

**“Permission to Be Human”: A Narrative Inquiry Exploring New Counselors’
Growth in Emotional Awareness and Attunement to Self**

**A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

The ability to self-attune, recognize emotional responses, and make meaning of these experiences within their own historied contexts is the foundation of the interpersonal work of counselors. Focused attention on affective development within a counseling program is essential to prepare future counselors for the task of helping individuals develop greater emotional awareness. Manuscript one includes a scoping review that seeks to map out current terminology used within counselor education related to affective development and explore how it is intentionally addressed in the counselor education literature. Current exploration of affective development within counselor education are discussed in seven emergent themes: Stress and Distress Management, Empathy, Self-Efficacy, Competency and Readiness, Self-Awareness, Use of Taxonomy within Counselor Education, and Measurement and Effectiveness of Counselor Training. Findings underscored the foundational role of affective development in counselor training and highlighted the need to better understand implementation of intentionally focused training for new counselors.

Manuscript two includes a narrative inquiry exploring the process of affective development and the factors that facilitate growth within emotional awareness and ability to self-attune for new counselors (n = 5). New counselors with training within Expressive Arts therapy were interviewed to investigate the process of intentional self-attunement within counselor education training. Five themes emerged from the overarching narratives of participants around the process of attuning to affect and deepening emotional awareness: recognition of dissonance, experiencing acceptance, engaging with ambiguity, attunement to self, and adapting. Implications for counselor education are discussed, focusing on tools for facilitating engagement

with necessary ambiguity and factors that foster relational safety within counselor education.

Keywords: Affective Development, Emotional Awareness, Self-Attunement, Counselor Education

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INTRODUCTION

Counselors actively support individuals in developing greater emotional awareness and attunement to promote client well-being and growth. The role of a counselor is multifaceted, requiring a delicate balance of applying intrapersonal and interpersonal skills (Easton et al., 2008; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2004). The complexity of this task requires active attention to developing greater self-awareness and emotional intelligence as counselors navigate therapeutic relationships within their cultural context (Austin, 2021; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Miville et al., 2006; Prikhidko et al., 2020). Focused attention on affective development within a counseling training program is essential to prepare future counselors for the task of helping individuals develop greater emotional awareness (Gutierrez et al., 2016; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2020).

Affective development is the intentional and progressive cultivation of an individual's emotional and social growth and maturation that occurs throughout their lifespan. It encompasses the development of emotional awareness and metacognition about the experience of emotions. This in turn shapes one's ability to identify, understand, express, and manage emotions and use this awareness to form and maintain relationships with others (Austin, 2021; Easton et al., 2008; Odaci et al., 2017). Affective development serves as the core foundation of an individual's motivation and values, influencing the choices they make and actions they take driven by their emotions and personal beliefs (Dollarhide, 2013; Mayes et al.). The need for affective development is embedded within each developmental task for counselors-in-training (CIT), highlighting its integral role in their professional growth and effectiveness. Emotional awareness and complexity development are implicit learning outcomes and are often overlooked in programmatic structuring (Nelson et al., 2020; Tangen, 2017). Prominent attention has been

given to the ways that cognitive complexity is fostered and scaffolded into counselor training (Castillo, 2018; Granello, 2010). Affective development is endlessly complex as is its outcome, leaving learning outcomes more readily measured in the forefront of concentrated attention. Counselor education would benefit from establishing frameworks to intentionally scaffold affective learning into core curriculum.

The complexity and multifaceted nature of affective development creates challenges in creating unified terminology or a framework to explore this construct. There are many overlapping terms and concepts that are both distinct while having direct relationships and interplay with others. Researchers have begun to explore the relationship emotional intelligence has to counselor development (Easton et al., 2008; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2004), the role of emotional awareness (Austin, 2021), the need and impact of emotional regulation (Cook, 2009; Gutierrez, 2016; Prikhidko et al., 2020), as well as ways to foster emotional complexity (Tangen, 2017). There is exploration of the use of Krathwohl and Bloom's Affective Taxonomy within counselor education (Krathwohl et al., 1964; Nelson et al., 2020) and how it may be used to inform transitions and growth in multicultural competence (Dollarhide, 2013; Mayes et al., 2016). This scoping review seeks to explore how affective development is being intentionally addressed within counselor education and map out the terminology and existing frameworks being used to describe its components.

CHAPTER I: A Scoping Review of Affective Development within Counselor Education: Implications and Future Directions

ABSTRACT

This scoping review seeks to map out current terminology used within counselor education related to affective development and explore how affective development is intentionally addressed in the counselor education literature. The role of a counselor is multifaceted, requiring a delicate balance of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The complexity of effectively employing these skills requires active attention to developing greater self-awareness and emotional intelligence as counselors navigate therapeutic relationships within their cultural context. Focused attention on affective development within a counseling program is essential to prepare future counselors for the task of helping individuals develop greater emotional awareness. In this manuscript, I present the terminology, volume, content, and focus of current literature on affective development. Implications focus on the needs within counselor education programs to better prepare CIT for the complex and emotionally demanding role of counseling by recognizing the importance of affective development and finding ways to actively integrate it into training.

A Scoping Review of Affective Development within Counselor Education: Implications and Future Directions

Affective development serves as the core of the many multifaceted learning outcomes within counselor training (Nelson et al., 2020). Within the literature, some of the current affective development terms include *emotional intelligence*, *emotional awareness*, *emotional regulation*, and *emotional complexity*. The terms each have distinct definitions yet overlap in the broader concept they collectively describe. *Emotional intelligence* encompasses both intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively

manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others (Gutierrez et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). *Emotional awareness* refers specifically to the capacity to recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate emotional experiences (Austin, 2021; Brackett & Simmons, 2015; Lane & Schwartz, 1987; Tangen, 2017). *Emotional regulation* involves the skill of modulating and managing emotional responses, ensuring they are adaptive and conducive to personal well-being and effective interpersonal interactions (Cook, 2009; Prikhidko et al., 2020). *Emotional complexity* refers to the ongoing process of developing an integrated understanding of emotional granularity, dialecticism, and range (Lindquist, 2008; Tangen, 2017). There has been extensive research in various fields of study on the concepts embedded within these terms. The definitions presented here represent a collective synthesization of the theoretical approach to these terms and how they are presented within counselor education research. Each term is defined with unique focal points but, when combined, encompass the multifaceted nature of affective development in counselor education, highlighting the interconnectedness and interdependence of these emotional competencies in the training and practice of counselors. The interconnected relationships between these terms are included below (refer to Figure 1).

As seen in Figure 1, *emotional intelligence* is the overarching abilities within intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional awareness and management. *Emotional awareness* is a foundational skill in emotional intelligence. *Emotional regulation* is a component of *emotional awareness* but also includes the ability to modulate a range of emotions. *Emotional complexity* is the ongoing development and expansion of the integration of metacognition and regulation of emotion, including understanding emotion with granularity, dialecticism, and range.

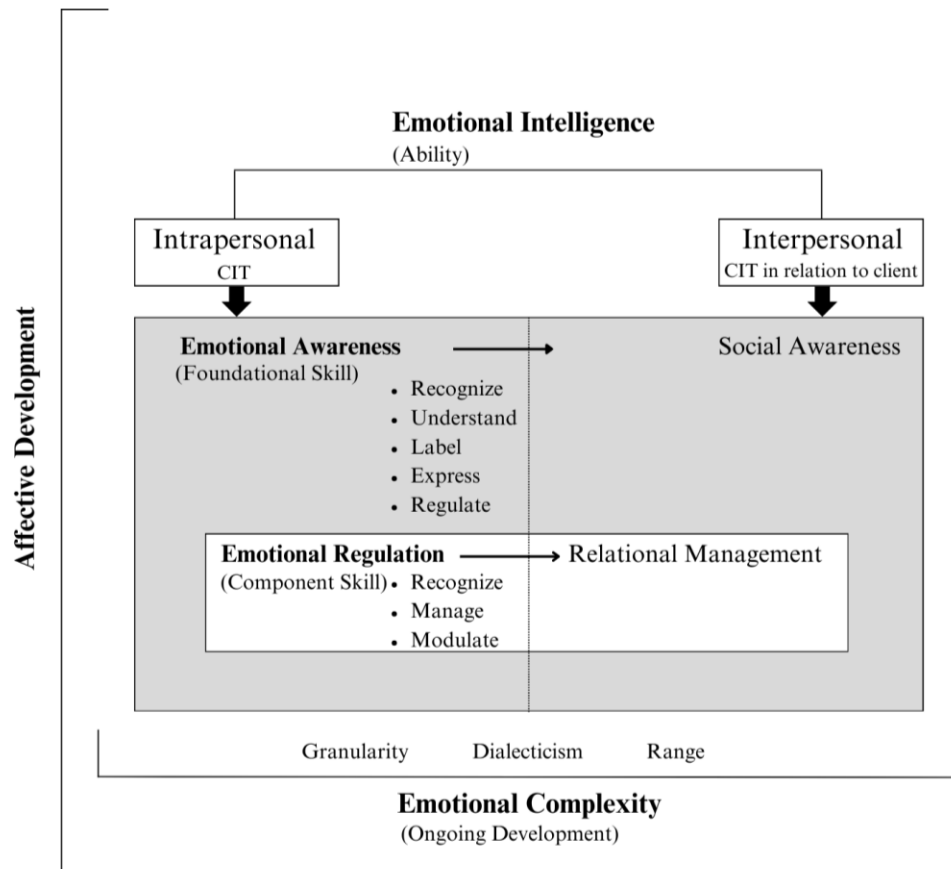


Figure 1.

Model of component terms and concepts within affective development

Additional variation of terminology is seen within counselor education literature including the specific term affect or affective experiences. Affect is understood to be a core component of the formation of values and beliefs as well as personal motivation (Dollarhide, 2013; Nelson et. al., 2020). The integration of values is directly tied to affective experiences and reactions (Dollarhide, 2013; Mayes et al., 2016; Melton et al., 2005; Miville et al., 2006; Nelson et. al., 2020). The breadth of influence affective development plays in CIT growth and the complexity of the relationship between its components make it a challenging concept to encapsulate. However, it plays a vital role and is at the core of desired learning outcomes within counselor training.

The influence of the component aspects of affective development spans widely. Emotional intelligence plays a key role in the ability to develop relational skills and has been shown to be related to self-efficacy in CIT ability to regulate challenging emotions while counseling clients (Easton et al., 2008; Gutierrez et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2004; Cook, 2009). This influences their ability to problem solve, think critically, and differentiate their own emotional experiences from that of their clients (Gutierrez et al., 2016; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Testa & Sangganjanavich, 2016). Researchers have explored emotional intelligence in stress management and ability to identify and acknowledge needs related to personal wellness and signs of burnout (Gutierrez et al., 2016; Merrill, 2019; Testa & Sangganjanavich, 2016). Additionally, others have explored its relationship to the development of leadership attributes (Mullen et al., 2016). Research has shown that those with higher levels of emotional intelligence are capable of greater empathy and thus able to engage in more complex perspective taking (Gutierrez et al., 2016; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Miville et al., 2006), and recognize and regulate

emotional reactions as clients introduce more emotion provoking topics or challenging conversations occur in session (Cook, 2009; Prikhidko et al., 2020). This in turn plays a role in the development of cultural competence and the process of deconstructing personal value systems as CIT learn to explore new perspectives (Dollarhide, 2013; Mayes et al., 2016).

Affective development is a crucial and foundational aspect of learning within counselor training. Its impact is pronounced; however, there is minimal exploration on the process of affective development, intentional investigation into how CIT accomplishes affective learning or how counselor educators understand aspects needed for the process of integration for CIT. Within this scoping review, I seek to explore how affective development is being addressed and intentionally integrated into counselor education.

Objective

Within this scoping review, I seek to explore how affective development is being addressed and intentionally integrated into counselor education. The focus will be on literature that includes CIT as the main population. The overarching focus will be on the identified component aspects of affective development as it relates specifically to counselor training.

Method

The review of the current literature on affective development followed the five-step process for conducting a scoping review outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). The intent of a scoping review is to map out key concepts, ideas, and current empirical evidence existing in an area of research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). I determined inclusion and exclusion criteria after investigating and becoming familiar with the existing literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014). Aligned with scoping review protocol, a critical assessment as the

primary objective was to map out the breadth of the topic and identify gaps within the literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010).

Stage 1: Identifying the research question

The aim of the initial stage of the review was to identify the research question in order to determine the parameters of the search on affective development in counselor education (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005). There is limited use of the term “affect” or “affective” within the current counselor education literature. The researcher consulted with a research librarian to determine ways of expanding specific terminology and methods of inclusion which led to exploratory searches to consider current terminology being used within counselor education literature. I then employed thesaurus tools within databases to ensure searches would include as many viable articles as possible. The holistic topic of affective development encompasses many terms and concepts. There is a dearth of research within each specific term searched, such as “affective development,” “emotional intelligence,” “emotional awareness,” or “emotional complexity.” I made the decision to conduct a search that included each component aspect identified within affective development. I determined the research question to be: How is affective development being intentionally addressed in counselor education research?

Stage 2: Identifying relevant studies

The aim of the search strategy was to be as comprehensive and inclusive of current terminology being used to describe some aspect of affective development as possible. I conducted the search using the following databases: PsycINFO, EBSCO, and Education Source. Additionally, I individually searched six counselor education publications, including the following: *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *Journal of Counseling and Development*,

Journal of Counseling Preparation and Supervision, Teaching and Supervision in Counseling, Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Supervision, and The Journal of Humanistic Counseling. I used the following keywords within each search: “emotional intelligence,” OR “emotional awareness,” OR “emotional complexity,” OR “emotional regulation,” OR “emotional competence,” OR “affective development,” OR “affective intelligence,” OR “affective awareness,” OR “affective complexity,” OR “affective regulation.” Searches included the addition of the following overlapping terms: “counsel* students,” OR “counselor in training,” OR “counsel* train,” OR “counsel* supervisee,” OR “counselor education,” OR “counselor preparation.” The inclusion criteria included (a) participants must include counselors-in-training, (b) directly assessing some aspect of counselor affective development, (c) the setting must be within counselor education (d) written in English, and (e) date of publication must be between 2003-2024. No limits were placed on the type of publication. Preliminary exploratory searches did not have a date of publication set as an exclusion. It was determined to set dates for inclusion based on limited results before inclusion date as well as alignment with the goal of the research question of capturing current inclusion of affective development within counselor education.

Stage 3: Study Selection

Initially I identified 189 articles within databases searched and 648 articles within counselor education journals. I excluded articles that did not have determined terminology included in the title or keywords. This was decided based on the ubiquity of use of included terms within abstracts and texts of publications that did not focus on components of affective development. This led me to include 82 publications. Duplicates that were repeated in each database or publication resulted in 47 publications to be screened. A second reviewer screened

and identified viable publications. The initial screen included both researcher and second reviewer determining related articles based on titles and abstracts. This effort resulted in 37 remaining publications for full-text review. Both the primary researcher and second reviewer conducted full-text reviews of the remaining 37 publications to ensure they met the inclusion criteria and were related to the research question. Exclusion continued during consultation over the remaining publications. In the full text review, we excluded articles that did not include CIT and articles using key terms (e.g., emotional intelligence) as a secondary moderator and not the focus of the article. After both initial and full-text screening, we determined that 24 publications met full criteria for the analysis. Figure 2 demonstrates the overall search and screening process.

Stage 4: Charting the Data

I extracted information pertaining to the research question from the remaining 24 publications and entered this information into excel spreadsheets. Initial extraction included author(s), year of publication, method, main aim of the study, and type of publication. The intent stated by each author was synthesized and charted. This process responded to the research question of how current literature is being addressed within counselor education. The scoping review rendered 24 publications: 15 peer-reviewed articles and 9 dissertations. All publications included were in the last twenty years with a moderate increase in frequency in the last eight years, as seen in publications in 2016 (n = 3), 2017 (n = 4), 2019 (n = 2), 2020 (n = 3), 2021 (n = 1), and 2022 (n = 1). The publications included quantitative (n = 18), qualitative (n = 4), and conceptual (n = 2) research.

Stage 5: Collating the findings

The process of collating the data was guided by focusing on the examination of how current affective development is being explored and addressed within counselor education literature. Terminology used and the stated intention of each study were considered in the development of thematic findings. The findings section summarizes the determined themes identified in the process of extraction and collating the information collected. Table 1 presents findings from the initial extraction.

Findings

I identified seven themes in response to the research question how affective development is being intentionally addressed within counselor education literature. Researchers examined stress and distress management (n = 5) in relation to emotional intelligence. They included exploration of the role of emotional intelligence on both empathic capabilities and development in the examination of how CIT manage their own experiences of stress. Researchers examined the role of emotional intelligence in CIT self-efficacy (n = 5) as it relates to counseling skills, relational management, as well as leadership skills. Others considered competency and counselor readiness (n = 5) both in relation to emotional intelligence and more specifically the ability to emotionally regulate. Researchers explored CIT self-awareness and awareness of others (n = 4) within many aspects of affective development, including internal experiences of affect while with clients, development of emotional complexity, and process of intrapersonal processing both in supervision and counselor education classes. The use of affective taxonomies within counselor education were considered (n = 2), some specifically

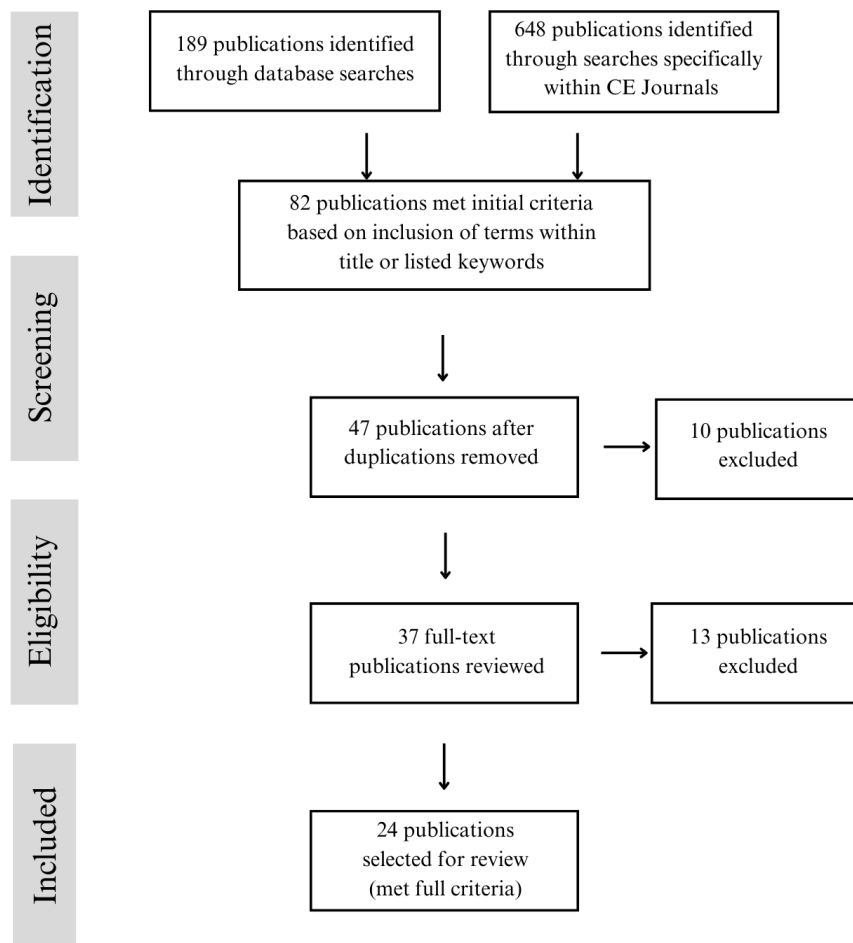


Figure 2.

Flow chart of scoping review process on affective development within counselor education

Table 1 Description of journal articles exploring affective development (n = 24)

Authors	Year	Methods	Aim	Type
Austin	2021	Quantitative (n = 196)	The primary objective of this study was to establish and investigate the initial psychometric properties of the Counselors' Emotional Awareness Scale (C-EAS), which is grounded in the researcher's synthesized and integrated model of emotional awareness.	Dissertation
Cook	2009	Quantitative (n = 68)	The principal goal of this study was to assess the significance of emotion regulation within counselor education training programs and its effectiveness in evaluating applicant potential and trainee readiness for professional practice.	Dissertation
Dollarhide	2013	Conceptual, action research (n = 21)	The primary objective of this study is to introduce the Krathwohl et al. (1964) affective taxonomy as a method for instructing values and evaluating the internalization of values among counseling students.	Peer reviewed
Easton	2005	Quantitative (n = 118)	The central aim of this study is to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence and counseling self-efficacy.	Dissertation
Easton, Martin, & Wilson	2008	Quantitative (n = 118)	This study represents the second phase of a two-part investigation focused on exploring the connection between emotional intelligence and counselor self-efficacy.	Peer reviewed
Gibson	2005	Quantitative (n = 40)	The present study is an examination of the concept of emotional intelligence and its connection to individuals undergoing counselor training.	Dissertation
Gutierrez, Conley, & Young	2016	Quantitative (n = 60)	This study investigated whether Jyoti meditation, a spiritually oriented meditation practice, had an impact on the stress levels and emotional intelligence of student counselors.	Peer reviewed
Gutierrez, Mullen, & Fox	2017	Quantitative (n = 305)	The primary objective of this study was to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence, empathy, stress, distress, and demographic factors among counseling trainees.	Peer reviewed
Hernandez	2022	Quantitative (n = 78)	The main aim of this study was to examine if there was a link between the self-reported emotional intelligence and the self-perceived counseling competency of counselors in training.	Dissertation
Hill	2014	Quantitative (n = 66)	This study explored the relationships among master's level counseling trainees' level of training, ability emotional intelligence (EI), and psychophysiological correlates of emotion regulation recorded during a video-simulated client interaction	Dissertation
Knight	2009	Quantitative (n = 44)	The primary objectives of this study are twofold: First, to assess how a particular intensive counseling skills training model affects the skill level and personal growth of counselor trainees. Second, to explore the correlation between emotional intelligence and the skill level of counselor trainees.	Dissertation
Lewis	2020	Quantitative (n = 52)	The primary aim of this study was to explore the connection between emotional intelligence and group counseling self-efficacy, as well as assess the potential utility of emotional intelligence in predicting changes in group counseling self-efficacy.	Dissertation
Martin, Easton, Wilson, Takemoto, & Sullivan	2004	Quantitative (n = 140)	The principal focus of this study was to examine the connection between emotional intelligence and counseling self-efficacy.	Peer reviewed
Mayes, Dollarhide, Marshall, & Rae	2016	Qualitative, phenomenology (n = 11)	The main objective of the study was to investigate the evolution of cognitive development, affective development, and the sense of self during a multicultural counseling class, with a comprehensive examination of growth in these areas.	Peer reviewed
Melton, Nofzinger-Collins, Wynne, & Susman	2005	Qualitative (n = 34)	The primary goal is to explore emotional states within inner experience, states besides those of anxiousness and negative affect. The study explored how grasping these affective states may assist trainees in developing self-awareness regarding their counseling experiences and in reducing potential negative consequences that these affective states may generate in counseling sessions.	Peer reviewed
Merrill	2019	Quantitative (n = 276)	The primary objective of this study was to investigate how trait emotional intelligence, perceptions of stress, and perceptions of wellness are related to wellness behaviors among counselors-in-training in CACREP programs.	Dissertation
Miville, Carlozzi, Gushue, Schara, & Ueda	2006	Quantitative (n = 211)	The central aim of this study was to explore the potential relationships between culturally relevant variables and emotional intelligence	Peer reviewed
Mullen, Limberg, Tuazon, & Romagnolo	2019	Quantitative (n = 225)	The primary aim of this study is to share the outcomes of a correlational research study conducted with 225 school counselor trainees, specifically examining their emotional intelligence and leadership qualities.	Peer reviewed
Nelson, Pender, Myers, & Sherperis	2020	Conceptual	The principal goal of this study is to explore the relationship between the Cognitive and Affective domains and to delve deeper into their influence on the development of counselor trainees. This research aims to help counselor educators adopt a best practice approach in their work by integrating these aspects into the well-established and widely used framework of Bloom's Taxonomy.	Peer reviewed
Odaci, Dergerli, & Bolat	2017	Quantitative (n = 349)	The main objective of this study is to explore the function of emotional intelligence in the context of counseling skills.	Peer reviewed
Pearson & Weinberg	2017	Quantitative (n = 103)	The primary goal of this study was to assess the influence of counselor training on emotional intelligence.	Peer reviewed
Prikhidko, Su, Houseknecht, & Swank	2020	Qualitative, grounded theory (n = 25)	The central aim of this study was to investigate the dynamics of emotion regulation within a group of 25 counseling professionals, including master's-level counselors-in-training and counseling supervisors.	Peer reviewed
Tangen	2017	Conceptual	The main objective of this study is to examine the 5 levels of emotional awareness and 3 aspects of emotional complexity in the context of the counseling supervision process.	Peer reviewed
Testa & Sangganjanavanich	2016	Quantitative (n = 380)	The main aim of this study was to assess how mindfulness and emotional intelligence contribute to burnout among counseling interns.	Peer reviewed

examining their use in guiding the process of cultural competence development for CIT. Lastly, researchers examined program effectiveness and measurement of affective development components ($n = 3$). As shown in the thematic findings, the role of affective development is multifaceted and intertwined in most aspects of CIT learning. The seven themes found within this scoping review demonstrate the breadth of influence of affective development and the need to consider its role in counselor training.

Stress and Distress Management

A prominent theme within the literature identified was the relationship of emotional intelligence with CIT stress, distress management, and wellness behaviors. Emotional intelligence was shown to have a significant relationship with CIT wellness behavior and ability to monitor levels of stress (Gutierrez et al., 2016; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Merrill, 2019). Gutierrez et al. (2016) found that emotional intelligence has a significant effect on the outcome of mindfulness interventions such as meditation. Emotional intelligence and mindfulness have been seen to impact CIT ability to self-monitor and thus acknowledge signs of burnout (Testa & Sangganjanavich, 2016). Researchers emphasized that it is imperative for CIT to possess the capability to recognize signs of stress and effectively differentiate their own emotions from those of their clients. This proficiency not only ensures the well-being of the counselors themselves but also translates into more effective and empathetic care for their clients. Researchers demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence exhibit an enhanced personal awareness, which, in turn, aids in the vigilant monitoring of their own wellness (Gutierrez et al., 2017; Merrill, 2019; Testa & Sangganjanavich, 2016).

Empathy

Within the exploration of distress management, the researchers explored the intricate relationship between emotional intelligence and empathy. Emotional intelligence has been shown to have a significant relationship to CIT ability to emotionally attune, read and appropriately respond to the emotions of others, and take on different perspectives (Gutierrez et al., 2017; Miville et al., 2006). Miville et al. (2006) examined the ways in which empathy is promoted by emotional intelligence. They found that counselors who possess greater emotional intelligence are more capable of differentiating their own emotional experiences from that of their clients, enabling them to hold empathy for others without over-identifying (Miville et al., 2006). Empathic capabilities and development were addressed within many of the publications but specifically highlighted in these two articles.

Self-Efficacy

Researchers explored Emotional intelligence in its relationship to counselor self-efficacy in connection to aptitude (Martin et al., 2004), counseling skills (Easton, 2004; Easton et al., 2008), group counseling skills (Lewis, 2020), and leadership skills (Mullen et al., 2016). Researchers used both trait emotional intelligence and performance or ability emotional intelligence measurements to explore its relationship to counselor self-efficacy (Easton et al., 2008; Lewis, 2020; Mullen et al., 2016). Results indicated a strong relationship between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence, excepting the examination of trait emotional intelligence and group counseling skills (Lewis, 2020). The researchers proposed to explore the use of assessment within counselor education to continue to monitor the ways in which counselor self-efficacy may be related to both trait and performance emotional intelligence.

Competency and Readiness

CIT competency, perceived competency, and readiness was an identified theme in the literature. Emotional intelligence was explored in relationship to self-perceptions of counseling competency (Hernandez, 2022) as well as the ways in which abilities to regulate personal emotions influenced perceived competency (Cook, 2009; Hill, 2014). Researchers examined the role of emotional intelligence and the effectiveness of training on CIT skills (Knight, 2005) and if emotional intelligence impacted skill level (Odaci et al., 2017). Researchers consistently emphasized the need for incorporation of intentional training in emotional intelligence component skills (Cook, 2009; Hernandez, 2022; Hill, 2014; Odaci et al., 2017).

Self-Awareness

Researchers explored the process of developing greater self-awareness and metacognition about affective experiences qualitatively and conceptually. All but one of the qualitative articles were included in this theme. Researchers examined the inner affective experiences of CIT while in sessions with clients (Melton et al., 2005) as well as how CIT process and engage with intense emotional experiences (Prikhidko et al., 2020). Tangen (2017) presented the ways in which supervision plays a role in the development of CIT emotional awareness and emotional complexity. Mayes et al. (2016) used journals completed within a multicultural class to explore the internal affective experiences of CIT as they processed their personal growth. The role of emotional education and intentional practices of processing affective experiences within counselor training were threaded throughout the three articles (Mayes et al., 2016; Melton et al., 2005; Prikhidko et al., 2020; Tangen, 2017).

Use of Affective Taxonomy within Counselor Education

The use of affective taxonomy within counselor education was conceptually explored (Nelson et al., 2020) and applied to action research within a specific multicultural counseling course (Dollarhide, 2013). Specifically, the researchers applied the affective taxonomy (Krathwohl et al., 1964) that expanded from Bloom's cognitive taxonomy to the affective and values-based learning outcomes within counselor education. Both articles speak to the complexity of affective learning outcomes and the possibility of using previously established taxonomies to guide the process of integrating attention to affective development into counselor education.

Measurement and Effectiveness of Counselor Training

The last theme within the findings is the use of measurement and assessment tools and ways of assessing the effectiveness of counselor training as it relates to affective development. Researchers explored the impact of counselor training on the intra- and interpersonal aspects of emotional intelligence of CIT with mixed results (Gibson, 2005; Pearson and Weinberg, 2017). Gibson (2005) explored changes in emotional intelligence over one year of counselor training, not finding significant results. Gibson (2005) recommended examining the specific factors related to growth and change in emotional intelligence. Pearson and Weinberg (2017) found a highly significant degree of improvements in measured emotional intelligence from start and end of counseling programs. Austin (2021) sought to develop a theoretically grounded tool for the measurement of CIT emotional awareness of self and other. Collectively, researchers examined and emphasized the significance of affective development in CIT competency (Austin, 2021; Gibson, 2005; Pearson & Weinberg, 2017)

Discussion

This scoping review provided an overview of scholarly publications exploring how affective development is being intentionally addressed within counselor education, identifying 24 publications through an extensive search of the literature. This review begins the process of mapping out current terminology used to describe component aspects of affective development and investigate ways in which it is being explored in counselor education research. Findings of this review consistently underscored the significance of affective development in counselor education; however, the overall limited number of publications found demonstrates the lack of attention given to this paramount aspect of CIT development. Affective development exerts a pivotal influence on various factors, including empathy, self-awareness, and counselor readiness (Austin, 2021; Cook, 2010; Hernandez, 2022; Guitierrez et al. 2017; Melton et al., 2005; Miville, 2006). Each component aspect of affective development is intricately connected. This interplay not only renders the topic challenging to undertake for counselor educators and researchers but also indicates its significance in the field of study.

The most prevalent term used in the finding was emotional intelligence. There were varied approaches examining the role of emotional intelligence in counselor education, both addressing the measurement of trait emotional intelligence as it relates to predisposition for the profession of counseling as well as factors that influence growth and development in emotional intelligence (Gibson, 2005; Guitierrez et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2004; Odaci et al., 2017; Pearson and Weinberg, 2017). Researchers used measurement tools looking at both trait emotional intelligence and others designed for ability or performance emotional intelligence with varying results. Researchers explored emotional intelligence in relationship to many intended

learning outcomes within counselor education such as ability to regulate emotions, distress management, and development of empathy (Gutierrez et al., 2016; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Miville et al., 2006).

Researchers examined the complexity of emotional regulation both quantitatively and qualitatively, exploring its role in emotional differentiation, distress management, self-efficacy in managing intra- and interpersonal aspects of counseling relationships, and the ability to maintain empathy (Cook, 2009; Prikhidko et al., 2020). Emotional regulation is interwoven with many aspects of the relationship CIT have with their beliefs and comfortability with their emotions (Prikhidko et al., 2020). Affective development is deeply personal and is repeatedly shown to be connected to all aspects of identity and personhood.

This scoping review highlighted both the complexity and expansive impact of affective development for CIT. It made evident that there is not a standardized way of attending to or measuring CIT affective development. Though exploration of established taxonomies has been proposed, there is no current framework or intentionally used approach to scaffold affective learning into counselor education (Dollarhide, 2013; Nelson et al., 2020).

Implications for Teaching in Counselor Education

This scoping review highlighted the need to intentionally scaffold affective development into counselor education. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2024) requires counselor education programs to include in the curriculum a concentration on self-awareness and self-care to maintain ethical and effective practice. Abilities to self-evaluate, deconstruct personal values, and maintain awareness of personal needs are directly and intrinsically linked to affective development. Learning outcomes spanning from skill

development to leadership in the counseling field are embedded within affective development (Mullen et al., 2020; Odaci et al., 2017). Emotional awareness and complexity are implicit learning outcomes and are often overlooked in programmatic structuring (Dollarhide, 2013; Nelson et al., 2020). Counselor education would benefit from establishing frameworks to intentionally scaffold affective learning into curriculum holistically and within each individual course.

Implications for Research

The consistent recommendation of authors within this scoping review is to further investigate ways of attending to affective development within counselor education (Cook, 2009; Easton et al., 2008; Gutierrez et al., 2016, Gutierrez et al., 2017; Hernandez, 2022; Hill, 2014; Martin et al., 2004; Melton et al., 2005; Mullen et al., 2016; Pearson & Weinberg, 2017; Prikhidko et al., 2020; Tangen, 2017; Testa & Sangganjanavich, 2016). Affective development is deeply personal and complex. CIT enroll in counselor education programs at different life stages, each bringing their unique intersecting identities, personal histories, and distinct ways of engaging with their emotional experiences. Affective development encompasses numerous intricate components, further compounded by the individualized nature of the experience. Present empirical research has predominantly focused on quantitative measurements to assess the impact of various aspects of affective development. It would be advantageous to establish a foundational understanding of the lived, personal experiences of affective development for CIT.

Limitations

The primary goal of this scoping review was to offer a comprehensive overview of current literature in this field and as such does not include an assessment of the quality of

publications included. Nevertheless, this limitation presents an opportunity for a critical future step, particularly as research in this area progresses. Despite the systematic literature search, there remains the possibility that some articles were overlooked, alternative databases might have yielded additional relevant material, varying terminology may have been missed, and the exclusion criteria may not have captured certain key contributions in the realm of affective development. Lastly, the author's positionality or subjectivity may have influenced the choice of articles or interpretations of the findings.

Conclusion

Affective development is a fundamental and multifaceted aspect of counselor education. The literature reviewed in this scoping review highlighted the interconnectedness of concepts such as emotional intelligence, awareness, regulation, and complexity within affective development. These concepts play a pivotal role in shaping CIT growth, personal wellness, and effectiveness as future counselors.

While the literature offers valuable insights, there is a need for further research to explore the process of affective development and how counselor education programs can intentionally scaffold this learning into counseling education curriculum. Counselor education programs can better prepare CIT for the complex and emotionally demanding role of counseling by recognizing the importance of affective development, learning intentional strategies to effectively teach these skills, and actively integrating it into training. Ultimately, this will contribute to the well-being and growth of both CIT and the clients they serve

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**CHAPTER II: “Permission to Be Human”: A Narrative Inquiry Exploring
New Counselors’ Growth in Emotional Awareness and Attunement to Self**

ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry study explores the process of affective development and the factors that facilitate growth within emotional awareness and ability to self-attune for new counselors with certification in Expressive Arts Therapy. The ability to self-attune, recognize emotional responses, and make meaning of these experiences within their own historied contexts is the foundation of the interpersonal work of counselors. Emotional awareness serves as the means to emotionally regulate which enables counselors to engage with the affective challenges they encounter both within the training process and ongoing therapeutic work. Five themes emerged from the overarching narratives of participants around the process of attuning to affect and deepening emotional awareness: recognition of dissonance, experiencing acceptance, engaging with ambiguity, attunement to self, and adapting.

“Permission to Be Human”: A Narrative Inquiry Exploring New Counselors’ Growth in Emotional Awareness and Attunement to Self

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) mandates the inclusion of self-care, self-awareness, and self-evaluation within program curricula (CACREP, 2024). Each of these standards is interwoven with attunement to one's emotions and the ability to cultivate a deep connection with them (Melton et al., 2005; Pompeo & Levitt, 2014). Affective development delves into the very core of what it means to be a counselor, shaping not only clinical practice but also personhood as new counselors begin to integrate their personal with their professional identities (Coll et al., 2013; Prikhidko & Swank, 2018). Counselor development is multifaceted and complex. New counselors are asked to deconstruct their own personhood and engage with ambiguity as they begin to integrate new

knowledge. This already disruptive internal growth is happening in tandem with experientially learning to hold space for others' emotional experiences with empathy and non-judgment, seeking to understand them within both the larger sociocultural context and the present relational dynamic.

Attention to new counselors' ability to engage with their affective selves intentionally should be paramount within counselor education (Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020). The ability to self-attune, recognize emotional responses, and make meaning of these experiences within their own historied contexts is the foundation of the interpersonal work of counselors. Emotional awareness serves as the means to emotionally regulate which enables counselors to engage with the affective challenges they encounter both within the training process and ongoing therapeutic work (Melton et al., 2005; Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Prikhidko & Swank, 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020). This process requires purposeful engagement with our felt experience and embodied knowledge (Lenes et al., 2023; Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Sultan, 2017). There is a need within counselor education to better understand how to cultivate intentional engagement with affective information and ability to self-attune (Melton et al., 2005; Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Prikhidko & Swank, 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020). Learning to self-attune and sit with our internal felt experiences can be overwhelming and challenging to navigate. It requires a felt sense of safety as we engage with something that can seem unknown while being socially and relationally consequential. This narrative inquiry seeks to deepen the understanding of how new counselors relate to their affective experiences, both as individuals and through the process of counselor development. Furthermore, this study seeks to explore the factors that facilitate the process of growth within emotional awareness and ability to

self-attune with new counselors who have had the unique experience of pursuing additional certification in Expressive Arts Therapy. Expressive Arts Therapy intentionally seeks to explore alternate ways of engaging with our felt sense information, find ways of practicing attunement, and use expressive methods for meaning making of felt information (Kossak, 2008, 2021). New counselors with experience within Expressive Arts Therapy offer singular insight into the process of engaging with our felt information and learning to deepen self-attunement.

Literature Review

Affect has been found to play a foundational role in our ability to learn, recognizing that learning is deeply integrated with feeling and the sense we make of our emotional experiences within our own historied contexts (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). We are primarily affective beings in need of social connection (Damasio, 2003; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Johnson, 2015). We learn to connect and make meaning of our affective experiences within a social and cultural context. The process of self-attunement, making meaning of this experience, and connecting it to our conscious selves becomes layered as we learn to navigate relationships and seek to maintain our own wellbeing. Our engagement with our affective self is the heart of how we construct our values and build our decision-making abilities (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Attunement and the ability to effectively interact with our felt information is within all learning but is the crux of learning outcomes within counselor education (Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018). Counselors are tasked with helping clients develop stronger understanding of their emotional experiences as it relates to their holistic health. This requires counselors to constructively develop the abilities to engage with their own emotional

experiences, make meaning of them, and adapt to felt information within therapeutic relationships (Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020; Tangen, 2017).

The process of affective development is intricate, personal, and complicated, making this a challenging task to distill. It encompasses many interacting factors. Peace and Smith-Adcock (2018) have advocated for intentional integration of training centered on helping new counselors engage with felt information, creating a conceptual framework for scaffolding self-attunement within course structuring. They highlight the need for a better understanding of how to foster new counselors' ability to integrate felt information into their therapeutic work by first cultivating openness to felt experience, learning to attend to it, and transitioning into using felt experiences (Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018). The ability to make meaning of affective information and connect to conscious choices is foundational to development for counselors; however, the process of how we best facilitate this within counselor education is still underexplored (Bohecker et al., 2016; Melton et al., 2005; Prikhidko & Swank 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020).

Beginning to intentionally self-attune can potentially be uncomfortable and at times overwhelming as we learn to be embodied in new ways and engage with unknown feelings (Lenes et al., 2023). Embodiment and the relationship we have with our affective selves is enmeshed with the storied experiences of our bodies (Lenes et al., 2023; Sultan, 2017). Though a powerful experience, it can bring with it vulnerability (Lenes et al., 2023; Prikhidko et al., 2020). There is a need to bring openness and non-judgment to the process of strengthening felt sense awareness (Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018). There is also a need for the experiences of embodiment to be “in a digestible amount, in an environment where the nervous system can

experience belonging and safety” as we learn to use felt information and integrate it into our interactions (Lenes et al., 2023, p. 12). Experience must be accompanied by safety within the relationships within the learning environment (Lenes et al., 2023; Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020). Counselor education training would benefit from incorporating scaffolded experiential learning, helping to bridge felt experiences to cognition, with the foundational understanding of the importance of our embodied knowledge in the process of integrating learning.

Much of the current literature within counselor education focuses on the cognitive process of how we make sense of felt experience. As demonstrated by Tangen (2017), there is a review of literature exploring emotional awareness and the development of emotional complexity as it relates to our cognition and the social meaning we give to felt experiences. Strengthening the bridge between our felt experiences and the ways that we make cognitive connections is valuable; however, the amount of affective information embedded within experiences does not always directly translate to the limited forms of expression like language nor are exacting labels always the best tool for making meaning of it. The process of becoming mindful of our affective information and making meaning can require openness as it can include ambiguity and engaging with the unknown (Bohecker et al., 2016). Creativity and use of alternate forms of expression can be invaluable as new counselors learn to attune to their felt sense in new ways (Kossak, 2008, 2021; Lenes et al., 2023; Warren, 2019). The incorporation of creative modalities in counseling training fosters emotional awareness and attunement, offering new counselors alternative avenues to explore and articulate their emotions. The practice of Expressive Arts Therapy offers unique insight into the process of embodiment and attunement. It

is intrinsically exploring the role of both self-attunement and relational attunement as it utilizes alternate ways of meaning making of our affective information (Kossak, 2008, 2021).

Holistically, there are gaps in how we incorporate intentional development of self-attunement and emotional awareness within counselor education (Peace & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020; Tangen, 2017). It is the foundation of both how learning is achieved and the learning outcomes required within counselor training. This narrative inquiry study seeks to deepen the understanding of how new counselors understand the role of affective experiences and factors that help facilitate strengthening the ability to self-attune.

Guiding Research Questions

The research questions guiding this narrative inquiry are (1) What are the past experiences, relationships, and beliefs about the role of emotions that new counselors bring to their pursuit of counseling? (2) What is the narrative of new counselors' experiences within counseling programs that shape their relationship with their emotions and ability to attune to themselves?

Method

As demonstrated within the literature review, the process of learning to attune to our affective selves and develop deeper emotional awareness is complex and interwoven with each persons' individual identities, experiences, and relationships. It is always evolving within the context of our relationship with self and the broader social and cultural environment. Given the dynamic nature of this process, I have chosen narrative inquiry as the method for this study. Narrative inquiry seeks to comprehensively understand and contextualize the lived experiences of individuals (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It does so through a relational lens,

which acknowledges the significance of the situation, continuity of experiences, and interactions with both the self and others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009; Riessman, 2008). This method aligns with the inherently relational nature of affective development within the counseling context, as it enables a nuanced exploration of experiences, relationships, and personhood that shape the new counselor development. I used McAdam's (2008) life story interview protocol to guide my approach to collecting narratives with recognition that identity and one's relationship with the self are ongoing, storied pursuits (Atkinson, 2007; McAdams, 2008). The aim of this study is to deepen the understanding of attunement to self and the process of deepening emotional awareness within the context of new counselors' life stories and their journey of integrating their personal and professional identities.

Theoretical Framework

Johnson's (2015) iteration of Embodied Cognition theory was used to ground the exploration of participants' relationship with their affective selves and beliefs about the role of emotion. Embodied Cognition theory posits that understanding comes primarily from an embodied understanding, prioritizing how information is processed through our bodies which are intrinsically linked to our affective selves. As bodies, we are driven to seek survival and the ability to thrive. We accomplish this through social connection and making meaning of our affective experiences. Our bodies are contextualized and have an ongoing interaction with our environment. Emotions serve primarily as a tool to monitor our bodies interactions with its internal and external world (Damasio, 2003). We are driven to make meaning of affective experiences in order to maintain safety and seek growth. The process of connecting our affective experiences to cognition are molded by our social and cultural contexts. We need social

connection to survive and learn to respond to our affective information based on this primary need. Our affective experiences become intertwined with how we construct meaning and assign value (Damasio, 2003; Johnson, 2015).

Researcher Positionality

In this research study, I embrace a constructivist perspective, recognizing the inherent value of subjective lenses and emphasizing the collaborative construction of meaning with participants. In my role as a researcher, it is essential to acknowledge that my perspective, beliefs, personal narrative, and identities play a significant role in shaping this study.

My own belief system is grounded in many humanistic concepts. I believe as humans our primary needs are relational safety, acceptance, and belonging. We are innately seeking to survive and thrive. We are adaptive and responsive to our social and cultural environment. Our bodies carry an intelligence that enables them to navigate how to have our needs met. This inherently impacts how we engage with our affective selves and the meaning we cognitively attach to that information.

There are many aspects of my own narrative experience that influence the process of my understanding and meaning given to affective information. I am a cis-gendered, white, female who has been within both a master's and doctoral programs within the field of counselor education. I was raised in the southern part of the United States, which carries its own set of social and cultural rules which I perceive as heavily influenced by patriarchy, white privilege, and the Christian religion. I was raised in a family that identified as Christian accompanied by strong direct and indirect messaging about what is "good" and what is "bad." As part of the Christian faith I was raised in, being helpful and selfless was of utmost importance. I perceived

messaging that I was to be content, resilient, industrious, obedient, and have a positive attitude. This was compounded by the gender roles both directly and indirectly communicated by my family and external community. Females were to be submissive. They were expected to find joy in being of service to others. They were also communicated to be of less social value. Bodies were conveyed as untrustworthy and shameful.

My family's income was below the poverty line which increased relational tension within the home as well as impacted social connections. I was homeschooled during the 1990's, which at the time carried subvert social meaning that influenced how I felt perceived by others, both positively and negatively. Collectively, it felt important for my own safety as a person to be able to self-manage and find alternate ways of engaging with my affective self. It was valuable to be able to read a room and know how others were feeling. The care takers in my world were very inconsistent. Being able to find patterns and understand consequences meant being able to keep the status quo and my safety. I perceived my emotional responses as moralized which led to a strong sense of shame. Feelings were not always safe. Being attuned to myself was discouraged and could threaten perceived safety.

My story of becoming a counselor consisted of deconstructing layers of beliefs over the course of many years. I hold many privileges in experiences, mentor relationships, access to information, opportunities for intentional self-reflection through counseling, and continued education. I perceive myself as someone who is curious about my affective experiences and intentional about discovering ways to both understand and express them. I consider this an ongoing process and one that will continue throughout my development as a person, counselor,

and researcher. To this study, I bring the assumption that each person learns and adapts to their affective experiences based on the pursuit of connection and belonging.

Participants

Criteria for participation required having completed a minimum of thirty graduate hours towards a master's degree in counseling and completion of a practicum experience within a CACREP accredited program, being either currently enrolled or having graduated within the past three years. Additionally, I required participants to be either in the process of or have completed a certification in Expressive Arts Therapy. My intent was to focus on participants who would have at minimum completed the majority of core coursework within a counselor education program to be able to better speak to the experiences, moments, and relationships which have had an impact on their own development of emotional awareness. I chose participants with certification in Expressive Arts Therapy due to this being a unique modality which encourages engagement with ambiguity and alternate ways of expressing affective experiences (Kossak, 2009, 2021). Expressive Arts Therapy is a multimodal use of creative activities that encourages awareness and connection between thought and feeling (Malchiodi, 2003; Snyder, 1997). The incorporation of creative modalities in counseling training fosters emotional awareness and attunement, offering students alternative avenues to explore and articulate their emotions by inviting them to engage in felt information that may feel ambiguous or unknown (Kossak, 2009, 2021).

To protect participants ($n = 5$), demographic information will be shared holistically. Of the five participants, four who identified as women with one identifying their gender as a queer woman. Four participants identified as White and one as Native American. Three participants

indicated that they were heterosexual, one queer, and one pansexual. When I asked participants to share any other salient identities, one stated they were a Christian and one shared they were the mother of a young child.

Recruitment

After receiving approval from the institutional review board, I used purposive, snowball sampling to gather participants. I used both social media and direct contact via email with faculty within CACREP accredited programs with Expressive Arts Therapy certification to recruit participants. Interested participants completed a screening and demographic form. Seven individuals completed the form, with five meeting eligibility criteria.

Data Collection

Informed by the McAdams (2008) life story interview protocol, I conducted 60-90-minute, semi-structured, virtual interviews over HIPAA compliant Zoom. Two main queries guided the interview: (1) What are the past experiences, relationships, and beliefs about the role of emotions that new counselors bring to their pursuit of counseling? (2) What is the narrative of new counselors' experiences within counseling programs that shape their relationship with their emotions and ability to attune to themselves?

I used open-ended prompts focused on the narratives and beliefs about their relationship with their emotions within the interviews. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for additional probing to encourage participants to share more in depth about their individual stories. The interview protocol is shared in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis to identify themes within participants' stories and create a composite narrative of their experiences (Braun & Clark, 2006, 2021; Riessman, 2008). I determined information power as themes emerged within each interview in relation to the guiding theoretical framework (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). With the intention to maintain alignment with a constructivist paradigm, I actively engaged with participants through member checking to collaborate in construction of meaning through the analysis process. I gave participants a week to review transcripts of their interview to check for clarity or mask any portion of their story they did not wish to include (Riessman, 2008). Again, I sent participants initial thematic analysis with narrative vignettes from their interviews to demonstrate themes that emerged and gave one week to review and offer any feedback.

My research partner and I conducted two cycles of coding to initially analyze the data (Braun & Clark, 2021; Saldaña, 2021). For the first cycle of coding, we applied deductive codes grounded in the theoretical framework of Embodied Cognition to the interview transcripts (Johnson, 2015; Saldaña, 2021). Categories of deductive codes included beliefs about the role of affect, the role of social relationships on engaging with affect, experiences that impact our relationship to our affect, ways of engaging with felt experience or affect, and lastly the meaning making process of felt experiences (see Appendix C for full deductive codebooks). After deductive coding was completed, we debriefed to compare chosen coded vignettes and discussed overlaps or any discrepancies. We used inductive, concept coding for the second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2021). My research partner and I consulted on the concept codes that emerged from the data and reached consensus on the collapsed codes. I identified initial themes from the developed

codes, seeking collective relevance and clarity. I consulted my research partner on the finalized themes for congruity, clarity, and connection to research questions and theoretical framework. Finally, I created a composite narrative to demonstrate the themes that emerged in the process of attunement to affect and deepening emotional awareness.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I utilized a range of techniques including an ongoing reflexive practice, triangulation, and member checking (Tracy, 2010). Before collecting data, I engaged in two reflexive interviews and conducted two pilot interviews with CE doctoral students who had training in Expressive Arts Therapy. I documented this process using written, video, and audio recording memos to ensure a comprehensive and detailed account of the reflexive and pilot interviews. I engaged in reflexive practice after each interview and participated in video documented reflexive consultation with my research partner throughout the data collection and analysis process. I conducted researcher triangulation to ensure findings were an accurate reflection of participants' narratives. I conducted two points of member checking to align with the constructive aim of the study.

Findings

Five themes emerged from the overarching narratives of participants around the process of attuning to affect and deepening emotional awareness: recognition of dissonance, experiencing acceptance, engaging with ambiguity, attunement to self, and adapting. Themes are organized in a way to represent the overarching narrative and process of development of emotional awareness. Pseudonyms are used to preserve the confidentiality of participants.

Recognition of dissonance

Each participant shared some of the implicit and explicit messaging about the role of emotions that came from either their family or community. They described there often being discomfort around both the experience of emotion and how it was expected to be expressed. There was at times a sense of dissonance between the internal felt experience and how that was received by others. Elise described the experience of grief after a family member passed away and how it was conveyed that she needed to emotionally respond:

We definitely talked about it. But I feel like it kind of got to a point where it felt like we just need to move on. So, it's like, I guess, that sweep it under the rug and, I don't want to talk about it too much, because we don't want to upset anyone. And so that's when I was kinda like, I wanna be able to talk about anything. Because this is just a part of life we need to talk about hard things. So, I remember kind of that mentality growing up, but still not being quite sure how to access that.

Marina shared a similar experience, where it was communicated that emotions should be processed on your own and intellectualized before being shared:

People would separate, and they would wait until they could either talk about it really intellectually, or just not at all. So, there was never like a space for raw emotion, like talking through it when you're still kinda in the thick of it.

Neyland shared that felt experiences were often disregarded or dismissed even when they appeared evident in both herself and those around her:

I was raised Southern Baptist, and it was very much like any big, scary emotions that you had was very much like, 'Hey, you're just gonna let go and let God.' And I still

identify as a Christian, but that never sat right with me. I never liked that any time I felt this feeling, I had these feelings, and I just didn't feel great about it. And it was like anytime I had those feelings. It was very like, 'Well, God says, do not be anxious 365 times in the Bible.' I was like, 'Okay, well, I still am.' I didn't know that what I was experiencing was anxiety.

Collectively, each participant shared that it was often challenging to navigate their own internal affective experiences and external expectations of how to interact with them. How feelings were expressed or conveyed carried meaning within their sociocultural context that influenced the ways they felt they had permission to engage with felt information.

Experiencing Acceptance:

Participants shared invaluable relationships both before and during their counseling programs that encouraged them to engage with their affect through offering acceptance and curiosity. Each of these moments were key markers in how participants described their engagement with felt information and the meaning that it was given. Gillian shared that she had experienced a disconnection and dissonance in her teenage years. She stated, "I remember in high school feeling...dissociative, almost like I didn't know who I was, and I didn't know how to express myself in a way that was both authentic and palatable to the world." Gillian shared that a shift happened as she developed a friendship in high school with someone who offered curiosity and acceptance:

So, I mean, I think she's been one of the most formative relationships of my life. Because I think she's taught me that emotion is okay. That we're allowed to feel things. We're

allowed to feel.... I can be accepted when I feel angry, when I feel sad, when I feel heartbroken, disappointed, joyful, thrilled, scared... all of it.

A pivotal shift for Neyland came when experiencing counseling for the first time and engaging in a therapeutic relationship that gave her space to explore felt information with non-judgment:

So many pieces kind of clicked into place where it was like, okay, I can go, and nobody is gonna judge me for this. Nobody's gonna use this against me. Nobody's gonna use these big feelings, these hard feelings against me, or in any sort of manipulation, or in any sort of like, 'Well, you shouldn't be feeling this way because God is going to take care of it.' It was like, 'Hey, that might be true, and also like what you're feeling is still very valid.' ...It was more the experience of going into therapy and experiencing therapy for myself and being like oh, these are the ways that I can handle emotion. And this is the way that emotions act in my body. It's not just like they're in and out like they do continue to build up. And learning that piece was pinnacle.

Relationships that offered a space to explore felt information with curiosity and without the need to immediately make meaning of them gave participants the opportunity to bring curiosity to their felt experiences. Acceptance, curiosity, and validation served as the foundation of many deep learning moments within participants' counseling training as well. Elise shared that the safety and acceptance felt in her counseling program enabled her to engage with more curiosity about both herself and others:

I have a Christian identity, and there's some, I think it's faith, love, and loving others as they are... Well, in the Christian world there's a lot of hateful things, too, but I think

coming in with that identity to the counseling program I was really nervous, just how I would be perceived or if I would be accepted. And everyone has been so, 'that is what is good for you.' And like, 'this is part of you and that's great.' And so, I just have felt so accepted in that way, too. And it has helped me to learn more about other identities and like their beliefs, too.

The environment created a safety to explore. Counseling programs ask students to engage in a high level of self-reflection while being observed. New counselors are asked to quickly integrate and demonstrate complicated relational skills. The experience of having faculty and supervisors offer encouragement and validation of individuals' skills created empowering moments. Neyland shared how recognition of her use of humor with clients and ability to use aspects of her own personhood helped her move into greater congruence in her role as a counselor. She stated, "it just gave me a lot of permission to be who I am authentically...it felt like it gave me permission to be human." Both before and during their counseling programs, the experience of relational safety and acceptance played a key role in participants ability to engage with felt information with curiosity.

Engaging with Ambiguity

Participants described engagement with ambiguity in many forms within the programmatic experiences, work with clients, and as they began to integrate their personal with their professional identity. There were personal transitions in the structural beliefs around how to interact with felt information. Neyland shared about being able to step into curiosity with felt information, "We don't have to moralize everything. Not everything is good or bad. It just is. And how different would the world be if we just viewed emotions as just being what they are."

Participants shared how experiences within their Expressive Arts Therapy classes invited them to engage with the experience of ambiguity with more openness. As Elise stated:

I do think specifically with expressive arts, I've become a lot more comfortable with– I always forget the word– but just the tension between something being like, I guess my thought is good or bad. Like it can be the inbetween. The liminal space is fine. It doesn't have to be like, 'Oh, I know exactly what I'm feeling and what's going on.' It can be like, 'No, you just don't need to know.'

Participants shared about how invitations to express themselves in alternate ways and attune in the moment let them sink into the experience of being curious and truly engaging with unknown felt information. There was safety to not know yet but actively give attention and curiosity to what was being felt.

These new ways of interacting with their own felt information translated into work with clients. Elise stated that “I had a client embody different ways that something felt to them. So, like stress versus relaxed. We tried on the different body movements that would look like. And it brought up this whole story.” Participants could actively see how bringing in more exploratory and expressive tools helped both understand their clients’ experiences as well as encourage clients to reflect on the complexities of how they felt. Gillian shared working with a client over telehealth and asking them to create a metaphor within a drawing to explore their felt experience which brought in “a depth to it that you can’t necessarily put words to.” Both Gillian and the client were able to not just name a feeling but explore “What was it like? How did they experience it? What was it... You know the big, small texture, weight, depth, like all of that.”

Experiencing the safety to engage with ambiguity within programmatic experiences paralleled participants' engagement with how they helped clients step into the complexity of their own affective information.

Participants who were still within internship spoke about the process of transitioning into the role of counselor and experience of ambiguity that can accompany personal professional identity integration. There was an accelerated personal growth that led to feeling they were in a liminal space, being caught between the no longer and the not yet. Elise stated:

It feels like I'm being squeezed right now I guess I would say... or stretched even. Just figuring that out and sitting with a lot of discomfort and being like, 'Is this actually working? Am I being helpful?' like, I don't know a lot. And so just having a lot of these questions that pop up ... And being okay with the unknown and the ambiguity, and the still not yet.

Marina shared about the complexity and overwhelm of not only stepping into a new professional role, but one that foundationally shifted the self-perception of other identities she holds:

Graduate school and becoming a 'professional' for the first time in my life has been its own form of deconstructing and reconstructing identity. And then becoming a parent, I feel like my sense of self has shattered to pieces and reconstructed over and over again...what does it mean to fully be myself and be authentic and engage with life in the way that feels right to me? And then also be in this space of being a stable guide and support for other people having a hard time. And am I fully able to be some of the old versions of myself? And do I still want those? And there's a lot of questions for me right

now about how I see myself as a person and how and if I can integrate all of these different kind of pieces...Boundaries are important for me, for sure, but there's no way to actually keep them separate. I don't stop being a mom when I walk into the counseling room. I don't stop being a therapist when I hold my screaming toddler and tell him it's okay to be sad.

Counselor training is intrinsically personal and requires learning to reflect on our own personhood in new ways. The experiences that participants shared led to encountering felt experiences that were complex and not easily articulated. There was a thread throughout many of their stories, whether personal, developmental, or in working with clients that pushed them into having to engage with ambiguity.

Attunement to Self:

Each of the participants described intentional time attuning to self through movement, making, or other forms of creative expression throughout their lives. Expression served as a powerful tool to help regulate, engage with their felt experience, or at times cope with challenging experiences or feelings. Intentional time within their counseling programs that encouraged self-exploration through creativity led to deeper self-insight and personal congruency. Panda stated that having some form of ongoing practice of spending time in attuning through some form of expression:

It feels essential. And I know I notice at times when I'm doing less creative work myself, I slip more into more traditional talk therapy counseling with my clients... sometimes that's what they're needing at the moment.... but it's not always. So, it's a reminder to me,

too, that when I'm doing this work myself, I'm able to offer my clients better what they need.

Participants emphasized the need to spend time paying attention and attuning to themselves. Gillian shared that this looked like beginning to notice what was happening in her body when experiencing challenges. Neyland stated it as giving herself permission to pay attention to felt information, letting feelings be more complex or unknown as she stated it is like “opening a dictionary of emotions and being like, ‘Hey, you also have all of these. You don't have to be confined...one good and one bad, and that's it.’ Intentional time and attention to their own felt experiences led to the ability to show up more fully as a clinician. Marina stated:

It's so often just a matter of giving myself permission to take the time to do that. And every time I do there's a re-centering and grounding and a new clarity that comes from it for me... And when I get more separated from that, I sometimes feel some hypocrisy, and kind of like some feelings of freeze or shutdown around like, “how am I asking clients to do this work when I'm not doing it myself?” But then, you know, when I am able to come back to it, it's still there. It's always still there.”

Adapting

There were many points of change or realignment in participants' relationships to their affectual selves in their stories. The process of deepening attunement to their felt information while being challenged in a safe relational environment led to personal insight and adapting. Adapting occurred in how participants responded to challenging feelings like shame as they experienced deconstructing their own identity or the ways they were able to engage with needed

ambiguity. Elise shared about her experience within her multicultural class and the process of allowing herself to experience challenges but continue to engage:

There's this weird coupling of realizing things that I have thought or said or done that are either, homophobic, racist... like things that I've said in my past that I really regret and a weird shame and sorrow that came with that. And I held on to that so much. And coming to the realization that I needed to be like, 'Okay, you're learning, and you have to let that go. You can't just keep holding that, or it's gonna destroy you.' I recognize those things that we quote unquote label as negative, and viewing them more as objective. And being like this is something that you're going through. And it's good because it's a feeling. And it doesn't have to be happy or joyful. I don't have to feel great about myself all the time. It can be that rubbing up against each other and that difficult 'Oh, what does this mean!' and that's fine too. And so I guess, holding space for those uncomfortable things.

The acceptance of an uncomfortable feeling enables the ability to give it curious attention rather than self-protecting. This is also seen how multiple participants shared about the changes in perspective of how they responded to feedback from others. Gillian stated, "Your relationship with your emotional response doesn't have to exclude you from growing or from hearing what other people are saying about you." Participants demonstrated how curiosity and openness to feeling allowed the ability to be more intentional in what meaning they wanted to give that felt information. Taking away the connotation of "good" or "bad" enabled more awareness of felt information as well as the ability to decide how they want to engage with it. Neyland said that she began to realize more that "Observing emotion is in and of itself an action. You don't have to do anything with it." There is an empowerment that comes with allowing feelings to be

information and separate from how we perceive our identity. As Neyland stated “I’m learning as a human being to be okay with the feeling—that might be all that there is to it, and there may be nothing else that continues on with that feeling, except just giving it permission to be.”

A significant way that adapting emerged is in how participants described their ability to empathize with others while differentiating their own emotional experiences. Gillian described her own changes how she felt able to genuinely empathize with others:

It's easy to empathize with somebody who's suffering. But it's less easy to empathize with somebody who's angry, or somebody who has been who's angry about a reason that doesn't feel justified to you because you don't understand it. So, I think that experience was really like, ‘Oh, I have to really recognize where I am coming into this. ...putting a boundary on my own emotions. Like, I don't need to fully understand or empathize with what you're experiencing in order to be able to be present for you with it. And I need to boundary myself and limit myself because you don't need to feel my emotions.

Panda described it as being a “safe containment” and that has the potential to give “power so that they can grow, if they're open to it.” An ongoing relationship with felt information that is curious and nonjudgmental enables the ability to take ownership of feeling, differentiate personal feelings from others, and make intentional choices about how we respond to felt information.

Discussion

The findings from this study build upon the understanding of how counseling programs may help cultivate continued development of new counselors’ ability to attune to felt information and further their emotional awareness (Melton et al., 2005; Pearson & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Prikhidko & Swank, 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020; Tangen, 2017). I used narrative inquiry to

explore influential factors brought into counseling training from the lived experience of new counselors and changes that occurred through engaging in a counseling program. Findings demonstrate the complexity of affective development as it is embedded within the many concurring relationships that happen throughout life within cultural contexts. Participants each shared experiences of how their family of origin and greater environment influenced their comfort with engaging with felt information. The meaning making process of felt information was embedded within their storied experiences that occurred within their sociocultural contexts (Lenes et al., 2023). Experiencing and expressing feelings held social meaning. This at times led participants to attempt to ignore felt information or experience meta-emotions like shame or fear about how they felt. Aligning with the theory of Embodied Cognition, participants' stories demonstrated the motivation for relational safety and acceptance (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Johnson, 2015). Stories demonstrated many ways of adapting to sociocultural expectations over attuning to felt information or exploring ways of making meaning of what they internally experienced (Johnson, 2015; Sultan, 2017). The environments of the participants applied social meaning to specific expressions of felt information. Participants learned to navigate expectations or communicated rules about how to engage with their affective selves which would at times lead to a feeling of dissonance. Experiences of having felt information be negated or communicated as wrong, would at times create feelings of confusion, shame, and fear about felt information (Prikhidko & Swank, 2018).

Relationships played a key role in how participants experienced building a relationship with their affective selves. Participants highlighted relationships that provided curiosity, acceptance, and nonjudgement as the foundation of their ability to feel safe engaging with felt

information. The feelings of anxiety and fear have been well documented as part of the process of developing as a counselor and engaging with the vulnerability of self-exploration while being assessed (Bohecker et al., 2016; Lenés et al., 2023; Prikhidko et al., 2020). Engaging in unknown feelings can feel exposing and vulnerable (Lenés et al., 2023). Participants emphasized the power of experiencing relational safety and the felt sense of acceptance as enabling them to step into the meaning making process of their felt information. Validation, encouragement, genuineness, curiosity, or making room in the learning process to not yet know provided the opportunity for participants to have a felt sense of safety to engage with ambiguity within their counseling programs.

Participants described the challenges of engaging with ambiguity and feeling in spaces of liminality through the process of becoming a counselor. Aligning with the grounded theory developed by Bohecker et al. (2016), participants shared that developing comfort with ambiguity was ongoing and a nonlinear process. Experiencing safety in the learning environment with deliberate attention and time devoted to attuning to felt information served as means to practicing engaging with ambiguity. Participants shared that the tools learned within their Expressive Arts Therapy specific classes were invaluable in providing space to engage with unknown feelings. As Kossak (2008) describes, there was an invitation to build mind/body connection and safety to tolerate some of the ambiguity that accompanies attuning to felt information. The continued deliberate use of experiential learning accompanied by challenging, reflecting, and encouraging led to participants deepening their valuing of felt information as well as their ability to differentiate their felt experiences from others. Consistent with the conceptual model developed by Peace & Smith-Adcock (2018), participants moved through stages of learning to be open to

felt information, attending to and making meaning of that experience, and then applying it to therapeutic relationships. Participants shared that their ability to attune and comfort with felt information is an ongoing process. There continues to be a vulnerability when attuning to their affective selves and navigating the meaning making process within relationships. As participants projected their future selves continuing as counselors, there was a consistent desire to bring more curiosity, acceptance, and openness to interacting with felt information.

Participants' stories demonstrated deep growth and adapting in their relationship to their affective selves. When able to attune to their own felt information with greater objectivity, it made it easier to differentiate from others' feelings and make conscious choices about how they wanted to use that information. Self-attunement and the ability to engage with unknown feelings with curiosity fostered the ability to more honestly self-assess as well as consciously set boundaries when needed. Participants shared that acknowledging challenging feelings within themselves and having room to explore them as information provided space to interact with others with greater objectivity and empathy.

The emergent themes from this study are individually present within the literature (Bohecker et al., 2016; Melton et al., 2005; Pearson & Smith-Adcock, 2018; Prikhidko & Swank, 2018; Prikhidko et al., 2020; Tangen, 2017). The ways that we integrate these complex concepts together has yet to be fully explored. It is well established that experiencing ambiguity is an inevitable aspect of the learning that occurs within counselor education and that strong emotions can accompany engaging with ambiguity (Bohecker et. al, 2016). The complexity of attuning to felt information within the context of the research about developing comfort with ambiguity was shown in the findings to be a non-linear process and one that is best facilitated in relational

safety. The impacts of this showed in how participants engaged with their own self-awareness work as well as shifted how they showed up with clients, allowing more comfort with helping clients sit in the discomfort of the unknown.

Limitations

A beginning limitation of the study is the narrowed participant criteria. Participants were required to have either completed or be working towards completion of a certification within Expressive Arts Therapy. While this enabled a valuable and unique perspective, it inherently carries a limitation. Furthermore, as with all research, the findings are influenced by the researcher's subjectivity. I gave attention to my own biases, positionality, and assumptions through an ongoing reflexive practice and triangulation with my research partner; however, there is inevitable influence from my own lens. Stories that form our relationship to our affectual self and complex and multifaceted and only specific aspects are captured within this study, potentially limiting broader perspectives of participants' experiences.

The primary and secondary researchers had several homogeneous qualities or identities, perhaps limiting the lenses from which they analyzed the data or considered the findings. Using more diverse researchers may enhance the perspectives from which the data could be viewed.

Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision

In counselor education, it is crucial to incorporate intentional practices that foster self-attunement among students. This involves creating learning experiences that encourage future counselors to be deeply attuned to felt information with consideration for the need for relational safety. It would be beneficial to scaffold experiences with acknowledgement and consideration of the complexities of meaning felt information may have for counseling students.

There are myriad ways to infuse attention to affective development through counseling training and demonstrated benefit from incorporating attention to self-attunement early in counselor development (Peace & Adcock-Smith, 2018). Foundational courses such as counseling skills could integrate mindfulness exercises that facilitate a more structured and guided (e.g. focused meditation, body scans, etc.) way to engage with felt information. Initial engagement with attuning to felt information can be overwhelming and mindfulness could help build tolerance for giving attention to feelings that have not yet been connected to meaning (Bohecker, 2016). This work could be expounded upon when moving into a group class, with intentional exercises that encourage somatic awareness and tuning into counseling students' embodied experiences. The focus on group dynamics provides counseling students to explore how felt information occurs interpersonally within relationships. Our intersecting identities, sociocultural experiences, and personal histories are carried in our bodies and become present when purposefully engaging in embodied practices (Lenes et al., 2023; Sultan, 2017). There is a vulnerability when exploring this within relationships. It is invaluable for this to be practiced and experienced incrementally as new counselors learn to incorporate this into their clinical work (Lenes et al., 2023; Sultan, 2017).

As demonstrated in the findings, exploration of personal identity and the process of deconstructing is ever present in the process of developing as a counselor. Multicultural courses are crucial in the learning process of counselors and rife with strong emotions, and commonly emotions that carry strong sociocultural meaning when expressed. Incorporating creative or expressive modalities could encourage self-attunement without the pressure of having exacting labels for feeling experiences as well as allowing for the complexity of felt information to be

explored (Kossak, 2008; Warren & Nash, 2018). More expressive modalities could additionally remove some of the evaluative pressures that can exist within a classroom setting, providing time to engage with complicated feeling experiences.

Holistically, tools for engaging with ambiguity and processing felt information could be integrated programmatically (e.g. recruitment, interviewing, orientation, and curricular), enabling students to navigate the complexities of feelings and the uncertainties inherent in the counseling process. Creating an environment that demonstrates the value and trust in the process could assist in helping students engage with ambiguity and processing felt information.

Additionally, counselor educators need to consider the ways they model attunement and embodied presence. Counselor educators and supervisors are tasked with working alongside counseling students to engage with the complexities of felt information and “progress beyond dichotomizing affect into positive and negative valences” (Tangen, 2017, p. 94). Counselor educators have the opportunity to model the ongoing development of learning to self-attune and grow in emotional awareness. Relationships are the crux of learning within counselor education, requiring that counselor educators continue their own self-exploration and engagement with the complexity of their own feeling experiences. Counselor educators bring with them their own storied relationships with their affective selves. This becomes present within the relationship dynamics that occur with counseling students. Ongoing reflexive practice and honesty is paramount.

Implications for Research

It would be beneficial to continue research in how to best facilitate learning environments within counselor education that take into account the need for experienced sense of safety and

attention to felt information. Affective development is a relational process that is deeply personal and complex. It could be helpful to examine factors that contribute to a sense of safety, such as relationships with faculty, program culture, and methods used to facilitate experiential learning. Ethnographic studies could explore holistic program cultures and the ways that relational dynamics between counseling students and faculty influence the felt sense of safety. There is benefit in further exploring how sociocultural factors, such as cultural norms, societal expectations, and historical contexts, impact the development of self-attunement, wellness practices, and process of identity integration. As found in previous studies (Lenes et al., 2023; Sultan, 2017), the complexities identities and the cultural contexts they exist within play a foundational role in how we build our understanding of felt information and the meaning assigned to it. Future research could build upon how we provide opportunities to safely move through the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of identity as counseling students begin to integrate their identity as counselors.

Future research could explore specific stages of counselor development to provide effective support for counseling students at different points in their counselor development as their emotional awareness evolves. This could involve longitudinal studies that track the progress of counselor trainees, identifying critical moments of growth and the factors that facilitate or hinder their development.

Future research could examine how counselor educators themselves engage in continued growth in emotional awareness and ability to self-attune. This could include studying the practices and strategies that educators use to maintain their own emotional health and attunement, and how these practices influence their teaching and interactions with students. By

understanding how educators model emotional awareness and self-attunement, researchers can develop best practices for training and supporting counselor educators, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of counselor education.

Conclusion

This study underscores the importance of emotional attunement and continued development of emotional awareness in shaping both the personal and professional identities of counselors. The ability to self-attune, recognize emotional responses, and make meaning of these experiences within their own historied contexts is the foundation of the interpersonal work of counselors. Emotional awareness serves as the means to emotionally regulate which enables counselors to engage with the affective challenges they encounter both within the training process and ongoing therapeutic work. It is imperative that counselor education be intentional in how they integrate affective development within counseling curriculum.

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APPENDIX

Recruitment Documentation and Informed Consent

Invitation to Participate in Research Study About Growth in Emotional Awareness While Pursuing Your Master's in Counseling

About the Study:

This narrative inquiry research study aims to explore new counselors' personal experiences, particularly their relationship with their emotions. This study seeks to understand the stories about the emotional experience counselors bring to their pursuit of counseling and the ways both their counseling program and additional training in Expressive Arts therapy have shaped their personal emotional awareness. Participants will be asked to participate in one, virtual, 60-90 minute interview over Zoom. Each eligible participant will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card after completion of participation within the study.

Eligibility Criteria:

To participate, students must meet the following criteria:

- Currently enrolled in a CACREP accredited counseling program or have graduated within the last three years
- Have completed at least 30 credit hours within their respective counseling graduate program
- Have completed their practicum experience
- Seeking additional certification in Expressive Arts Therapy

If interested in participating, please reach out to me by email at **qjr498@vols.utk.edu**. The next steps to participate would be to complete this screening and demographic form and to schedule an interview.

Excited to speak with you!

Consent for Research Participation

Research Study Title: Fostering Affective Development: A Narrative Inquiry of Counselors-in-Training Navigating Growth

Researcher(s): Betsy Johnson, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Joel Diambra, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

We are interested in how new counselors navigate and grow in emotional awareness through the process of their counseling program and first years of working as a counselor. We want to explore the people, experiences, and training that have been meaningful to you in understanding your relationship to your emotions. We are particularly interested in interviewing new counselors who are either pursuing or have completed an additional certificate in Expressive Arts therapy and exploring how you understand your own and others emotional inner world. To be eligible for the study, you must either be currently enrolled in a counseling program and have completed at least 30 credit hours and your practicum or have graduated from a CACREP accredited counseling program in the last 3 years. Additionally, you must be either pursuing or have completed a certificate in Expressive Arts therapy.

What is this research study about?

The purpose of this research study is to develop a greater understanding of how new counselors experience growth in emotional awareness. Counselors seek to help others grow in self-awareness and pursue holistic wellness. Counselors are asked to know themselves deeply and have the capacity to sit with a range of others' emotional experiences. Counselor training is an inherently personal journey that encourages self-examination, enabling counselors to bring self-awareness and attunement to others in their professional work. This study seeks to explore the personal stories of counselors-in-training as they experience this process of development.

Who is conducting this research study?

This research is being conducted by Betsy Johnson as part of her dissertation to complete a doctoral degree in Counselor Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The research will be overseen by her faculty advisor Dr. Joel Diambra. Sarah Elizabeth Anderson, a doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, will assist with data analysis.

How long will I be in the research study?

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to take part in a virtual interview which will last between 60-90 minutes. You will have the option of reviewing the transcript from your interview and giving any feedback on the analysis of the interview collected. Reviewing materials and offering feedback is not required.

What will happen if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research study”?

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to complete a brief survey that has your contact information, confirmation of eligibility, and demographic information including gender, race, age, sexual orientation, and any other personally salient identities. You will be asked to meet for one 60–90-minute virtual interview in a private space of your choosing. The interviewer will conduct the interview in a private space and be the only person present. The interview will consist of prompts and questions related to your personal growth and development.

We will contact you by email at two points during the study to prompt you to provide feedback. First, after your interview has been transcribed, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript to correct, clarify, or mask any part of the interview that you see fit. You will be given one week to send any feedback. The second time will be after the preliminary findings. At this point, you will have one week to provide any additional thoughts or feedback to ensure that we have accurately represented your contribution to the study.

What happens if I say “No, I do not want to be in this research study”?

Being in this study is up to you. You can say no now or leave the study later. Either way, your decision will not affect your relationship with the researchers, the University of Tennessee, or your own institution.

What happens if I say “Yes” but change my mind later?

Even if you decide to be in the study now, you can change your mind and stop at any time.

If you decide to stop before the study is completed, please contact Betsy Johnson to inform her that you would like to be removed from the study. Any information that has already been collected for the research will be deleted and not used in the study.

Are there any possible risks to me?

Possible risks include:

- There is the possibility that someone could find out that you were in this study or see your study information. I believe this risk is minimal as there will be procedures used to protect your information. These procedures are described in more detail later in this form.
- The study consists of an interview which asks personal questions about experiences and relationships that have been part of your self-understanding and growth. This may potentially bring up uncomfortable emotions or thoughts. You may skip any question or terminate the interview at any time if you wish to end the interview. There will be no penalty for asking to skip a question or to terminate the interview.

Are there any benefits to being in this research study?

We do not expect you to benefit from being in this study. Your participation may help us to learn more about the experience of growth in emotional awareness and how it is potentially fostered in a counseling program. We hope the knowledge gained from this study will benefit others in the future.

Who can see or use the information collected for this research study?

We will protect the confidentiality of your information by keeping all demographic information collected stored on a password protected computer. The audio and video will be recorded over Zoom (HIPPA compliant account) and stored on a password protected computer. The interviews conducted will first be transcribed, first using Zoom's automatic transcription feature, and then checked and adjusted for accuracy. Transcriptions will be labeled with pseudonyms and stored on a password protected computer (along with a pseudonym key) with access only to the primary researcher. The transcriptions will be uploaded into a qualitative research software (NVivo) and coded. After this point, the video and audio of the interviews will be deleted.

If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, only your pseudonym will be used and the university and program will not be disclosed.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what information came from you. Although it is unlikely, there are times when others may need to see the information we collect about you. These include:

- People at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville oversee research to make sure it is conducted properly.
- Government agencies (such as the Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and others responsible for watching over the safety, effectiveness, and conduct of the research.
- If a law or court requires us to share the information, we would have to follow that law or final court ruling.

What will happen to my information after this study is over?

We will keep your information to use for future research. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be destroyed from your research data collected as part of the study.

We will not share your research data with other researchers.

Will I be paid for being in this research study?

After the completion of the virtual interview, you will receive a \$25 Amazon digital eGift card through your provided email. These will be sent out within a month of completing the interview.

Who can answer my questions about this research study?

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem or injury, contact the researcher, Betsy Johnson either through email (gjr498@vols.utk.edu) or by phone (423-341-3339). You may also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Joel Diambra, through email (jdiambra@utk.edu).

For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Phone: 865-974-7697
Email: utkirb@utk.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By signing this document, I am agreeing to be in this study. I will receive a copy of this document after I sign it.

Name of Adult Participant

Signature of Adult Participant

Date

Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the study to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to be in the study.

Name of Research Team Member

Signature of Research Team Member

Date

CONCLUSION

Affective development is a fundamental and multifaceted aspect of counselor education. This study underscores the importance of emotional attunement and continued development of emotional awareness in shaping both the personal and professional identities of counselors. The ability to self-attune, recognize emotional responses, and make meaning of these experiences within their own historied contexts is the foundation of the interpersonal work of counselors. Emotional awareness serves as the means to emotionally regulate which enables counselors to engage with the affective challenges they encounter both within the training process and ongoing therapeutic work. It is imperative that counselor education be intentional in how they integrate affective development within counseling curriculum.

VITA

Betsy Johnson is a counselor who is committed to promoting practices within counselor education that foster self-awareness and the integration of personal identity into the professional counselor role. Betsy is originally from Greenfield, Tennessee and went to East Tennessee State University to pursue a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art. Betsy wanted to use her love of people and advocacy to explore a career that enabled her to promote greater community wellness. She went on to complete her M. Ed in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Betsy continued her academic journey to receive a PhD in Counselor Education at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. Following the completion of her doctoral degree, Betsy intends to work towards the completion of her License of Professional Counseling.