive complexity: Use of a Hybrid (Online & In Person) Theories Counseling Course
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification
ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: December 22, 2015

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNC) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Ashley -

Thank you for the very thorough IRB application. Based on these submitted documents and materials your application is verified/approved exempt and you may proceed with participant recruitment and data collection.

Please make one small addition, that does not need to be submitted for subsequent review but should be completed before use of your consent forms; add your research advisor’s name and contact information to the headings.

Best wishes with this interesting research and please don’t hesitate to contact me with any IRB-related questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNC) IRB’s records.
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM
Gender identity/preferred gender pronouns:

Age:

Ethnicity or Ethnicities:

Full or part time student:

Track in the program:

Are you employed? If so describe

How many semesters have you been in the program?

Have you worked in a helping related field before? If so describe

What is your preferred learning style? (e.g., experiential activities, lecture, video, discussion)

What is your level of comfort using technology to access online course material? 1-5 (not at all comfortable to very comfortable).
APPENDIX C

REFLECTION JOURNAL PROMPTS
Journal Prompt Reflection Questions for Theories

Context Videos

1. What factors do you think were most salient in the development of this theory?
2. How might these factors have impacted the development of a specific aspect (e.g., values, assumptions, practices) of the theory?
3. What aspects of this theory fit with your worldview and the way you think about counseling?
4. What aspects of this theory do not fit with your worldview and the way you think about counseling?
5. Compare and contrast two of the theories that you learned about in this section. What are some similarities between the theories? What are the differences?

Journal Prompt Reflection Questions for Session Demonstrations

Questions were created based on Transparent Counseling Pedagogy post session processing questions which include CITs reactions to the session, observations about counselor ways of being, and perceived fit between the theoretical lens utilized and the client’s worldview, beliefs, and context (Dollarhide et al., 2007).

1. What did you see the counselor doing that was consistent with this theory?
2. What would your reactions be to working with this client?
3. How would you describe the clients presenting problem(s)?
4. What factors did the client identify as salient?
5. What are your reactions to this session?
6. What did you notice about the personal style of the counselor?
7. What did you notice in terms of fit of theory for this client?
8. How useful do you think this theory would be with this client?
9. Would a different theory be a better fit? Why?
10. What would you have done differently?

Group Discussion Questions for Reflection

Video Case Scenarios

1. What are your reactions to thinking about working with this client?
2. If this were your client how would you describe their presenting problem?
3. How would this theory describe the clients presenting problem?
4. What factors might be most salient for this client?
5. What factors would be most salient for you in working with this client?
6. How useful do you think this theory would be with this client?
7. What aspects of the theory might be helpful in understanding this client?
8. Would a different theory be a better fit? Why?
Each student will complete a final reaction paper that is based on student learning as well as the theory pre and post-test assignment. There is a maximum page limit of five pages for each paper, not including title or reference pages. Grading will be based on thoroughness of content and APA style, organization, and clear writing. All assignments will be turned in electronically through blackboard in word format.

- Students will use organized headings to address the following:
  - Reflect on your theories pre and post-test results.
    - Describe any changes between the pre and post-test.
    - What factors do you think prompted these changes? If your pre and post-test results were relatively similar describe aspects of the course that solidified or reinforced your preferences.
  - Which theory do you personally think is the closest match with your own personality and worldview (this may be based on the theories test)?
    - What makes this theory a natural fit with yourself and the way that you see the world?
    - What client demographics do you think your preferred theory might work well with (hint: consider multiple “intersections”, for example, how theory interacts with gender and age or with career goals and ethnicity)?
    - At what times or with what client demographics might your preferred theory be insensitive or potentially ineffective?
  - Which theory is most at odds with your own personality or worldview?
    - What makes this theory at odds with your personality or worldview?
    - What client demographics do you think your least preferred theory might work well with (hint: consider multiple intersections)?
    - At what times or with what client demographics might your least preferred theory be insensitive or potentially ineffective?
APPENDIX E

PRE, MID, AND POST COURSE QUESTIONNAIRES
Pre-course Questions

1. What are some of the benefits you see in having portions of this course online?
2. What are some of the limitations you see in having portions of this course online?
3. How comfortable are you with using technology to access online course material? 1-5
4. Please list three words that capture your thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others.
5. Please select the image that most accurately symbolizes your thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others.

Mid-course Questions

1. What lingering questions do you have about the content from the first weekend?
2. What aspects of the course have worked well for you thus far?
3. What aspects of the course would you like changed?
4. What would you change about them?
5. Please tell us the name of a song that you feel represents the counseling process and briefly describe the reasons you selected the song.

Post-course Questions

1. Which of the in class experiential activities, discussions, and/or demonstrations were most useful to your learning? How did they encourage your growth and development?
2. Which of the online video demonstration sessions or applied client scenarios were most useful to your learning? How did they foster your growth and development?
3. What benefits do you feel the online content offered?
4. What limitations did you encounter with online learning?
5. After completing the course how comfortable was your experience accessing online portions of material? (5 pt. scale)
6. Please list three words that capture your thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others.
7. Please upload the image that most accurately symbolizes your thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others. If you upload an image, then please do not answer the next question. We will email you when your images are available at the front desk in Lowry.
8. Only answer if you did not upload a file for the previous question. Please select the image that most accurately symbolizes your thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others.
APPENDIX F

COURSE STRUCTURE FIRST ONLINE SATURDAY
### Instructions for unit one: The first force – Psychoanalysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Web Link</th>
<th>Time Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Freud &amp; Psychoanalysis Mind Map Video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/resources/psychoanalysis.html">http://www.counseling.education/resources/psychoanalysis.html</a></td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Please watch one of the two following videos: Adler or Jung</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read pg. 89-92 &amp; Watch the Analytic Psychology Context Video with Carl</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/jung.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/jung.html</a></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jung or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read pg. 64-65; 68-69 &amp; Watch the Adler Early Recollection Demonstration</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/adler.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/adler.html</a></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the Journal Prompts &amp; Reflection Questions from either the</td>
<td><a href="#">Journal prompts &amp; reflection questions can be found directly below videos.</a></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Psychology Context (Jung) Video or the Early Recollections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video (Adler)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Dr. Harry Harlow Early Life Attachment Video &amp; the Dr. Sue</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/earlydevelopment.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/earlydevelopment.html</a></td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson Early Life Relationships &amp; Adult Attachment Video</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Psychoanalytic Counseling Demonstration Video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalytic.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalytic.html</a></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the Journal Prompts &amp; Reflection Questions for the Psychoanalytic Counseling Demonstration Video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalytic.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalytic.html</a></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post the journal prompts &amp; reflection questions you have responded to in</td>
<td><a href="#">Blackboard</a></td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unit one your small group discussion board in Blackboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Psychoanalysis Client Scenario Video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalysiscase.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalysiscase.html</a></td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the Written Psychoanalytic Client Scenario</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalysiscase.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalysiscase.html</a></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychoanalysis Client Scenario Small Group Discussion Questions, You</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalysiscase.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalysiscase.html</a></td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO NOT need to discuss the Psychoanalytic Client Scenario Small Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Planning &amp; Client Conceptualization Activity- save for class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday. For the discussion please have one person take notes and post the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notes to your small discussion board.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Instructions for unit two: The second force – Behavioral & Cognitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Web Link</th>
<th>Time Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Dr. Ellis &amp; Gloria Counseling Demonstration Video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/rebt.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/rebt.html</a></td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respond to the Journal Prompts &amp; Reflection Questions for the Dr. Ellis &amp; Gloria Counseling Demonstration Session</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/rebt.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/rebt.html</a></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Demonstration Video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/cbt.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/cbt.html</a></td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the Journal Prompts &amp; Reflection Questions for the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Demonstration Video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/cbt.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/cbt.html</a></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Comparing Psychoanalysis &amp; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Demonstration Sessions video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalysesbt.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/psychoanalysesbt.html</a></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post the journal prompts &amp; reflection questions you have responded to in unit two your small group discussion board in Blackboard</td>
<td>Blackboard</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Download &amp; Watch the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Client Scenario Video</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/cbtcase.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/cbtcase.html</a></td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the Written Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Client Scenario</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/cbtcase.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/cbtcase.html</a></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Client Scenario Small Group Discussion Questions. You DO NOT need to discuss the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Scenario Small Group Treatment Planning &amp; Client Conceptualization Activity- save for class Sunday. For the discussion please have one person take notes and post the notes to your small discussion board.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.counseling.education/private/cbtcase.html">http://www.counseling.education/private/cbtcase.html</a></td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

VIDEO EDITING PROCESS
APPENDIX H

CONCEPTUALIZATION NOTE CARDS
Each factor can be pasted on to its own note card. Additional blank note card can also be provided. Please see http://www.counseling.education/resources/conceptualization.html for further activity instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment Style</th>
<th>Presenting Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Socio-Economic Status (SES)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>Social Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Patterns</td>
<td>Boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>Developmental Life Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Values</td>
<td>Family Values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Shape/Image</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Community Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Rural/Urban Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma/Abuse</td>
<td>Prior Mental Health Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook/Sentiment</td>
<td>Social Class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

COURSE STRUCTURE SECOND

ONLINE SATURDAY
### Instructions for unit two: The fourth/fifth force – Multicultural and Social Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Web Link</th>
<th>Time Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Multicultural Demonstration Session</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/multiculturaldemonstration.html">http://counseling.education/private/multiculturaldemonstration.html</a></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Social Justice Session</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/sidemonstration.html">http://counseling.education/private/sidemonstration.html</a></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the Journal Prompts &amp; Reflection Questions from either the Multicultural or Social Justice Demonstration session</td>
<td>Journal prompts &amp; reflection questions can be found directly below videos.</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Comparing Humanistic/Existential, Multicultural, &amp; Social Justice Demonstration Sessions</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/comparing45.html">http://counseling.education/private/comparing45.html</a></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Multicultural Social Justice Applied Client Scenario Video</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/mcsjscenario.html">http://counseling.education/private/mcsjscenario.html</a></td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the Written Multicultural Social Justice Therapy Client Scenario</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/mcsjscenario.html">http://counseling.education/private/mcsjscenario.html</a></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Instructions for unit one: The third force – Humanistic/Existential:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Web Link</th>
<th>Time Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*** Please watch two of the following three demonstrations sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch Carl Rogers &amp; Gloria Counseling Demonstration Session Video</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/rogers.html">http://counseling.education/private/rogers.html</a></td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch Fritz Perls &amp; Gloria Counseling Demonstration Session Video</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/perls.html">http://counseling.education/private/perls.html</a></td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch Existential Counseling Demonstration Session Video</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/existential.html">http://counseling.education/private/existential.html</a></td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the Journal Prompts &amp; Reflection Questions for ONE of the three demonstration session videos (Rogers, Perls, or Existential)</td>
<td>Journal prompts &amp; reflection questions can be found directly below videos.</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the Humanistic &amp; Existential Client Scenario video (Omarina’s Story)</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/hescenario.html">http://counseling.education/private/hescenario.html</a></td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the written Humanistic &amp; Existential Client Scenario (Omarina’s Story)</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/files/humanistic_existential_scenario.docx">http://counseling.education/private/files/humanistic_existential_scenario.docx</a></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic &amp; Existential Client Scenario Small Group Discussion Questions. You DO NOT need to discuss the Humanistic &amp; Existential Client Scenario Small Group Treatment Planning &amp; Client Conceptualization Activity. We will save this for class Sunday.</td>
<td>Please discuss the questions with your small groups.</td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose one of the following two videos:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brené Brown <em>Emphasizing Genuineness: Do Vulnerability &amp; Empathy Matter for Connection</em></td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/brene.html">http://counseling.education/private/brene.html</a></td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative School Counseling</td>
<td><a href="http://counseling.education/private/narrativesc.html">http://counseling.education/private/narrativesc.html</a></td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post the journal prompts &amp; reflection questions you have responded to in unit two your small group discussion board in Blackboard</td>
<td>Blackboard</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
1) What classes have you taken, other than the theories course, in the counseling program?

2) How were your experiences in your other courses been similar and/or different to your experiences in the theories course?

3) What opportunities have you had to reflect on your values, worldviews, and biases in your classes? Was this useful to your learning? If yes, please describe how this was useful to your learning.

4) When presented with a complex client scenario (video and written) what client intersectional factors would you describe as important in your ‘ways of understanding’ the client?

5) How might your ‘ways of understanding’ the client inform ‘your way of being’ with the client in the counseling room?

6) How might your ‘ways of understanding’ the client inform ‘your ways of intervening with the client’ through specific counseling goals and interventions?

7) Based on your ‘ways of being, understanding, and intervening’ with the client which theories might you utilize from the following domains? Is there a primary theoretical domain that you would utilize?
   a. Psychoanalytic domain
   b. Behavioral and Cognitive domain
   c. Humanistic and Existential domain
   d. Multicultural and Social Justice domain

8) How would you assess theoretical fit given the client’s context and salient intersectional identity factors?

9) Would you have any fears when working with the client or their family?

10) Are there any additional things that you think would be important to share regarding your experiences with this interview or in the theories course?
APPENDIX K

PILOT STUDY
Theories Pilot Study

Once initial experiential activities were selected (i.e., Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role play demonstrations, Kinesthetic Values Clustering Continuum Activity) and the videos and client conceptualization and treatment planning activity were designed for the pilot course I began to put together a tentative course schedule for the in person and online days in order to budget our time efficiently and to design additional experiential activities that would be likely to foster student self-reflexivity, attunement to context, sharing of multiple perspectives, and therefore rapid cycling through each of the domains of the Recursive Superstructure.

Pre-course Information and Expectations for Pilot Study

Six weeks before the onset of the pilot study and the beginning of the counseling course students were contacted via email and blackboard and provided with relevant reading assignments and a detailed syllabus outlining instructional design and expectations for both the in-person and online portions of the course. The syllabus might also be considered an organizational tool in the case as it provided detailed expectations for both students and instructors. This was intentionally done to help ease students into a transition in their roles as teachers and learners within the constructivist hybrid learning environment and to clarify the role of instructors’ as facilitators and guides. Also, note the professionalism and participation portions of the syllabus and how detailed and specific the instructors were in communicating specific course expectations and intentions. In constructing the syllabus, I followed several recommendations in the literature including providing counselors in training (CITs) with a clear statement regarding expectations for engagement with technology in the course (Nelson, Nichter, &
Henriksen, 2010) and a clear definition of ‘netiquette’ expectations in online interactions (Moorhead et al., 2013).

**Pre-Course Assessment**

Counselors in training were also required to complete a pre-course assessment which included a set of questions related to their expectations for the course (see Appendix E), the theoretical orientation scale (Smith, 2010), and a photo elicitation activity where CITs were asked to select a photo and three words that they felt represented their thoughts and feelings regarding counseling others. This was intended to orient students to the course and help them to begin to develop self-reflexivity regarding their own values, worldviews, and contexts and how those may or may not fit with various theoretical perspectives. Counselors in training were provided with a copy of their photo/word card with their theoretical orientation scale results laminated on the back the first Friday during introductions.

**Pilot Study: First Friday**

The first Friday the primary instructor opened the course with introductions of all counselors in training and instructors and then briefly clarified general expectations and intentions for the first weekend. At this time, I mentioned that the counselors in training would have an opportunity to participate in a research study as part of the hybrid counseling theories course and that they would be invited to participate before the end of the evening. Counselors in training were then told that the second weekend of the course would likely look similar to the first weekend, however, it would be modified based on their feedback and learning needs. This was intended to communicate to the students that all instructors were highly invested in their development, believed that they were in the best position to self-identify their own learning needs, and valued their knowledge and
experiences. I briefly mentioned the study in order to be upfront and transparent with students about my research study from the onset of the course, however, it was determined that the study would be most easily introduced following the cake lecture as this provided the synthesis and rationale that would lead into the explanation of the purpose of my study.

**Icebreaker and Intentions**

The instructors then transitioned into a small group icebreaker activity in which students were presented with an envelope full of materials (e.g., rubber band, paperclip, ribbon, pieces of paper, twist tie) and instructed to make something that was symbolically representative of or related to counseling theories. Each small group spent time creating from the items and then shared what they had co-constructed and the meaning they had made related to counseling theories with the whole class. As the counselors in training shared their experiences the instructors modeled reflective and group processing skills by engaging the counselors in training in a discussion regarding what it was like to complete the activity and work with one another to create new understandings and meanings related to counseling theories. This activity was intended to allow opportunities for counselors in training to share their tacit knowledge regarding theories, to begin to build relationships both among the students and between students and instructors, to foster awareness of the process, and to allow opportunities for instructors to observe CITs ways of understanding theories at the outset of the course. Following the activity, the instructors reviewed the syllabus with the students, reviewed the detailed course expectations, and clarified student questions regarding the course. Instructors also spent time addressing student concerns and anxieties related to learning online that they had expressed during the pre-course assessment. Instructors explained their intentionality in
utilizing a hybrid course design and clarified the ways in which the online portions of the course could potentially enhance the in-person learning environment.

**Personal Evocative Narratives and Context Lecture**

Following the syllabus review the primary instructor read aloud her personal evocative narrative detailing her lived experiences of transitioning to a U.S. context to pursue her doctoral degree and entering a counseling relationship with a well-intentioned, yet culturally unaware counselor, who failed to recognize the significance of culture and context. The sharing of this narrative was intended to further build relationships among CITs and instructors, to help them begin to attend to context, to mitigate power hierarchies to the extent that is possible, and to emotionally access students in order to prime them for the context ‘lecture’. The context ‘lecture’ also followed an evocative narrative format and was collaboratively given by the co-instructor and me in an intentionally engaging way. The stories shared in the context ‘lecture’ detailed various experiments in which the role of context was highlighted as significantly impacting people’s thoughts feelings and behaviors (e.g., Asch conformity, 1951; Stanford prison, 1971; Milgram shock, 1963). This was then connected to a personal evocative narrative shared by the co-instructor highlighting the role of context in a similar way within jury decision making research he and I participated in during undergrad.

These ideas were further built upon and connected to two research stories conducted in counseling in which counselors struggled to successfully identify and attend to client contextual factors (found in Broffrenbrenner, 1992) as well as to the story of the good Samaritan experiment (Darley & Bateson, 1973). For a more detailed example of how research stories can be shared in evocative and engaging ways please listen to
Malcom Gladwell tell the story of good Samaritan experiment in his audiobook the Tipping Point (2002). Each of the stories in the context ‘lecture’ were intentionally told in an interactive way in which responses and reactions were elicited from the counselors in training. The context ‘lecture’ concluded with a personal evocative narrative in which I shared my lived experience of encountering the common situation of traffic and the way in which I prioritized my own context while minimizing the contexts of others (i.e., fundamental attribution error) because I was late for an important life event. The purpose of these research stories was to prime counselors in training to the importance of context, to normalize the human tendency to selectively overlook contextual factors, to promote awareness of this tendency so it could be more self-reflexively monitored, and to foster further relationship building and safety with instructors.

Participation in Qualitative Portraiture Case Study

Following the context lecture CITs were provided with information regarding the qualitative case study portraiture and invited to participate. All three instructors left the room and allowed the students to decide in private if they wished to participate in the study. The signed informed consents were collected in a pre-addressed envelope by one of the students and returned to the front desk where they were mailed to the department chair and kept confidential in a locked filing cabinet until after course grades were turned in. This was done in order to keep the teaching team from knowing which counselors in training had chosen to participate in the study until after the course was complete.

Kinesthetic Values Clustering Continuum Activity

Next the CITs and instructors went outside and completed a kinesthetic values clustering continuum activity similar to the one described by Brubaker et al., 2010 in
Chapter II. However, instead of using Prilletensky (2000) value clustering’s I utilized a modified version of Ratts & Pedersen’s (2014) Five Forces as this clustering shared more congruence with the theoretical organizational system utilized by the instructors in designing the course. Instructors served as guides in this process through modeling reflective and group processing skills as the students moved where they were standing based on differing values and talked aloud through their perspectives, ways of understanding, and lived experiences. This activity had a similar aim to Brubaker et al.’s (2010) kinesthetic theoretical clustering activity as it was intended to continue to raise values awareness in relation to various theoretical perspectives while also creating opportunities for relationship and trust building between the CITs so that they could begin to share divergent perspectives and worldviews with one another.

Cake, Contextual Models, and Common Factors

Following the value clustering continuum activity, the students and instructors went inside and the cake lecture was given. This lecture involves a metaphor of a wedding cake with the interpersonal layer making up the base of the cake, the conceptual layer making up the center of the cake, and the technical layer making up the top layer of the cake. The wedding cake is then tied to the contextual model of treatment efficacy and the common factors which were detailed in Chapter II (Cuijpers, et al., 2012; Lambert, 1992; Wampold, 2001). After the common factors were identified they were then each tied back into the wedding cake metaphor. At the close of the lecture counselors in training were given cupcakes to eat while the ways of being (i.e. interpersonal), ways of understanding (i.e., conceptual), and ways of intervening (i.e., technical) were also connected with the common factors and the cake. The intention of this lecture was to
provide the necessary organizational strategies and justification for the request that CITs attempt to engage with each of the theoretical perspectives explored in the course as each could be considered potentially useful dependent upon context.

My intention in providing the metaphor of the cake was to symbolically simplify a complex topic that counselors in training tend to struggle with and to make it more memorable and easier to talk about. For example, during the second weekend CITs were heard making statements to each other during small group conceptualization activities such as, “I think we are on different layers of the cake right now. We need to all go back to the second layer of the cake”. The cupcakes were provided to increase engagement with relatively dense information and as a way to create additional resonance with the cake metaphor. This lecture represents the least constructivist activity in the course, however, is necessary as it provides counselors in training with the broad organizational and structural system that orients them to the online course design.

**Orienting to First Saturday Online**

The last activity on the first Friday involved breaking up into small learning groups and talking them through the steps and clarifying questions regarding expectations for the first online Saturday. Notice by the close of the first Friday students have been systematically exposed to all of the foundational elements (i.e., contextual/critical constructivist pedagogy, systems/context, multicultural, and social justice theoretical perspectives) of the Recursive Superstructure in experiential ways.

**Pilot Study: First Saturday Online**

The schedule for the first Saturday online can be found in Appendix F. After watching the videos and completing self-reflexivity journals counselors in training shared
their responses to the self-reflexivity prompts in online small group discussion boards and responded to one another’s reflections. Counselors in training were also required to discuss each applied client scenario in their small group for a total of one hour. Students were informed that these discussions could occur in whatever format was most useful for them including inside of the learning management software, via Google Hangouts, Skype, phone, or in person. Counselors in training were provided with discussion questions to help them structure their conversations and to prepare them to participate in the in class portion of the activity on Sunday. Instructors were available to respond to students from 9:00am to 5:00pm and interacted with them via email and discussion board throughout the first Saturday.

**Pilot Study: First Sunday**

We began the first Sunday of the course by checking in with the large group regarding the online activities of the previous day. Counselors in training generally expressed frustration regarding the time it took to watch the videos and complete the reflection prompts. Instructors reflected and empathized with their frustration. The students seemed to appreciate the content and activities, however, many of them seemed to have engaged with the content for 10-12 hours or more. This prompted the instructors to adjust expectations for the second Saturday by reducing the amount of content CITs were required to complete.

**Photo Elicitation Activity**

The initial check in was followed by a photo-elicitation activity where counselors in training were presented with black and white pictures of people’s faces and were asked to choose an image of a “client I would like to work with and a client I would like to work with less”. I also selected two photos and modeled aloud to the whole class the
process of reflecting on how my personal biases recruited me to prefer working with someone who I perceived as having similar lived experiences to my own and my fear in not having anything to offer to the client I selected as ‘someone I would like to work with less’. Counselors in training were then asked to discuss and reflect on the ways in which their biases potentially impacted the photos that they selected in their small groups. The activity was then processed with the whole class. During processing CITs identified personal biases and sources of privilege as well as experiences of oppression. Counselors in training also identified that the elicitation activity was similar to utilizing an association technique in Psychoanalytic theory.

**Psychoanalytic Role Play**

Following the photo elicitation activity, we set up the Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role play demonstration (Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007). Prior to the role plays the co-instructor and myself created client role-play scenarios with similar presenting concerns to those presented in the client scenario videos. We then reviewed the key tenets of the theory we would be demonstrating, as well as the counseling demonstration videos from the theory before practicing the role-plays with each other. This is likely a necessary step for instructors to take as it is challenging for both the ‘counselor’ to demonstrate a theoretical perspective and the ‘client’ to stay in character while simultaneously making metalog transparent and engaging in active dialogue during the session pauses. For the first Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role play demonstration the co-instructor played a psychoanalytic counselor and I played a fictional client, who had suffered the loss of a partner, though with different client identify factors and differing intersections than the applied client scenario demonstration video. The primary instructor helped to facilitate student interactions during the session.
time outs, which could be called by any of the class participants. The primary instructor also facilitated the post session processing following the activity.

**Applied Psychoanalytic Client Conceptualization Activity**

Counselors in training then transitioned into their learning groups to further discuss the applied client scenario conceptualization and treatment planning activity for the psychoanalytic domain. This experiential activity involves creating notecards that can be used within small learning groups (3-4 students) to help counselors in training to hold online various potentially salient client identity factors (e.g., ethnicity/race, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, social support, strengths) while they conceptualize client struggles in context by kinesthetically moving the factors in relation to one another. This activity is useful because CITs are able to visually see the intersections they integrate and make meaning of the various interactions. Please see Appendix H for a copy of what these note cards look like. This activity was selected because of its potential to help counselors in training to develop cognitive complexity through differentiation and integration strategies.

During this activity, counselors in training are also provided with a few blank note cards so that they can begin to differentiate additional salient contextual factors or client characteristics that they identify as important to their ways of understanding the client. Educators then act as guides in the large group helping CITs to struggle aloud with how they conceptualize and understand client struggles in context, encouraging the sharing of multiple perspectives, and helping CITs to begin to articulate how they might integrate this information based on their awareness and understanding of context and intersecting salient client factors in order to assess theoretical fit. The small groups also discussed
their working hypotheses, ways of understanding the client, and how they saw
psychoanalytic theory as fitting or not fitting for the client. Instructors facilitated small
groups sharing their perspectives in the large group and reflected and processed the
experience with the class.

**Cognitive Behavioral Role Play**

The Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role play (Dollarhide, Smith, &
Lemberger, 2007) activity and the applied client scenario conceptualization and treatment
planning activity were then repeated except applied to different client scenarios with the
co-instructor playing a fictional client, who was experiencing career concerns due to a
recent incarceration, though again, with different client identify factors and differing
intersections than the applied client scenario demonstration video. I played a cognitive
behavioral counselor and the primary instructor facilitated processing during time outs
and following the session. During the second Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role-play
processing counselors in training identified that the making transparent of internal
dialogue and thoughts shared some similarity to cognitive behavioral (CBT) techniques
demonstrated in the session.

**Applied CBT Client Conceptualization Activity**

Counselors in training then transitioned into their learning groups once they
completed the applied client scenario conceptualization and treatment planning activity
for the cognitive behavioral domain in an identical manner to the way in which they
completed the activity for the psychoanalytic domain instructors once again led large
group processing. At the end of the day the teaching team informed CITs that they would
be emailed a mid-course assessment (see Appendix E) between the first and second weekends. After processing the student’s experiences thus far and discussing expectations for the second weekend of class the educators ended the first weekend of class.

**Pilot Study: Second Friday**

We began the second weekend by checking in with CITs and following up with the ways that we planned to implement their feedback from the first weekend. The co-instructor further responded to feedback gathered on the mid-course assessment by providing the class with a mini-lecture that was nearly identical to the mini-lecture on common factors and the role of theories in the overall counseling process from the first weekend. I participated in this lecture by drawing words and graphics and presenting the metaphor of the cake as he explained the common factors aloud. Counselors in training were more participatory in the cake lecture during the second weekend and asked more questions. Next they completed a unit on solution focused therapy that involved a mini-lecture by the primary instructor as well as a video demonstration. Following the video demonstration counselors in training engaged in solution focused role plays within their small groups while instructors provided encouragement, support, and feedback to the students. The solution focused therapy unit was then processed as a large class and counselors in training were given expectations for the second online Saturday.

**Pilot Study: Second Saturday**

The time allotted for videos was adjusted so that counselors in training could complete all of the videos, activities, and discussions within a 7.5-hour time period. See Appendix I to view the schedule for the second Saturday online. The self-reflexivity prompts were adjusted slightly based on CITs feedback and students were once again
required to respond to each other’s small group reflective posts and have an hour long discussion regarding the applied client scenario videos in preparation for the conceptualization and treatment planning activity. Again the instructors were available from 9:00am to 5:00pm and interacted with counselors in training via email and discussion board throughout the second Saturday.

**Pilot Study: Second Sunday**

We began the second Sunday by setting expectations for the day and processing experiences with online activities from Saturday. We then asked counselors in training to participate in an activity in which they observed still objects on a table from a two specific locations while writing their observations. After each observation the primary instructor lead the counselors in training in a discussion regarding the relationship between where in the room CITs were standing and the meaning they made from the objects. Students position in the room was compared to social location as some counselors in training were not able to see as many objects as others could. During processing, counselors in training reflected on the ways in which they had different meanings and perspectives based on their own life experiences, which resulted in each student making unique meaning out of what they observed. Following the observation activity, the counselors in training were provided with two additional metaphors (GPS and camera with lenses) to help them connect that theories, just like their personal life histories and contexts, provide a lens through which one can view a client.

**Applied Existential Client Conceptualization Activity**

Counselors in training then returned to their small learning groups (3-4 students) to discuss the first applied client scenario and treatment plan from the second Saturday.
Interestingly some of the note cards fell out in my car resulting in some of the identity and contextual factors being missing. The students believed that I had purposely removed the factors so that they could practice identify the ‘missing pieces’ based on the client scenario. While this was not intentional it was an interesting serendipitous event as I believe it resulted in increased autonomy and opportunities for counselors in training to begin to differentiate more characteristics than perhaps they would have done otherwise.

Gestalt Role Play

After a short break CITs convened as a class to watch the co-instructor and I role play a gestalt counseling session. This role play was similar to those done on the first Sunday, with the co-instructor playing the counselor while I played the client and the primary instructor led the processing during session pauses and post-session. In processing the videos in small group discussions many of the students had specifically requested to see a gestalt session because they had negative reactions to Fritz Perls in the Gloria (Shostrom, 1965) video. During the session pauses counselors in training discussed how the co-instructor’s way of being was different from Fritz Perls' approach, however, his way of understanding and intervening in the here and now was consistent with Perls' approach.

Cooking Ingredients and Common Factors

Following the processing of the role-play the co-instructor, the primary instructor, and I provided the CITs with a final metaphor (cooking) to describe the role of theories in the counseling process. The common factors were associated with grains, proteins, fruits/vegetables, etc. and the theories were associated with different types of food including Mexican food, Asian food, Italian food, Indian food, etc. An example of a
common ingredient (onions) was elicited from the counselors in training that they would likely find across all of the food types. Onions were then associated with reflections of feeling. This was repeated with other ingredients that could be found across types of food and each ingredient was written on the board and labeled with a corresponding microskill that could be used across theories. Then an example of a specific ingredient (garam masala, an Indian spice) was offered as an ingredient that would not be found across the different food types. Indian food (gestalt) was then associated with the specific ingredient of garam masala (the empty chair technique). The students actively participated in the co-construction of the cooking metaphor and appeared to resonate with the idea that learning to apply theories was similar to learning to cook.

**Applied Social Justice Client Conceptualization Activity**

Next, counselors in training reconvened with their small groups to discuss the second case conceptualization and treatment planning activity from the second Saturday. When processing this activity with the whole class the instructors identified advocacy strategies at micro, meso, and macro levels that could be useful in standing up to transgender oppression (the presenting problem in the case). The instructors then explicitly linked the activity that they had just completed to their final conceptualization and treatment plan assignment which would require the students to differentiate salient contextual factors and client characteristics and to integrate these factors and characteristics to describe their ways of understanding the client and potential ways of intervening with the client through theoretical application.
Multicultural Role Play

The last activity in the course was a final Transparent Counseling Pedagogy role play during which I played a counselor using a multicultural/social justice perspective and the co-instructor played the client. Like other role plays the primary instructor processed actively with the counselors in training throughout the experience and following the session. Finally, the instructors engaged the counselors in training in asking questions about final assignments, meaning making, processing, synthesizing and saying goodbye before ending the final class. Following goodbyes, the instructors left and CITs filled out instructor evaluations and returned them to the front desk. After the conclusion of the course counselors in training completed a post-course assessment where they were again asked to complete the theoretical orientation scale (Smith, 2010), and the photo elicitation activity and then were given a new set of post course questions (see Appendix E). Following the post-course questionnaire counselors in training completed a final theories reaction paper (Appendix D) and a final applied client scenario video case study and treatment plan paper.
APPENDIX L

ANTICIPATORY TEMPLATE
In the following Appendix I provide illustrative quotes of the way in which I conceptualize counselor development at each of the stages defined in the combined cognitive complexity model (Kitchner & King, 1981; Perry, 1970).

**Dualistic Domain: Reality**

An example quote of a hypothetical counselor in training operating from the reality domain at the intersections of terminal illness, chronic pain, spirituality, and family role expectations.

I feel bad for clients who are experiencing terminal illness because I can see how it would be hard to be in pain like that and to feel like a burden to your family but at the same time I know with absolute certainty that life is a sacred gift that we have each been given and sometimes clients may just need a little help to understand that. Because even when life is a struggle and there is a lot of suffering it is important to maintain faith and hope for the future. Terminal illness is just a part of the clients’ journey so even in situations where you are in pain and dying it still is not acceptable to end your life prematurely. Suicide is never the right path for a client. No amount of suffering would ever be worth ending your life for.

**Dualistic Domain: True False Claims**

An example quote of a hypothetical counselor in training operating from the true false claims domain at the intersections of ethnicity, socio-economic status, and education/career.

I have reviewed the ACA code of ethics, taken the diversity class, and attended multicultural trainings to better understand privilege and oppression. During the class discussions and the trainings, I kept having to remind myself, whenever I started to get defensive, that I had no responsibility for this problem because issues of discrimination are not my fault. I have never had any issues with people of color. I could potentially see how some people may have benefited from privilege but I think that has a lot more to do with career choice and finances than ethnicity. For example, I can think of several black people who have been successful and had great careers because they worked hard. My family is middle class and I have not received any special treatment or advantages because I am white. I should not have to feel guilty about my achievements and abilities. Instead I am successful because of my hard work, dedication, and my commitment to client welfare. I think that all counselors feel like being multiculturally
sensitive is important now days, so these issues have already been addressed. In the past oppression was a problem but things have changed now.

**Multiplistic Domain: True Reality, False Claims, and Uncertainty**

An example quote of a hypothetical counselor in training operating from the true reality, false claims, and uncertainty domain at the intersections of sexual orientation, family versus personal values, privilege, and oppression.

I recognize how important it is to be affirming to clients who do not identify as straight because they probably already face some discrimination and I certainly don’t want to recreate that dynamic in counseling. So I feel a lot of uncertainty and confusion about value based referrals. I don’t feel like my counseling program has adequately prepared me to work with LGBT clients because we haven’t spent much time learning or talking about human sexuality. I worry that without more specific training in this area I could cause client harm because I haven’t been exposed to very many gay people and a lot of my family members don’t necessarily support that lifestyle. I wouldn’t choose to be gay but I don’t think it is my place to say what someone else should choose to do. Still I worry that I will use the wrong language or accidentally say something offensive. In this situation part of me feels like maybe it would be better for the client if I were to refer them to someone who could be more sensitive about sexual orientation. But then I am also afraid that I could hurt the clients’ feelings by referring them and I don’t want to violate the ethics code. How can you become competent without having an opportunity to work with an LGBT client first? I feel like the professors say contradictory things about when it is and isn’t okay to refer. I guess I am still confused and conflicted about what is and isn’t considered a value-based referral. Which choice would be the correct one?

**Multiplistic Domain: Reality Exists but Cannot Be Known**

An example quote of a hypothetical counselor in training operating from reality exists but cannot be known domain at the intersections of child abuse/neglect, culture, socio-economic status, immigration history, family role expectations, and gender. Notice that as the level of cognitive complexity and reflective judgment increases the complexity and number of intersections identified by the CIT as salient factors also simultaneously
increase and are increasingly informed by an awareness of self in relation to other’s experiences and contexts.

The more I work with different clients at my internship site the more I realize that my values are framing the way that I want to approach things with clients or the way that I actually view and understand a given situation. Like with reporting child abuse and neglect. I was feeling like the way she kept leaving the kids with different extended family members was neglect but later I realized I had missed the part about immigration, poverty, access, and advocacy- so when that happens it is really frustrating. My supervisor helped me to feel better about that blindspot and to take some of the blame off. Because my intention in considering reporting was to help the kids and the family. I am realizing I grew up with a lot of financial privilege and in my family there are gender expectations where moms take on certain roles and a pretty high level of involvement with kids. So there were a couple of times where I used a challenge and I could tell by the way the client reacted that it didn’t quite hit right for the way she thought about her culture and parenting and even family roles. I am trying to figure out how I can use awareness of my blindspots and biases so I can grow in those areas. I feel like talking with my supervisor has helped me to have more empathy for the client and also to feel like it was okay to bring up with her the times that I missed and said something that didn’t quite fit, so we could use those times to repair the rupture in our counseling relationship. Right now the client and I are in the process of figuring out how can we approach her situation so that it fits for her culture, context, and worldview while figuring out what other resources are available and recognizing for her extended family support is a strength.

Relativistic Domain: Personal Interpretation of Individual Realities

An example quote of a hypothetical counselor education and supervision doctoral student operating from the personal interpretation of individual realities domain. Notice the shift in the way in which the student describes their process of understanding through prolonged engagement, ongoing self-reflexivity, and patterned thematic awareness.

It seems like becoming a counselor educator and supervisor actually made me a much better clinician, which was surprising to me at first but makes sense now that I realize how many parallels there are between the three. Maybe part of the reason it is easier now is because I am a step removed from the process. Hours of facilitating discussions with students and watching counseling from behind a two-way mirror has helped me to start to anticipate some of the more common struggles beginning counselors tend
to encounter. It takes the pressure off when a relationship rupture occurs in session and you are behind the mirror noticing and reflecting on how you are reacting to what the client is saying. Recognizing oh, I am feeling defensive here I wonder how the supervisee is reacting. Or I see the supervisee is backing off and not challenging the client in this interaction, how can I explore this with the supervisee and then provide growth-oriented feedback so I can model empathetic challenging behaviors. Those things are easier to recognize when you are not directly in the room with the students or the client(s) having to manage the relationships at the same time. I am also noticing more and more how certain developmental, cultural, and relational markers will be more likely to surface in certain contextual situations and stack in somewhat predictable patterns. The meaning contained within these markers are unique to student and client experiences and contexts but the process of the way context influences the stacking of factors is often similar across students.

**Relativistic Domain: Reality Assumed**

An example quote of a hypothetical counselor educator and supervisor operating from the reality assumed sub-domain.

Now I have a mental framework that allows me to navigate how intersecting developmental, cultural, and relational markers can be attended to in the context of my relationship with students and their relationships with one another. This framework allows me to organize and create working hypotheses based on the interactions of the developmental, cultural, and relational markers that have surfaced. I am essentially trying to think about the markers mutual and reciprocal influences on one another in many directions at multiple levels and then trying to select an approach that is going to allow us to access some of the more salient intersections for these students in this context. Thinking in this way helps me to anticipate some of my blind spots and to avoid circumscribing possibilities based on a narrowed worldview. It isn’t so much about selecting the perfect theory, strategy, or technique as it is about using the markers and relational data to plot the course and model the process aloud in the classroom so that CITs can co-construct new meanings based on their lived experiences and contexts. Theory, strategy, and techniques can all be tailored and refined as relational feedback, new markers and conceptual data continue to surface.