THE EXPERIENCE OF CAREER PRACTITIONERS IN USING CREATIVITY WITH CLIENTS: WHAT HELPS AND HINDERS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experience of career development practitioners in using creativity with their clients. Career counselling literature details a change in the landscape of work. Globalization and the unpredictable nature of the economy require a shift in the career counselling paradigm, as workers today are expected to look after their own career progression, be more flexible, and have more adaptive skills. Many authors argue that creativity is an integral part of the future of career counselling as the need to move from traditional theory to more innovative approaches and techniques becomes more apparent. The challenge for career counsellors is to find creative ways to help clients develop the tools they need to effectively navigate the modern working world. However, there is little research into how career counsellors use creativity with clients, especially with regard to what facilitates the use of creativity and what challenges its use.

The results of this research study lend insight into what helps and hinders career practitioners’ use of creativity. Thirteen participants were interviewed using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique. The study yielded 78 incidents that participants perceived as helpful to their use of creativity, 65 incidents that hindered their use of creativity, and 40 wish list items. These incidents and wish list items were grouped into 25 categories. The 10 main helping categories were: experience and knowledge, personal traits, colleagues, professional development, personal activities and methods, time, clients, work environment, collaboration with clients, and resources. The 6 main hindering categories were clients, work environment, personal factors, lack of time, professional development, and burnout. The 9 wish list categories were colleagues, supportive work environment, resources, professional development, physical work environment, time, financial security, clients, and autonomy. The findings show that a
supportive work environment is significant for counsellors, as well as time and access to resources. Clients and colleagues also play an important role in the use of creativity, as do personal factors such as individual characteristics, activities and practices. Finally, the results of the study suggest professional development as a key component in counsellors’ ability to feel creative and use creativity with their clients.
This research study was approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board on January 17, 2011 (H10-03162).
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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandmother, who was the most creative person I have known and who taught me that I can do whatever I set my mind to.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1989, H.B. Gelatt wrote about the state of career counselling: “a quarter century ago the past was known, the future was predictable, and the present was changing at a pace that was comprehensible…. Today the past is not always what it was thought to be, the future is no longer predictable, and the present is changing as never before” (p. 252). In the 20 years since Gelatt's statement, it is generally accepted by most in the career counselling field that the world of work has become even more unpredictable, unstable, and chaotic (Maglio, Butterfield, & Borgen, 2005; Amundson, 2005). Technology, globalization, changing demographics, and rapid shifts in the economy have changed the landscape of working life, which in turn has impacted the field of career counselling (Amundson, 2005). Many career scholars have recognized that change is needed and that traditional career theories are no longer meeting the needs of contemporary workers (Savickas, 2002; Amundson, 2005; Maglio et al., 2005). Several authors (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999; Bright, 2005; Amundson, 2005, 2009; Gelatt, 1989,1995) have proposed alternative career development approaches to help clients deal with the modern working world by focusing on the experience of the worker and promoting flexibility and creativity (Maglio et al., 2005).

After I received my master’s degree in career counselling, I began working in both university and private practice settings. I gained first hand knowledge of the effect the current world of work was having on my clients. I noticed the complexity of presenting concerns, including multifaceted internal and external barriers and pressures that went beyond interests, skills, and values. As a new professional, I struggled to find effective interventions and felt confined by traditional career counselling theories. As I began to look beyond standardized
assessments, I was encouraged to find literature on emerging theories that emphasized innovation and creativity. As a creative person this resonated deeply with me, and my interest in creativity in career counselling was sparked. I began incorporating creativity into my counselling practice, and noticed the positive reactions I was getting from my clients. I attended national and local conferences, where creativity tends to be a popular topic. I searched the literature and read articles on creative techniques such as collage, metaphors, imagery, and genograms. However, I realized that there was a paucity of literature on creativity in career counselling and how counsellors feel about using creative in their practice. I wanted to understand the experience of other career counsellors, what has helped them use creativity, what challenges they have faced and how they have dealt with these challenges. Through this study, I feel that I realized my goal of understanding counsellor creativity, as well as generating and contributing knowledge about creativity to the field of career counselling.

1.1 Definition of Terms

Before beginning a study and discussion of creativity in career counselling, it is necessary to define what is meant by the terms creativity and career.

*Creativity*

Research literature has different ways of considering creativity, and includes varying definitions of the term. In counselling and psychology literature, the central feature of creativity in counselling is divergent thinking (Gladding, 2005). Creativity is the counsellor’s willingness to responsibly think outside of the box, while encouraging clients to look at their own creative capacities and innovative ways to work through their problems (Lumadue, Munk, & Wooten,
It is also important to note that creativity is not considered to be an inherent trait, available to only the talented few. According to Carson & Becker (2004), “To a large extent, creativity is a skill, a way of thinking and working with clients that can be learned, developed and fostered over time” (p. 111). Creativity is not a talent but rather a learned activity in which counsellors should regularly engage (Kottler & Hecker, 2002).

In the literature on creativity theory, creativity involves the development of a novel idea or problem solution that is valuable to the individual. There is “Big C” or eminent creativity, which consists of relatively rare displays of creativity that have a major impact on others. There is also “Little C” or everyday creativity, which refers to daily problem solving and the ability to adapt to change (Hennessey, 2010). Beghetto & Kaufman (2007) contend that it is also important to explore what they term “mini c” creativity, or the creative processes involved in the construction of personal knowledge and understanding (as referenced in Hennessey, 2010).

For this study, creativity is defined as divergent thinking, or “thinking in a broad, flexible, exploratory, tentative, inductive, and non-data-based way that is oriented toward the development of possibilities” (Gladding, 2005, p. 3). Creativity is also a learned and developed skill that facilitates daily problem solving, the ability to adapt to change, and the enhancement of personal knowledge and understanding.

Career

There are many meanings assigned to the term career in the counselling literature. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines career as an individual’s path or progress through life. Richardson (1993) echoes this definition by focusing on the place of work in people’s lives. Savickas (2002) defines career as vocational development where vocation refers to the
“responses an individual makes in choosing and adapting to an occupation” (p. 382). Clifford Shaw (as referenced by Savickas, 2002) uses the term career to refer to the individual or subjective perspective. A person has a private meaning of career based on their interpretation of their experience and their conception of social roles. Savickas (2002) states that in this subjective meaning of career, individuals “orient themselves to their society’s occupational structure” (p.383). Career is a reflection on a person’s vocational behavior and the meaning they place on that behavior.

For the purposes of this study, career is defined as the general progression of one’s vocational life and behavior, focusing on both the objective and subjective course of chosen pursuit (Savickas, 2002).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The current economy is characterized by high unemployment rates, economic recession, and a contingent workforce (Maglio et al., 2005). Globalization, new social contracts between employers and employees, and rapidly advancing technologies have brought shifts in the world of work that have resulted in an increased sense of unpredictability, instability, and change (Amundson, 2005; Maglio et al., 2005; Savickas, 2002). Amundson (2005) provides a comprehensive summary of the changes in the world of work:

 Greater competition and pressure for productivity; fewer defined and predictable career pathways; organizational change being driven by mergers, joint ventures and work alliances; more opportunities for work in different parts of the world, greater reliance on temporary or contract positions; greater need to consider self-employment options; increased diversity in the workplace; greater emphasis on technological skills; increased need for skilled trades workers; more tasks and greater work/life complexity; more need for dual career planning/pressure on families; increased emphasis on interpersonal skills i.e., teamwork, networking; need for continuous learning; need for ongoing innovation; fewer opportunities for upward mobility; and greater income disparity between workers and managers (p. 4).
In light of these changes, workers are expected to be continual learners, embrace flexibility rather than stability, maintain employability, and create their own opportunities (Amundson, 2005). Consequently, individuals must learn to manage their own careers and view their career development as a life long process.

In the current economy, it has become harder to achieve and maintain work stability (Tang, 2003). Workers are realizing that blind loyalty to corporations and organizations is unwise in a time of contingent employment, technological advances, and a globalized economy (Niles, 2003). Sonnenberg (1997, as cited in Maglio et al., 2005) argues that many workers are unprepared, either educationally or emotionally, for the instability and unpredictability that they experience in their careers. Workers are struggling to find new ways to cope as they find that old solutions for ensuring job security, such as working harder, are no longer sufficient strategies (Niles, 2003). Moreover, with the increase in employer expectations, workers now feel pressure to learn how to combine traits in a different way than has been traditionally done, possess more adaptive skills, and learn quickly to adjust to new environments (Tang, 2003).

The increased insecurity, instability and demands for a self-managed career may translate into increased family discord, anxiety, and adjustment disorders (Lee & Johnston, 2001). Stress resulting from instability and the lack of lifetime employment is an emerging concern for individual workers, and thus for the career counselling professional (Tang, 2003). More people are now turning to career counselling for new coping strategies and insights into how they can reduce the anxiety and confusion they feel (Niles, 2003). Multon, Heppner, Gysbers, Zook, & Ellis-Kalton (2001) conducted a study of 42 clients from the community who were voluntarily seeking career counselling. Clients were seen for a total of 290 sessions by 21 career counsellors. The study was exploring client psychological distress as a variable in career
counselling, and found that 60% of the clients were categorized as distressed according to their pretreatment assessment. This finding was significantly higher than the approximately 13% expected in the normative sample population (Multon et al., 2001). The authors suggested that this study provides evidence of the psychological distress that many clients bring to career counselling. They concluded that career counsellors should be aware of this possibility, and attend to more than just occupational knowledge and skills when working with clients.

Counsellors will have to help their clients learn how to develop “positive psychological attitudes such as tolerance for ambiguity, resilience, proactivity, and openness” (Lee & Johnston, 2001, p. 178) in order for them to focus on lifelong adaptability and adjusting well in an environment that demands flexibility, resilience, and openness to learning (Lee & Johnston, 2001; Tang, 2003).

The new world of work and consequently the increasing complexity of career concerns experienced by clients impacts career counselling theory and practice, and requires a shift in the career counselling paradigm, specifically in terms of what is going to benefit clients (Amundson 2005; Maglio et al., 2005; Tang, 2003; Lee & Johnston, 2001; Heppner et al., 1994). Career counsellors are challenged to consider the relevance and utility of career counselling models that were developed in the middle of the last century (Niles, 2003). Many authors have argued that the nature of the work environment is no longer compatible with linear, rational career development approaches, and that traditional career theories are insufficient in helping clients with the challenges they are facing (Maglio et al., 2005; Savickas, 2002; Tang, 2003; Lee & Johnston, 2001). Traditional theories are rooted in assumptions of the stability of personal characteristics and the security of jobs in predictable organizational career paths (Savickas, 2000; Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck, & van Vianen, 2009). They conceptualize careers within a relatively fixed and stable work environment and
labor market (Savickas 2000, Savickas et al., 2009; Maglio et al., 2005; Bright & Pryor, 2005). Savickas et al. (2009) state that “current career development theories and techniques face a crisis in that their fundamental assumption of predictability based on stability and stages is debatable and, more importantly, may no longer be functional” (p. 240). The premise upon which traditional career theories were built is no longer relevant or adequate within the current context of change and uncertainty.

Given the limits of career theory, new approaches to career development are needed (Amundson, 2002). Helping clients understand the relationship between their personal traits and the requirements of the work environment is much more complex and can no longer be the central focus of the career counselling relationship (Tang, 2003). Career counsellors need renovated approaches and interventions in order to remain pertinent to the realities of the modern working world (Savickas, 2003). This is not to say that traditional theory should be ignored, but that it has to be augmented with interventions that promote creative, nonlinear thinking (Lee & Johnston, 2001). Savickas et al. (2009) state that “theoretical models are needed that emphasize human flexibility, adaptability, and life-long learning. Moreover, future methods of career counseling should take a dynamic approach that encourages individuals’ imaginative thinking and the exploration of possible selves” (p. 240). Career counsellors need to respond creatively, and innovate their approaches in order to better help their clients effectively manage their careers (Savickas, 2002; Niles, 2003). Heppner, O’Brien, Hinkelman, & Humphrey (1994) affirm that career counsellors should use their own creative potential to engage in more dynamic and innovative approaches with clients.

In addition to the need for new career approaches, the field of career counselling is also facing the documented divide between career or vocational research and career counselling
practice (Savickas, 2001, 2002, 2003; Niles, 2003; Fouad, 2001; Tang, 2003; Walsh & Savickas, 2005). Many authors agree that there must be improved communication between researchers and practitioners (Savickas, 2002, 2003; Fouad, 2001; Niles, 2003). Savickas (2001) asserts that vocational psychologists need to communicate theory and research to counsellors in ways that are meaningful and that help them apply the research in their practice. There is a call to bridge this gap between research and practice by refocusing research efforts from career development and behavior to the process of career counselling (Niles, 2003; Savickas, 2003; Tang, 2003). Savickas (2003) states that it is “imperative that researchers and practitioners create more ways to use data from career counseling encounters to improve outcomes, and expand knowledge” (p.90). Tang (2003) proposes that researchers and practitioners collaborate on research and construct approaches and theories that focus on the counselling process.

In an effort to understand the divide between theory and practice, Brown (2002) conducted a survey of career counselling practitioners. Suggestions for how career counsellors and researchers can work together to close the gap between theory and practice yielded 47% of respondents indicating communication, collaboration and teamwork. Additionally, counselling practitioners indicated that they are interested in research findings that will assist them in helping clients plan for change as the choice of a career or career path may no longer be stable, predictable, or controlled by the client. This is an interesting finding given that over half of respondents (55%) indicated that they used Holland, Super, and Learning theories to inform their work. These findings could serve to illustrate both the divide between research and practice, and the need for more research that can help counsellors better serve the changing needs of their clients. It is important to note that there is an apparent lack of research concerning creativity in career counselling. Heppner et al. (1994) reviewed the career development
literature and found a scarcity of information examining the role of creativity. The authors found this to be especially interesting “given the general acceptance of the importance of counselors’ creative processes in emotional-social counseling” (Heppner et al., 1994, p. 78).

In the almost 20 years since that article was published, creativity has been recognized as an important element in the shifting career counselling paradigm and there has been an increased demand in the literature for new, creative career counselling approaches. However, very little research has resulted and a void in the literature still exists. This study aims to take a step toward filling that void by looking at the factors that facilitate and challenge counsellors’ use of creativity. This study also contributes to narrowing the gap between research and practice by focusing on career practitioners and exploring their experience with creativity.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore what factors help and hinder career practitioners in using creativity with their clients.

1.4 Research Questions

The central research question for this study is what facilitates career practitioners’ use of creativity when working with clients and what hinders their use of creativity?
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Before exploring how counsellors use creativity, it is important to understand the role that creativity plays within the context of career development. In this chapter, I will review the current counselling literature with regard to the world of work, traditional and emerging theoretical approaches to career development, and creativity in both counselling and career counselling.

2.1 Changing World of Work

Workers today must adapt to an increasingly unpredictable world of work. Technology, globalization, shifts in corporate structure, and the demographics of the labor force have all influenced “who works, how they work, where they work, and the security of their employment” (Fouad, 2006, p.410). Technology continues to change the nature of work by changing the nature of occupations. Jobs are less stable and predictable and have shorter lifecycles as technology emerges and disappears (Fouad, 2006). Technology affects how people work by blurring the boundaries between work, family, and leisure (Betz, 2001). Technology has also contributed to a global or worldwide economy. Increased globalization has led to “rapid changes in the organization of work and arrangement of occupations” (Savickas, 2003, p.88). Manufacturing has been moved to other countries in order to cut costs and take advantage of low wages, a change that both affects where individuals work and with whom they work (Fouad, 2006). Additionally, demographic changes in the workforce include an increase in older workers, women and working mothers, and culturally diverse workers (Fouad, 2001).
According to Savickas (2003), new psychological contracts exist between employers and employees. Because of the rapid changes of the labor market, organizations no longer feel responsible for the careers of their employees. They expect employees to maintain their own career progression (Betz, 2001). Workers must also be more flexible and have more adaptive skills (Tang, 2003). The focus has shifted to “self-management and continuous skill development” (Lee & Johnston, 2001, p.178). This results in more workers feeling a sense of insecurity and instability in their work and careers (Savickas, 2003). This insecurity is compounded by the threat of layoffs and the decrease in, or often the elimination of, retirement pensions (Fouad, 2006).

All of these changes in the world of work have led to changes in the progression of a person’s career. The idea that a person will work for one company until retirement has quickly become an extinct notion; instead, an individual can expect to make many career transitions throughout their life (Fouad, 2006; Lee & Johnston, 2001). Established assumptions have shifted from career as a single choice made early in life to career as a string of choices, or forced transitions, that a worker must make over their lifetime (Fouad, 2006). Career choice and career development have become much more complex. The challenge for career counsellors then is to find effective ways to help clients develop the tools they need to navigate the turbulent work environment (Lee & Johnston, 2001).

2.2 Career Theory

In this section, I will describe three traditional career theory models: trait-factor, Super’s life-span theory, and learning theory. I will then discuss the emerging theoretical perspectives of planned happenstance, chaos theory, positive uncertainty, and active engagement.
Trait-Factor Theory

The trait-factor theory dates back to the early 1900’s and is associated mostly strongly with vocational theorist Frank Parsons and his person-environment fit model. Parsons believed that in order to choose a career, a person has to know themselves and the world of work, and be able to analyze the relationship between the two (Fouad, 2007). The three basic elements of trait-factor theory are self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, and decision-making skills (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). There are a few basic assumptions that underlie this theory. Every person has a unique pattern of traits made up of their interests, values, abilities and personality characteristics, which can be objectively identified and profiled. Every occupation has unique characteristics required for the successful performance of that occupation, which can be objectively identified and represented as an occupational profile. It is possible to identify a fit or match between individual traits and job factors using a straightforward problem-solving process. The closer the match between personal traits and job factors the greater the likelihood for successful job performance and satisfaction (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). This theory suggests that each person is best suited for a particular type of work, and that groups of workers in different occupations have different characteristics. It views occupation as a single, point-in-time choice; and views career development as a mostly cognitive and rational process (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

Trait-factor theory focuses mainly on how to classify and measure characteristics in an objective way. It usually relies on standardized assessments to identify and make a direct relationship between the characteristics of an individual and an occupation. In classic trait-factor
theory, the counsellor is directive, taking an active role in collecting the client’s data through assessments and then explaining their results (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

The work of John Holland is derived from trait-factor theory as it focuses on the connection between individual characteristics and occupational tasks. However, he expands on the concept of personality characteristics and how they fit into various work environments and job titles (Holland, 1996). Holland’s model is based on four basic assumptions (Holland, 1973, as cited in Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). The first is that most people can be described as a combination of one or more of six personality types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional), often referred to as a Holland code. Second, environments can be categorized as a combination of the same six types. Third, people search for work environments that will allow them to use their skills and express their interests and values; therefore, a person with a particular Holland code will seek a work environment with a similar code. Finally, a person’s behavior is determined by the interaction between their personality and their environment. A key factor to Holland’s theory is congruence, or “the degree of fit between a person’s personality type and current or prospective work environment” (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 52). A person will tend to be more satisfied with their work and perform better if they experience a high level of congruence (Holland, 1996).

Holland’s model takes a cognitive, rational approach to career development and has been extremely influential in the field of career counselling (Holland, 1996). It has been used in many assessment tools such as the Self-Directed Search and the Strong Interest Inventory. With Holland’s approach, career counsellors help clients identify their type and congruent work environments usually through the use of assessments (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).
Super’s Life-Span Theory

The life-span theory was developed by Donald Super and takes a developmental approach to career development and occupational choice (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). This theory describes three aspects of career development: lifespan, life space and self-concept (Super, 1990).

Life span refers to career development as a lifelong process, which exists within the context of psychosocial development, social expectations, and economic opportunity (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Super (1990) describes five major stages of career development, each with a unique set of career development tasks: Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Disengagement. Growth is typically experienced from age 4-13, and children begin to develop a sense of self and a basic understanding of the working world. Exploration is from age 14-24 with adolescents and young adults planning for the future. Establishment generally occurs from age 25-45, where adults focus on stabilizing, consolidating and advancing their careers. Maintenance is from age 45-65, with workers meeting the tasks of holding, updating, and innovating their careers. Finally, Disengagement happens in the later part of life when workers face a decrease of interest in their careers and begin planning for retirement.

Although Super originally presented the stages and tasks in a sequential manner, he later added that people cycle and recycle throughout their life span as they adapt to changes in themselves as well as when they go through career transitions (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

Life space refers to the different roles a person plays during their lifetime and the relative importance they give to those roles at different times in their lives. Life roles interact in a unique way for each person, so the same job will hold different meanings for different people (Super, 1990). The meaning and importance that people attach to their life roles defines their life
structure (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Super (1980) identifies nine major life roles: son/daughter; student; leisurite; citizen; worker; spouse; homemaker; parent; and pensioner. These roles play out at home, work, school, and the community (as cited in Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

Self-concept is defined by how a person views themselves in light of the various personal and external factors that shape their life span and life structure. A self-concept is a picture of who we are and what we are like, and considers how we see ourselves, how we would like to be seen, and how we think others perceive us (Super, 1963, as cited in Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). The formation of self-concept begins at an early age and continues growing and deepening throughout life. It is influenced by internal and contextual experiences and reinforcements. Super (1990) suggests that career decisions are an individual’s attempt to translate their self-concept into career terms, or a vocational self-concept. In making a vocational choice, an individual is expressing their understanding of their self-concept. People seek career satisfaction through work roles in which they can express themselves and implement and develop their self-concept. Career satisfaction increases when a person’s self-concept includes a view of the working-self as being integrated with their other life roles (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

The idea of career maturity or career adaptability is also central to Super’s theory (Super, 1990; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Both terms refer to an individual’s career decision-making readiness; however, career maturity is most often used with regard to children or adolescents, and career adaptability is used when referring to adult career development.

Super’s theory has greatly influenced career practice (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). In this approach, career counsellors help clients identify where they are in their life span
development, and consider career development within the larger context of the client’s life roles and life style (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

**Learning Theory**

Learning theory was developed by John Krumboltz and his colleagues and involves two separate parts (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). The first part is the Learning Theory of Career Counseling (LTCC), and centers on career counselling and how career counsellors can help clients make effective career decisions. The second part falls under LTCC but is focused on factors influencing career choice and is referred to as the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (SLTCDM).

The SLTCDM centers around four main factors that influence career choice (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990). The first is genetic endowment and special abilities. Genetic endowments and inherited and special abilities are a result of the interaction between genetics and environmental experiences. The second factor is environmental conditions and events that are outside of our control, including cultural, social, and political forces. The third factor is instrumental and associative learning experiences. Instrumental learning occurs when some positive outcomes (such as praise or positive emotions) follow a given behavior. Associative learning occurs when people observe outcomes experienced by others, select these people as role models, and pattern their own behavior after them. The final factor is the task approach skills that a person has, such as self-observation, environmental experiences, goal setting, information seeking, work habits, and problem-solving skills (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990).

The consequences of these factors and most particularly learning experiences lead people to develop beliefs about themselves, the world, and the nature of careers (Mitchell & Krumboltz,
These beliefs, whether realistic or not, influence career choices and work related behaviour. Learning experiences, especially from significant role models, have a powerful influence on career decisions (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990). According to Krumboltz (1994), people will prefer or avoid an occupation depending on whether or not they have succeeded at tasks they believe to be associated with that occupation, experienced associative learning with role models in that occupation, and/or received positive reinforcement in relation to that occupation (as cited in Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

The LTCC assists career counsellors in creating interventions that effectively address career concerns such as career indecision, conflict, and aspirations (Krumboltz, 1996). Specifically, counsellors use the LTCC to help clients attain more accurate self-observations and worldview generalizations, learn new task approach skills, and take career action. Counsellors can apply good techniques of learning theory to help clients with career choice and career development (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). This model pays little attention to characteristics of individuals or occupations; rather, the focus is on developing desired behaviours and eliminating negative behaviours. Krumboltz (1996) suggests that the main role of the counsellor is to help clients learn to have positive outcomes. This can be achieved through direct instruction, or through experiences that result in positive reinforcement for the client, such as a mock interview (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

**Planned Happenstance**

can no longer count on their careers to follow a linear course. Instead of combining personal attributes and integrating them with the work environment, the authors propose that people consider staying open to possibilities and crafting new, unexpected opportunities for themselves. Lee and Johnston (2001) argue that this approach is especially useful in the current career environment, where people have to manage their own careers, and create direction for themselves. This theory allows for unexpected events, failure, taking risks, change, flexibility, and openness to new experiences and options (Mitchell et al., 1999; Lee & Johnston, 2001). It encourages people to be assertive in their career development by being active and curious, with a willingness to try new things.

With this method, career counsellors help clients to consider unplanned events as opportunities for exploration, and to generate and anticipate possible opportunities. They encourage clients to continue to network, learn and try new things, get involved in new projects, and view change and unpredictability as opportunity (Mitchell et al., 1999). Counsellors promote open-mindedness and comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty, so that clients are open about their future and are more receptive to possibilities when unplanned events occur. Counsellors can help clients create opportunities using creativity rather than practicality by developing five key skills: curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking (Mitchell et al., 1999; Amundson, 2005; Lee & Johnston, 2001).

Chaos Theory of Careers

Jim Bright and his colleagues developed the Chaos Theory of Careers, which characterizes both individuals and careers as complex, dynamic systems (Bright, Pryor, & Harpham, 2005). Chaos theory addresses modern realities of career decision making such as
chance, unpredictability, the limitations of goals, and the nonlinearity of change (Bright et al., 2005). This theory challenges the traditional notion of fit between people and careers because it is predicated on both elements being static and predictable (McKay, Bright, & Pryor, 2005). Instead, careers and career paths are non-linear, unpredictable and subject to continual phase shifts (Bright et al., 2005). According to Bright & Pryor (2005), all factors that influence career development, such as family, social context, gender, age, political and economic climate, values, interests, and skills are inherently unpredictable and subject to change. Career counsellors must consider this complexity and help clients understand the processes and patterns that have influenced and continue to influence their experience of life and career. The factors that influence career development are complex, and so an individual’s career development cannot always be assumed to be planned, predictable, or logical (McKay et al., 2005).

The Chaos Theory of Careers identifies four elements in career development and choice:
1. The complexity of human experience and the potential range of influences on a person’s career; 2. The importance of change and the dynamic, interactive and adaptive nature of career decision-making; 3. The tendency of people to construct and interpret experiences and perceptions into meaningful ways of understanding themselves, their experiences, and their world; and 4. The unplanned, chance events and experiences that are often central to people's careers (Bright et al., 2005). Chaos counselling is exploratory and dynamic. The client is viewed as a complex, unique, nonlinear, adaptive, chaotic, and open system that is sensitive to change. It stresses the importance of adaptation in careers, and focuses on increasing client self-awareness and broadening perspectives on interactive influences and chance events of the past, present, and future (Bright et al., 2005; McKay et al., 2005). Chaos theory emphasizes creativity, meaning, insight, inspiration, and opportunity awareness (Pryor & Bright, 2003). Career counsellors
encourage adaptability in clients through ongoing learning, interaction with their environmental systems, reframing their understanding of self, others, and the world, and purposeful action.

Positive Uncertainty

In 1989, H.B. Gelatt published his seminal article on positive uncertainty, which redefined his earlier rational approach to career decision-making. Gelatt (1989) argues that people can no longer rely solely on rational, linear career decision-making, as it does not fit with the contemporary environment and is not consistent with the nature of human experience (Lee & Johnston, 2001). When the future is certain, you can prepare for it. Traditional career theories that are more rational and linear tend to focus on the probable and preferable futures. Positive uncertainty focuses on the possible future and the creation of new opportunities (Gelatt, 1989). It is built on the premise that goals and preferences are in flux and constantly changing. With the unpredictable nature of work, it is challenging for workers to maintain the same goal over an extended period of time, let alone an entire lifetime (Lee & Johnston, 2001). Gelatt (1989) sees uncertainty as a reality, and asserts that we should embrace the uncertainty by being positive and creative.

Positive uncertainty has four underlying paradoxical principles (Gelatt, 1989). The first is to be focused and flexible about what you want in order to let go of goals that are no longer relevant to your life and to continue to discover and create new goals over the course of your career. The second paradox is to be aware and wary of what you know. This also implies a focus and flexibility in terms of learning and knowledge, as the skills that a person has today may not be the ones that are necessary in the future. The third paradox is to be realistic and optimistic about your beliefs. Finally, the fourth paradox is to be practical and magical about
what you do, or listen to both your head and your intuition by looking at the bigger picture and possibilities (Gelatt, 1989).

With positive uncertainty, career counsellors should encourage clients to be flexible with their goals, open to new information, and comfortable with uncertainty, ambiguity, and intuitive thought (Lee & Johnston, 2001). Gelatt (1989) recommends that counsellors help clients to redefine success by managing their careers in a different way and by being more fluid, flexible, and creative. Counsellors should also help clients to take a balanced, holistic approach to career decision-making, and to embrace change in a positive way, rather than just accepting that unpredictability and instability are inevitable (Lee & Johnston, 2001). This will allow clients to be open to absorbing new information, learning new skills, and generating new ideas through creativity and imagination (Gelatt, 1989; Amundson, 2005).

Active Engagement

Active Engagement is a career counselling approach advanced by Norm Amundson that focuses on dynamic counselling and values experiential interventions, imagination, and creativity (Amundson, 2009, 2006, 2005). Active engagement approaches career counselling in a way that is accepting of ambivalence, intuition and flexibility. It challenges the traditional counselling conventions of space, time, participation, topic, and method of delivery (Amundson, 2005, 2006). An active engagement approach promotes a holistic view of the client and a natural flow between career and personal issues. It provides a wider range of counselling options, with counsellors being more flexible when it comes to counselling environments, session length, and choice of counselling interventions (Amundson, 2005). Counsellors are also open to involving family member or significant others in counselling sessions.
Active engagement begins with establishing a climate of mattering for the client, or an environment where the client feels as if their experiences are significant and important to the counsellor (Amundson, 2009). Active engagement also holds imagination and creativity as a key element in career counselling. Amundson encourages counsellors to use their full range of creativity and imagination in order to create memorable and transformative experiences for clients, and to provide the environment and conditions necessary for clients to engage their own creativity and flexibility (Amundson, 2002). Career counsellors need to “make an effort to use a variety of counseling methods at every level of counseling activity” (Amundson, 2002, p.141). Counsellors also need to consider that people learn through many different sensory modalities. Amundson asserts that counselling can be much broader than solely engaging in verbal dialogue. Career counsellors are encouraged to use their own creativity along with various dynamic counselling methods, such as flip charts, card sorts, mind mapping, storytelling, metaphors, pattern identification methods, journaling, and drawing. These other methods offer clients the opportunity to view their situation from a new perspective, reinvigorate their creativity, and re-envision possibilities (Amundson, 2002, 2006).

2.3 Creativity

Emerging career theories seem to value the common themes of innovation, risk-taking, flexibility and creativity, and indicate a call for career counsellors to employ more innovation and creativity in their career counselling practice (Mitchell et al., 1999, Gelatt, 1989; Bright et al., 2005; Amundson, 2005, 2006, 2009). In this section, I will discuss the current literature as it relates to creativity in both counselling and career counselling.
Creativity in Counselling

Counselling provides fertile ground for creativity to develop (Gladding, 2005). Helping clients to generate new possibilities and discover different ways of looking at problems is at the heart of the counselling process. Counselling is a moment-by-moment experience where the activities, strategies, thoughts and behaviors of both the counsellor and the client are valuable. Creativity is central to this process and contributes to the flow of therapy:

Flow may occur…when counselors help clients run with an idea or feeling in the moment, or when the clinician gets clients out of their chairs and moving, acts in a completely unexpected way, or interjects a critically timed comment or nonverbal behavior. Flow is that which happens when clients and counselor are completely enveloped in the moment.” (Carson & Becker, 2004, p. 113)

It is the counsellor’s responsibility to not only use creativity, but to also help clients access the creative side of their spirit, which can open them up to unknown alternative possibilities (Kottler & Hecker, 2002). Creativity contributes greatly to new and novel ways of conducting counselling, and promotes positive and often corrective emotional experiences for clients. These experiences can lead to divergent thinking, flexibility, imagination, and problem solving which in turn can lead to client change (Gladding, 2005; Carson & Becker, 2004; Amundson, 2009).

Creativity in Career Counselling

In order to attain innovation in career and career services, counsellors need to use a variety of creative interventions at every stage of counselling (Amundson, 2002). They should be more flexible in their approaches with clients and use imagination and creativity to open up new possibilities. Heppner et al. (1994) states that it is “critical to explore different ways of being creative in our work in order to ensure that clients receive excellent services” (p. 85).
Amundson echoes this belief in his assessment that most clients go to counselling because they are stuck and cannot see new possibilities, which he terms as a “crisis of imagination” (Amundson, 2009, 2006). Career counsellors help clients through this crisis by using creativity and imagination, allowing clients to renew their creative spirit, envision a new reality and be open to new ideas and possibilities about their future.

Both Amundson (2009) and Heppner et al. (1994) believe that career counsellors must be more flexible in their approaches with clients and shift to more dynamic, creative and challenging interventions. Counsellors should regularly use their creative skills in order to help clients access their own creative capacity. Career counselling relies heavily on dialogue and formal assessments, but it can be expanded to include such activities as metaphors, storytelling, art and drawing, guided imagery, genograms, free association writing, and journaling, to name a few (Amundson, 2009, 2006; Heppner et al., 1994). Using these methods and engaging clients in a creative way allows them to see their problems from a new perspective and provides an opportunity for new solutions.

**Conclusion**

Given the shifting realities of the working world and the impact this is having on workers, the field of career counselling is beginning to reevaluate traditional career theories and recognize the need for innovation. Several approaches have emerged in an effort to adapt to the new landscape of work and to provide guidance for career counsellors as they help their clients effectively navigate their career paths. These theories are similar in that they emphasize flexibility and adaptability, and encourage both counsellors and clients to engage in innovation, creativity, and imagination. Despite this call for creativity, there is a scarcity of research on
creativity in career counselling, and appears to be no research into how career counsellors use creativity. In light of this lack of research, this study is an attempt to understand career counsellor creativity, specifically using the critical incident technique to explore what factors play a role to help or hinder their use of creativity.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the research method and procedures I used to conduct this study. First, I will give an overview of the research design, discussing the critical incident technique (CIT) and its suitability for exploring the research question, “What facilitates career practitioners’ use of creativity when working with clients and what hinders their use of creativity?” Next, I will describe participant recruitment, selection and demographics, followed by the process of data collection and analysis. Finally, I will discuss rigour as well as ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

Critical Incident Technique

The critical incident technique (CIT) was developed by John Flanagan (1954) and grew out of the research of the Aviation Psychology Program of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005). CIT was originally utilized to determine critical factors required for job success and to create a functional description of an activity. Since Flanagan’s (1954) seminal article, CIT has evolved from its behavioral, task analysis roots, and has moved away from direct observation toward retrospective self-report. It has since developed into a qualitative research methodology used to investigate a wide range of topics in many fields including nursing, education, marketing, social work, industrial and organizational psychology (Butterfield et al., 2005). Woolsey (1986) focuses on applying CIT to counselling and psychology research (Butterfield et al., 2005). Woolsey outlines the strengths of using CIT to study psychological constructs and experiences. These
strengths include its ability to “encompass factual happenings, qualities or attributes, not just critical incidents ... its capacity to explore differences or turning points ... its utility as both a foundational/exploratory tool in the early stages of research, and its role in building theories or models” (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 480).

CIT is consistent with other forms of qualitative research; however, there are five features of CIT that distinguished it from other qualitative methodologies. The first is the focus on critical incidents that help facilitate or hinder an activity or the experience of an activity. The second is the origins of CIT in organizational and industrial psychology. Next is that data is collected mainly through interviews followed by data analysis, which involves identifying incidents and forming categories that emerge from the data. Finally, CIT narrative consists of categories with operational definitions and self-descriptive titles (Butterfield et al., 2005).

The primary purpose of CIT is to create a categorization scheme that reviews and describes critical incidents in a useful way, while retaining its comprehensiveness, specificity and validity (Butterfield et al., 2005). Flanagan (1954) defines an incident as a human activity that is complete and can be observed in a way that inferences or predications can be made (Butterfield et al. (2005). To be critical, the incident must be real and significantly contribute to the outcome of an activity (Butterfield et al., 2005). CIT has five major steps: “(1) ascertaining the general aims of the activity being studied; (2) making plans and setting specifications; (3) collecting the data; (4) analyzing the data; and (5) interpreting the data and reporting the results” (Butterfield, 2005, p.477). CIT collects rich and descriptive data about critical incidents from the perspective of the individual (Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009). It takes into consideration the cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements, including how these incidents are managed, and their perceived effects (Butterfield et al., 2005).
Suitability

CIT assists researchers in exploring “effective and ineffective ways of doing something, looking at helping and hindering factors, collecting functional or behavioral descriptions of events or problems, examining success and failure, and determining characteristics that are critical to important aspects of an activity or event” (Butterfield et al., 2005, p.476). CIT uncovers not only critical incidents, but also facts, experiences, turning points, and qualities (Butterfield et al., 2009). It is an appropriate and useful tool in the early phases of research, when little is known about particular incidents or factors (Butterfield et al., 2009). Given the systematic, yet flexible and exploratory nature of CIT (Butterfield et al., 2009), it lends itself well to this particular study. Creativity in career counselling as a research topic is in the exploratory stage, with little understanding of what encourages and impedes career counsellors in using creativity. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore and gather data on the factors that help and hinder career practitioners in using creativity in their work with clients.

This study used Enhanced CIT (ECIT), which adheres to the traditional aspects of CIT but adds context, wish list items, and credibility checks. Contextual questions were added to the beginning of the interview, which provide background knowledge for CIT data (Butterfield, et al., 2009). Wish list (WL) items were also included in the interview, which described “people, supports, information, programs, and so on, that were not present at the time of the participant’s experience, but that those involved believed would have been helpful” (Butterfield et al., 2005, p.267). Finally, credibility checks were added to the process of data analysis in order to increase the trustworthiness of the study. These credibility checks are outlined in the rigour section.
3.2 Participants

Flanagan stated that in a CIT study the number of participants interviewed is determined by the number of critical incidents reported and whether the incidents represent adequate coverage of the activity being studied (Butterfield et al., 2005). Therefore, participant interviews should continue until data exhaustiveness or saturation is attained, which occurs when no new critical incidents or wish list items are mentioned and no new categories are needed (Butterfield et al., 2009). There were 13 participants in this study, who provided sufficient critical incidents and wish list items to reach the data exhaustiveness criterion.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Participant recruitment was initially limited to the 240 career practitioners in British Columbia who were Certified Career Development Practitioners (CCDP). However, multiple recruitment attempts were made and a significant amount of time (4 months) passed with no volunteers from this group. Therefore, recruitment was opened up to any career practitioner, both in Canada and the United States, who met the selection criteria. Career practitioners had to self-identify as using creativity in their work with clients in order to participate in the study. Further, participants had to be currently working in the career development field and currently seeing clients (either individually, in groups or a class, or both). Recruitment emails were sent to 35 professional contacts (26 women and 9 men) within the career development field (see Appendix C for the recruitment poster). Fifteen responses were received and all potential candidates were screened via email. Only two volunteers were excluded from the study because they were not currently working with clients.
**Participant Demographics**

Thirteen participants were interviewed for this study. Three men and ten women participated. Ten participants were from the United States and three were from Canada. All participants spoke English as their first language. Eleven participants had a Master’s degree, one had a PhD, and one had a Bachelor’s degree along with a Career Development Certificate. The age range of participants was from 31 to 59, with the average age of 43. Participants had 7 to 15 years of experience in the career development or career counselling field, with an average of 11 years of experience. Eleven participants worked with clients as counsellors (2) or career counsellors (9), one worked with clients as a psychologist and one worked with clients as a career instructor. Eleven participants held multiple positions and/or responsibilities. For example, five participants were in supervisory roles in addition to their work with clients, and four worked full time and also had a private practice. Eight participants worked in education and were employed by universities (7) or colleges (1). Two participants worked in employment services, and three worked solely in private practice.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through one in-depth interview and a follow-up contact. The interviews were sixty to ninety minutes and were the primary source of data collection. All participants received, reviewed and signed the informed consent (Appendix B), ensuring that they understood the purpose of the study, confidentiality and privacy, and their rights as research participants. In the interviews, participants described in detail how they define creativity, how they use creativity in their counselling practice, and what factors help and hinder their use of creativity. Participants also shared wish list items, elaborating on factors that they did not have
which might be helpful to their use of creativity. A semi-structured interview protocol served as a standardized framework for each interview and is included as Appendix A. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that gathered demographic data used in the above description of the participant sample.

All interviews were recorded, and hand-written notes were also taken. Three interviews were held over the phone, eight took place in the participant’s office, and two were held at coffee shops (at the request of the participant).

The interviews were followed up by a second contact made via email (see Appendix D for a sample email). This contact served to check and validate the data collected from the primary interview with the participant. Details of this participant check are described in the rigour section.

3.4 Data Analysis

To prepare the data, audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and interview transcriptions were read through and organized. The critical incidents (CI) and wish list (WL) items were extracted from the data in batches of three randomly selected interviews (Butterfield, et al., 2009). For the first interview, helping and hindering CIs and WL items were identified. Categories were then created based on any patterns, themes or similarities among the CIs and WL items (Butterfield et al., 2009). For each subsequent interview, helping CIs, hindering CIs and WL items were identified and placed into existing categories. For those CIs and WL items that did not fit within existing categories, new categories were created.

Categories were modified, renamed, merged together and broken apart as data analysis proceeded, in order to create a richer understanding of the research data, to reduce overlap, and
to distinguish between categories. Another consideration when creating viable categories was the minimum participation rate standard set by Borgen and Amundson (1984) of 25% of participants identifying incidents that fit into a specific category (as cited in Butterfield et al., 2009). All but 5 categories adhered to the minimum participation rate. Three additional categories had a rate of 23% and were considered to meet the minimum participation rate. The categories that fell below the standard were kept in order to maintain the meaning behind the data and to uphold the experience of the participant. All categories were given a self-descriptive title and an operational definition.

Interpretation of the data involved the following credibility checks: audiotaping interviews, independent extraction of CIs, exhaustiveness, participation rates, placing incidents into categories by an independent judge, participant cross-checking, expert opinions, and theoretical agreement (Butterfield et al, 2009). These credibility checks are addressed in more detail in the rigour section.

3.5 Rigour

Trustworthiness is crucial in demonstrating rigour in qualitative research as the research audience is counting on this quality when basing decisions on the information provided (Haverkamp, 2005). Trustworthiness and rigour were established in this study through eight of the nine credibility checks that are central to the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (Butterfield et al., 2005).
Audiotaping

All interviews were audiotaped in order to have an accurate account of the participants’ words and stories. I personally transcribed all interview audio recordings, and worked directly from those transcripts when analyzing and interpreting data.

Independent Extraction of CIs

An independent coder extracted CIs and WL items from a randomly selected 25 percent of the interview transcripts. There was 100 percent agreement “between what the researcher thinks is a critical incident and what the independent coder thinks is a critical incident” (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 486).

Exhaustiveness

CIs and WL items and categories were logged in order to track the point at which no additional categories emerged from the data. Exhaustiveness was reached at 13 participants.

Participation Rates

Participation rates were calculated for each category and are reported in Tables 1-3 in the Findings chapter.

Placing Incidents into Categories

25 percent of the incidents were randomly chosen and given to an independent judge, who placed each incident into existing categories. The agreement rate was calculated at 100% after a discussion between the judge and the researcher.

Participant Cross-Checking

A second contact was made with participants after the data from the interviews were analyzed and placed into categories. Participants received a summary of their interview, and reviewed the CIs and WL items that were extracted from the data, along with the corresponding
categories that had been created. Participants provided feedback on whether the incidents represented their experience, as well as clarification and revisions about any CIs, WL items and categories. Eleven participants provided feedback on their summaries. Ten did so through email and one by telephone. All eleven participants agreed that the incidents and categories represented their experience. Two of the participants did not respond to the second contact email and a follow-up reminder email, and did not provide feedback.

*Expert Opinions*

The categories were submitted to and reviewed with an experienced career counsellor who has worked in the career development field for 18 years. Categories were revised based on this discussion and his feedback.

*Theoretical agreement*

The categories that emerged from the interviews are compared to the relevant scholarly literature in the Discussion chapter.

### 3.6 Ethics

Haverkamp (2005) stresses an ethical relationship between researcher and participant because of the vulnerability of the participant and the responsibility of the researcher to protect the participant from harm and promote their welfare. With this in mind, there were several ethical considerations related to the study. A thorough informed consent form was created which clearly expressed the purpose of the study to ensure that participants fully understood my intentions. Going into each interview, I was aware of the possible harm factors for the participant, specifically the possibility of the participant sharing confidential and sensitive information, including confidential information on their clients. This harm factor was not a
concern in any of the interviews as participants understood and felt comfortable with the parameters of confidentiality, and all participants maintained client confidentiality. Further, most participants appreciated the chance to share their experiences and commented that the interview was beneficial for them.

Another important ethical consideration was to ensure the validity of my interpretation of the data in order to provide an accurate account of the participants’ experience. To check accuracy, I brought the data and interpretations back to the participant. Eleven participants reported that I captured the true meaning of their experience and felt that their statements were interpreted in an authentic way (as detailed above, two participants did not respond to the second contact).
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Thirteen participants were interviewed in this study with a total of 183 critical incidents (CIs) and wish list (WL) items extracted from these interviews. There were 78 incidents that participants found to be helpful to their use of creativity, 65 incidents that they found hindering to their use of creativity, and 40 wish list items that they perceived would be helpful if they could have access to them. The study resulted in a total of 25 categories, with 10 categories of helping incidents, 6 categories of hindering incidents, and 9 categories of wish list items. One helping category and one hindering category were broken down into subcategories in order to maintain the integrity of the participants’ experience and to provide the categories with a deeper level of detail. This chapter will discuss the findings of the study, beginning with the helping categories and incidents, the hindering categories and incidents, and the wish list categories and items. Each of these sections will begin with a table, which shows the distribution of incidents or items within each category. The categories will be discussed in the order in which they appear in the tables. This chapter will conclude by reporting the contextual findings of the study, including the participants’ definitions of creativity, ratings on use of creativity, and overall experience of the interview.
4.1 Helping Critical Incident Categories

Table 1. Helping Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helping Categories</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>% of Helping Incidents</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Experience and knowledge</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Personal trait or characteristic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Colleagues</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Professional development</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Personal or individual activity/method</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ample time</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Time pressure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Clients</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Work environment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Collaboration with client</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Resources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL NUMBER OF HELPING INCIDENTS: 78

1. Experience and Knowledge

Experience and knowledge was the largest helping category, with 54% of participants detailing 11 incidents. Participants credited their professional experience, knowledge of the material, and counselling background as helpful to their use of creativity.

Many participants described their professional experience as being instrumental to their ability to use creativity. In general, the more experience the participant had as a career counsellor, the more comfortable they felt bringing creativity into their work with clients. One
participant felt that the experience she has gained as a career counsellor working at the university has allowed her to “develop more tools, and that has increased my comfort level and confidence. I have been able to grow into my own identity as a counselor and trust in myself.” This helps her to work with clients who are “traditionally academic, and used to being more linear…When I first started it was more challenging to challenge them to think in a new way. But as I got experience I’m more comfortable challenging them.”

For another participant, her experience has helped her tune into her intuition, trust in her abilities, and acknowledge ideas that she might have hesitated bringing up before:

I feel like I can be more secure in my abilities. I trust my intuition more...So ideas will pop into my head when I am in session of what I should do or say with the client. I would question it, and so now I give voice to them where I used to question them a lot more.

Participants also credit their experience of using creativity as a helpful factor, especially when this experience has been positive or successful. As one participant described, “seeing firsthand that creativity works encourages me without censorship to keep using creativity, to keep exploring, to keep asking questions, to keep taking risks.” She knew that creativity was working with one client “when I saw the spark, the energy in my client, and the client opened up and discloses.” Another participant spoke about his professional experience using creativity in a similar way, emphasizing that the more he uses creativity, the more he realizes how effective it is with a diverse range of clients:

I have seen the positive effect of creativity on my clients. I have seen that creativity works on a diverse population of clients; it’s generalizable, which encourages me to continue to use creativity, and it, well, it builds my confidence in being creative with clients… I have seen the breakthroughs that clients experience when they can let go of the “shoulds” and “musts” and reframe their thoughts.
Participants feel encouraged to continue incorporating creativity into their practice because they have experienced the positive impact that creativity has on their clients. They have seen that creativity works to help clients open up and gain new perspectives.

Participants also spoke about experience in terms of knowledge of material. One participant found that her counselling experience helps her use creativity because it gives her confidence in her knowledge on the topic, “I can rely on my experience, that I know the topic…so I feel comfortable and more willing to try new activities.” Another participant reflected on how helpful it is for her to “fully understand the material” and have a deep knowledge of the meaning behind the creativity she is using. This allows her to deliver the material in a meaningful way.

It helps me to deliver it in the best way…Creativity is meaningless unless you can make a connection to something. Students need to understand why I'm doing whatever I'm doing. So as a counselor, I should be constantly articulating that and making the connections.

This participant feels she is able to better help her clients by effectively connecting creativity to career exploration and to the client’s life in general. For example, in one of her classes she made a metaphor in response to a client talking about several actors of different skill levels in the same movie, “and I said there's room on the stage for everyone and I felt it was important for them to understand that we can all bring something to the table…I understood the material so I could make the connection. I could help them see something new, help them see the connection.”

Several participants found their background in counselling helpful. For one participant the counselling process itself helps her to use creativity, meaning her knowledge of the counselling process and her skill at “being present in the process in session” with the client. This helps her to be open and to engage in the moment. “It feeds my creativity. I was in a session
with a client…and was very present and in the process. As the client was talking, I saw an image of the client’s experience…I could visualize a picture that was a metaphor for (the client’s) experience.” Being present in the counselling process allowed the participant to see the client’s situation as a specific image and then shared this image with the client. The participant described it as a “very powerful” experience, as the client was able to externalize the issue and look at it in a new way.

For another participant, her specific counselling skills help her to center on both her intuition and her creativity. For example, her “deep listening skills” allow her to tune in to the client and hear a sense of who the client is under what they are saying:

I think it's a foundational piece. My belief is that people really have the answers to what they're coming for, but they have trouble hearing themselves and their own wisdom. I need to listen deeply to hear a sense of who they are and what is this person's identity…It's helpful because I'm listening for essentially blocks in creativity or ways that they’re stuck or they’re experiencing barriers or they put up barriers for themselves…listening brings up clues for myself about what I might want to address.

Her listening skills help her feel for blocks in creativity and barriers, or where the client may be stuck. This helps her find where she would like to focus the session. For example, she had a client who was having blocks around trust. By listening deeply to the client, the participant was able to identify certain words that she should stay away from because they acted as triggers for the client. By noticing these words, she could approach the client in a different way.

Finally, one participant had a moving positive personal experience with creativity in his life, which was the impetus to begin incorporating creativity into his work with clients:

With this experience I saw that creativity causes shift and change…I found a new perspective. Now I could feel empowered to take on new challenges. I thought, I was inspired to use creativity with clients…I started to see that clients can feel the shift and how powerful it can be…it helped reframe my thoughts and beliefs, reframe my story, and I see it do the same for clients…you change your thoughts and beliefs, challenge them and you change your perspective.
The participant used creativity as a way to reframe his beliefs and change his way of thinking to get him through a very personal challenge. Remembering this experience helps him continue to use creativity with his clients because he knows how impactful it can be.

2. Personal Trait or Characteristic

Fifty four percent of participants reported having an inherent personality characteristic, drive or motivation that is part of who they are, and that they tap into professionally in order to use their creativity. This was the second largest helping category, with 7 participants describing 10 incidents.

Personality characteristics or natural, inherent traits are important for many participants because it allows them to be creative and open to new ideas. Some participants indicated that they feel inherently creative and therefore have an interest or draw toward using creativity in their work with clients. One participant stated that using creativity feels natural, “I guess it's just so natural that I almost, I don't really ever second-guess it. It just comes out…I think it's just a natural kind of way that I would operate no matter if it was with myself personally or with my client professionally.” She feels comfortable with creativity, she has fun using it, and she trusts the creative part of herself. Similarly, another participant described having “a natural interest in thinking in a creative way” because she believes that “life in general calls for creativity… so I’m curious and have a passion for new things.”

Curiosity is a trait that several other participants mention as central to their creativity. One participant has a natural curiosity in people’s careers, which allows her to learn more about career paths and collect information and resources that she can use with clients.
I feel like I'm continually collecting an arsenal of resources that I can draw upon for work with my clients. I would say continually finding out about people's careers…I'm collecting information so that when I'm working with the client I can come up with ideas to help them.

She feels that her curiosity helps her have to “spontaneous ideas and connections” during counselling sessions.

Personal drive or motivation is also significant for the participants, most notably that they considered their personal drive to be central to their use of creativity. For example, one participant conveyed that her religious obligation is a part of who she is and it pushes her to use creativity and to do a good job at work. For the participant, religious obligation meant having a sense of duty to her job and to her clients. She feels a responsibility to do her job well, and so she goes above and beyond in order to do the best job she can do:

P: It comes from my religious background, it's your duty to do the best that you can. So I feel like it's my duty to my job, to do it really well…It pushes me. It's my duty to my job, to my students…It’s my religious obligation.”
I: And using creativity, it’s a part of doing your job well?
P: I want do the best that I can for my (clients) so I want to keep everything fresh and new…I want to incorporate creativity and I feel like I should.

Other participants described being motivated by their dedication and passion for their work because it helps them make sure that their clients’ needs are being met. One participant describes having a strong dedication to her clients:

Knowing the population that I'm working with and doing things I know that they'll like. For example, I hate group work. I've always hated group work but it seems like the students I work with love it…And so I try to push myself to come up with stuff to do for them and this is kind of pushing my own boundaries because these are things that I wouldn't want for myself…I do what they want, what they need even though it might be outside my own comfort zone and outside my skill set. So I have to develop certain skills to help them…So now I'm trying to fully understand something that I don't understand, that I don't like, in order to do something that my students will enjoy. So it takes work, not just intellectually but also emotionally. It's challenging.
The participant does whatever it takes to help her clients move forward in their career development. This dedication helps her push herself, challenge herself, stretch herself, and build her skills, “I grow in order to help the students grow.”

3. Colleagues

This category encompasses 7 participants reporting 9 incidents of when they felt supported and connected to colleagues, either in their own department and organization, or in the career counselling and development field in general. This included staff, peers, mentors, and professors.

It was important for the participants to feel like they could share their creative ideas with colleagues and that those ideas would be valued and validated. For many participants, it was helpful to both contribute their own ideas as well as hear other people’s ideas. They indicated that this exchange and collaboration generated new ideas that they could use with their clients. It also allowed them to modify or build upon ideas in order to suite the needs of clients. For example, one participant described a brainstorming session she had with her colleagues that helped her “free her mind” to new ideas because “there were no rules or judgments on ideas.” She felt like she didn’t have to monitor herself and that she could “set aside the rules and let creativity flow.” She left the brainstorming session feeling more inspired and creative for her work with clients.

Case consultation was also helpful for many participants. Being able to talk to colleagues about client issues gave participants a sense of support and feedback. This was particularly helpful when participants were feeling stuck with a client. It helped them find different ways to approach the client. For one participant, being able to seek support allowed her to “clarify and
process my own thoughts on a client that I had… I did the standard things and that didn't work for him. So then I was like what am I going to do? So I had conversations with my colleagues here to get some other ideas about how to work with him…Talking to my colleagues helped me see it differently.” Another participant commented, “It is helpful to talk with other counsellors that I trust and talk about a particular client when I’m feeling stuck.” He feels he can be “vulnerable and ask for help and support.” He gains a new perspective and is able to “look at the stuckness creatively.” It reminds him who he is, helps validate him as a counsellor, and builds his confidence. For example, he had a client who was “pretty combative…I didn’t feel like I was helping at all. I felt like it was me, like I was doing something wrong.” He felt stuck so he spoke with a colleague and realized that there was “probably something more going on with the client. I could reframe it, see it with a different perspective then could move forward.”

Finally, some participants found it helpful when colleagues would encourage and show interest in their creativity. One participant commented that it encouraged him when professors would want to meet with him to talk about a classroom presentation and hear about his creative approaches and ideas. This encouragement gave him the permission to engage with the students creatively, “It’s just the general feeling of a green light…It's helpful because it lets me be creative. It's a big difference. Freedom and being able to do and say what I want to do and say. It encourages me to keep using my creativity.” Encouragement gave him the “security, comfort, and confidence” to continue being creative.

One participant best summed up this category when she said:

I think colleagues that you can turn to for support and validation is helpful. When I have more interaction with colleagues, and really the ones who are using creativity or value it, I feel more energized and creative. Like when I was in graduate school and I felt like I had support of professors that I could bounce ideas off of. Or when I ask another counsellor for specific help and I would get positive feedback on the way that I handled
Then I feel more comfortable with the way I was approaching it and the way I could approach it in the future.

4. Professional Development

Professional development was an important helping factor for 38% of the participants. This category had 12 incidents, accounting for 15% of all helping incidents. Professional development held different meanings for different participants. A majority of the incidents related to attending professional development events, including workshops, networking, trainings, and local and national conferences. However, this category also represents individual professional development, such as researching online or reading journal articles.

For most participants in this category, professional development is helpful in generating ideas. For example, when participants attend conferences, the education sessions help stimulate their thinking and expose them to new ideas. It also gets them thinking “how do I modify these ideas to fit my clients?” For one participant, hearing the same information again at a conference was helpful to her creativity:

At a (national) conference I went to a workshop about choosing majors. And it’s not like he presented things that no one had ever heard of or I had never heard of. But he helped me think of things differently. It helped me realize or just think about the fact that students or people in general have these thoughts or beliefs that it can cause them to get stuck. So it helps me ask different kinds of questions in my counseling sessions…It helped me understand some of the roadblocks for my clients so that I can ask the questions and find out if they're experiencing these roadblocks. So I considered it in a new way. And so maybe I can get clients to open up to me in a new way about what's going on in their life, and maybe I can help them see things from a different perspective.

For this participant, the way the information was presented at the conference helped her “process the information differently” and build upon the ideas that were presented.
Participants described professional development as enjoyable and reinvigorating. A participant commented, “I have fun attending professional development events…it helps me not feel bored and makes me enjoy my job more.” Another participant stated that one particular conference helped her get back in touch with herself as a counsellor, “I was tapping into something in myself…. it was inspiring and gave me a new, a sense of renewed energy….It helped me realize possibilities within myself and that is what we are doing with our clients when we are being creative.”

Professional development also helps participants deepen their level of knowledge and awareness of particular topics that can then impact their sense of creativity. For example, one participant described reading a book on curiosity, “It increased my exposure to this new idea…it increased synchronicity so I began to see it in situations, how it can help in session…I started to look at new ways to tap into a place where I can be creative in relationship to this concept…it increased generativity and inspired me.”

5. Personal or Individual Activity/Method

Five participants reported 11 incidents of personal activities or practices that help them feel more creative, which in turn inspires them to incorporate creativity into their work with clients. The central theme of this category is that participants use their own personal method to allow a space or an opportunity for creativity to flow. For example, one participant uses writing as a way to “get my thoughts out, clear my mind, and allow for new ideas to come in. It gives me new solutions, and I can see things I hadn’t thought of before.” Another participant keeps figurines next to where she counsels clients, which serve as “muses” and reminders for her to use her creativity, “They help me smile, relax, take a break from seriousness.” This helps her “free
my brain...they’re a reminder of creativity and to use my imagination and to remain playful...They can be a source of instant reframe.”

One participant describes his use of “doodling” as essential to his creative process. While listening to his clients, he uses a sketchpad to take notes. He combines writing and drawing by “turning words into images.” Taking notes and doodling in this manner help him free his mind, “catch things”, and tap into his intuition: “Doodling is a visual representation. And it has a practical purpose because I am taking notes so it gives me some sense of structure. But it helps me be present with the client so I can help them be present with their experience.”

Being present and in the moment was also reported as helpful by several other participants because it helps them to focus, it eases distraction, and it allows them to let go of external or internal demands or pressures. For one participant, being physically still helps her to be more present with the client and access her creativity:

It is just physically being still. My life is pretty busy and so there is something very symbolic about just sitting and being in a quiet space…I oftentimes right before the session will do a little bit of breathing or stretching; not a dramatic amount but a little bit to get into the frame of mind…I think it's very hard to tap into my creativity when I'm too busy and I'm being too distracted by things…being able to be still is when you're able to relax from your schedule or your scheduled life and focus or be able to draw energy from the clients…It helps my creativity because it is a focused moment.

Two participants commented that taking care of their physical and mental health was a vital part of nurturing their sense of creativity. They both mentioned that they make sure to exercise, get enough sleep, and try to maintain work-life balance. A participant described how her physical health affects her creativity:

It’s important because if I don't get enough sleep then I feel I don't think as quickly. The thoughts and ideas just don't come because I'm tired. It’s like, there's got to be a way to help you I just can't think of what it is right now. But if I'm rested and I have energy as I'm working with them, ideas come to me and I can think outside of the box better.
Another participant spoke of attending to her mental health and emotional awareness through personal therapy, “Going to personal therapy generates self-improvement and growth. It frees up things inside me to be more creative...Stimulates ah-ha moments and feels like creativity bubbling up, and in general feeling more creative.”

6. Time

Four participants reported that time can play a helpful role in their use of creativity. There were a total of six incidents in this category ranging from having enough time with clients to feeling the pressure of deadlines. As a result of this distinct range of meaning, this category has been divided into two subcategories: ample time and time pressure. The common element in both of these subcategories is that time is a catalyst for creativity with 31% of participants reporting that time helps them to be creative.

a. Ample Time

Three participants described how having a sense of ample time helps their use of creativity because it gives them the space and freedom they feel they need to think, process, and come up with ideas. Several participants commented on having time on their own. For example, a participant expressed, “On my drive home I feel like I have time to free my mind. Ideas can incubate, or I can play around with different ideas, or think of different combinations of ideas.” Comparably, another participant describes “large, uninterrupted blocks of time” as helping her generate ideas. It lifts the pressure and gives her a sense of freedom, “It's helpful to just have a large block of time because sometimes I have to just know that I don't have an artificial stop before that creativity can flow.”
Time also pertains to spending enough time with clients. For one participant, time in her schedule allows her to be flexible so she can see clients when she wants to and she doesn’t have to “wait three weeks between appointments.” Another participant described a similar situation, where having enough time with clients is particularly helpful because “I’m not feeling pressure which can inspire creativity in that moment.”

b. Time Pressure

One participant described two incidents of time pressure as a helpful factor to her use creativity. The first experience is whenever she writes an article for her departmental newsletter, “Usually I’m under a deadline and yet creative ideas pop up because they have to.”

The second incident is “when I have to be spontaneous, feeling pressured in the moment can spark my creativity.” It helps her because she feels the pressure to have to come up with something, and this pressure forces her to improvise and use her creativity based on her experience. For example, “I wasn’t prepared for a resume presentation, and didn’t have the power point visuals that I usually rely on. I had to wing it, so tried a new activity, which the students ended up really liking.”

7. Clients

Four participants reported 5 incidents of when their clients have been a helping factor in using creativity. The central feature of this category is that the participants feel more willing to use creativity, take creative risks, and engage creatively as a result of the relationship with the client or some characteristic of the clients themselves.

Two participants described feeling high levels of rapport and trust in their relationship with the client, and consequently felt more connected to the client and more comfortable in using
creativity. One participant experienced long-term clients as helping her creativity. She felt that the client was willing to go deeper and so she was more willing to take risks. She had “a higher sense of confidence and more trust in the relationship…I decided to do a genogram with a long-term client who had a willingness to go deeper in the counselling process. There was a strong counselling rapport. There was a breakthrough because the client was more open and so I took a risk where maybe I wouldn’t have normally. And so I was able to get to know the client more.”

A sense of strong rapport was important to another participant for similar reasons, “There is more trust, more permission to introduce new perspectives and propose creative interventions.” She feels more comfortable using creativity and taking risks because she feels the client will be more receptive or open to her ideas.

Most of the participants in this category detailed experiences with clients who seemed to be more open, receptive, and willing to engage creatively. As a direct result of this sense of openness, the participants felt more freedom and comfort, and less pressure to “convince the client on the merits of creativity.” The participants reported feeling much more open themselves to engaging creatively with the client. A participant explained how they sensed if a client was open and receptive:

There’s just a lack of skepticism, and (there’s) a value placed on the counselling process. I feel safe to go there and also confident in my own abilities. That’s when I know that the client is open and values the process…Often, I will assign homework to really gage a client’s reaction to creativity, to see if I’m right. Like I had a client who seemed open to it, and I assigned a vision board. And the client ended up loving it…so then I knew I was right.

After that point, the participant was more comfortable and didn’t feel like she had to worry about this client’s reaction to creativity. This was also true for another participant, who found it more “comfortable to be creative with clients who are open, willing and receptive…based on my
professional judgment and based on what the client says or the experiences that they choose to share with me.”

8. Work Environment

Three participants experienced their work environment as conducive to creativity. This category includes 6 incidents describing creativity as supported in the workplace, as well as physical workspaces that participants feel contribute to their creativity.

Only one participant reported that creativity is valued and supported by everyone in her workplace, particularly by her supervisors, her department, and the larger institution:

Something that helps me, I feel very lucky to be working in this environment because they support being creative and innovative here at the university, which is nice. So I can try new things and everybody is okay with that, and if they don't work everyone is okay with that too. I don't have to worry about those types of things. It's okay to make mistakes. So I try something and it doesn't work, I don't have to feel like I'm going to get reprimanded for it not working or lose my job or anything like that. Those thoughts never even cross my mind… That is actually something that helps my creativity. It’s a big deal to have supervisors and upper management that support innovation and creativity.

The participant has a feeling of security and freedom. It helps her “not to stay stale all the time and do the same things that may have worked in the past that are not working now. Just to keep fresh and helping the clients the best I can because I have new stuff to think about.”

Two participants indicated that their physical work environment is a crucial factor when it comes to using creativity, “Having a creative space gives me a sense of privacy and sacred space. I’m confident, more comfortable. There’s that creative energy. My home office is painted green. I have it decorated the way I want. I feel relaxed and creative.” Another participant also expressed that having her physical space set up the way she wants it helps her feel more comfortable and more engaged with the clients”
I’m a visual learner and so having a visually creative environment helps me feel more creative. I feel more prepared…decorating the classroom in a bright and cheerful way using colorful flipcharts, not using a PowerPoint…placing meaningful quotes around the classroom and arranging tables in a certain way…also playing music. It helps me stay focused and present.

9. Collaboration with Client

Twenty-three percent of participants found collaborating with their clients to be a helpful factor. Participants describe collaboration as engaging creatively with the client, considering client feedback, and actively involving the client in the creative process.

Collaboration helps participants use creativity in session by generating creative energy. One participant uses brainstorming sessions to collaborate with her clients, “Brainstorming helps me get a feel for what they're familiar with and what is influencing them and their decisions or where there may be gaps are blind spots. It gives me a base, sparks my creativity to do other things. And then I do those things and it sparks my creativity even further.” For this participant, brainstorming is a way to “co-creative” with her clients. It gives her energy and inspiration, “it’s fueling the fire in a good way.” Another participant also sees collaboration as a way to actively co-create with his clients. He uses collaboration as a “counselling tool” that he uses to “co-create with every client, what we do together in session and for homework.” Collaboration helps him see another perspective and inspires him to do something different. It helps him be “original and respond creatively in order to meet (the client’s) needs.” It helps him be intuitive so he can be in tune with the client, build on what they say, and tune in to how his responses may impact the client.
10. Resources

This category is the smallest of the helping categories with 2 participants reporting 3 incidents. Participants find it helpful to have access to materials, interventions, and/or technological resources that allow them to use creativity with their clients. For one participant, internet resources were particularly helpful, “Resources like materials and books, but an example would be when I do internet research. I think it's very organic based on whatever results come up from my research. It can lead me into different places…ideas and possibilities and information.” For example, she had a client who was interested in becoming a pastry chef. The participant was able to use her resources, specifically the internet, to do research and come up with ideas to help the client.

For another participant, researching is also an important way to find different activities and understand how to effectively implement and facilitate these activities. It helps her “deliver it in a different way.” It also helps her feel motivated and excited about working with her clients: “I want to do things new for myself also so that when I'm teaching I can be excited about it.”
4.2 Hindering Critical Incident Categories

Table 2. Hindering Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindering Categories</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>% of Hindering Incidents</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clients</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Work environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Unsupportive supervisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Creativity not valued by institution/department</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Lack of colleague support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Rules and expectations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Lack of resources</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal factors</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lack of time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Professional development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Burnout</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF HINDERING INCIDENTS: 65**

1. Clients

This is the largest hindering category with 17 incidents reported by 85% of participants. Participants in this category feel that there is something about the client or client relationship that hinders their use of creativity.

Some participants experience the expectations of clients as hindering. These participants describe feeling pressure to deliver information and answers:

The students that come in and they want me to tell them the answer. They want me to tell them what I think they should major in or they want me to tell them what would be the best thing for them to do. They want me to tell them where the best internships are. And that's not at all how I see my role as a career counselor. They don’t want to engage in an activity or a brainstorm. So they're looking for answers rather than wanting to engage in finding out the answers together… All of those things impede the process of moving forward into a collaborative creative approach using creativity to solve whatever their goal is.”
It is difficult for the participant to engage creatively with clients who have certain expectations and look to her for the answers. She feels the need to “do role definition, reality checking and explaining, instead of moving forward creatively with client.” Other participants feel hindered when working with “clients who are in crisis mode.” For example, a participant expressed feeling pressured by “clients who need a job or a particular service immediately or come to counseling with a lot of fear and anxiety.” She feels like clients in this situation have immediate needs and expectations, and she feels pressure to fulfill those needs. She gets the sense that the client doesn’t see the value of creativity in this crisis mode.

Participants also feel challenged by clients who “demonstrate a lack of engagement or aversion to the career counselling process.” These clients seem more reluctant and less open to creativity, “Clients simply are hesitant to provide me information or the information they provide is very limiting or they have an aversion to doing an exercise that I might suggest.” Similarly, another participant recounted an incident with a client who was not open to creativity, “It was tough for this client to see or even consider a new possibility, so it’s tough for them to move (forward)...I tried to keep creativity going but it’s hard when they’re not ready.”

Many participants also describe a lack of connection and inability to build rapport as hindering to their creativity. For example, one participant explains her experience:

I proposed a collage with a client and immediately was second-guessing myself about whether I should have done it or not. Was it too early in the relationship? Had they established a level of trust? Something about the counselling relationship made me question how creativity would be received by the client...that it could be poorly received...So I second-guess myself...It made me anxious because what if it falls flat? Will it affect the relationship? So I hesitated to try something new and didn’t take that risk...I let the moment pass.
When this participant feels hindered by the counselling relationship, she wants to “revert back to what I usually do, to back off, to use routine.”

One participant feels that the mix of different clients in her career class is a hindrance to creativity. The class is unbalanced and so it is difficult for her to meet each client where they are at individually. She feels like she spends a lot of time on classroom management, and has to focus her energy on making sure everyone understands the activities. This translates into less time for creativity as well as the meaning behind the activity getting lost:

Another thing is the population I'm working with. My classes are so diverse in terms of ability. I have students coming in with severe cognitive impairments, and they can barely understand what I'm saying. And then I have other students wanting to go back into the workforce or I have students who already have a degree. I have ESL students, just everything you can imagine in one class...So that is a huge challenge for me...It's unhelpful because the class I feel is always unbalanced. There is never everyone getting everything. I have to deal with classroom management issues. It's hard to address everyone's needs. It's hard to get them on the same page, meet them where they're at when they're in such a diverse ability level. For example I do the skills card sort and it's supposed to be in one hour. They're supposed to be able to sort the cards and I'm supposed to explain and talk about what the categories mean. So maybe half of the kids will do that, but I can't get into the discussion because the other half are still working on the activity.

For some participants, experiencing clients who hinder their creativity can be an impetus for them to try something different. One participant described her working with a client who was “standoffish, who was checked out…I had to re-evaluate how to approach the client and shift expectations, which can be disruptive to my flow and to the flow of the class. It challenges me to reach them in a different way, which can be tiring because it adds additional work. It is frustrating for me and disappointing to have clients who are their own biggest barrier to success.”

This participant was able to reach her client by validating his unwillingness to be there, but it disrupted both her creative flow and the flow of the class. Many participants shared this feeling of exhaustion and frustration working with hindering clients. However, even though it is
challenging for these participants, they will try to find a creative way to reach the client while still attending to the client’s immediate needs.

Other participants respond to hindering clients by becoming more task-oriented. One participant expressed, “When clients expect certain things or are not open, I feel like I don’t have the freedom to be creative, explore or really counsel.” Another participant stated, “I had a client who wanted concrete help and believed anything else was a waste of time. So I was hesitant (to use creativity). I felt this obligation, pressure to meet expectations, not go beyond that…I get more task-oriented and information giving.”

2. Work Environment

This category encompasses incidents where participants perceived their work environment as unhelpful and not conducive to creativity. Five participants reported 15 incidents in this category, which accounted for 38% of participants and 23% of all hindering incidents. An unhelpful work environment ranged from unsupportive supervisors to a lack of resources. These incidents are illustrated through the five subcategories below.

a. Unsupportive Supervisor

Two participants described their experiences with supervisors who were unsupportive. One participant had a supervisor who she felt had “a rigid definition of counseling, and adhered to a certain theory and they were not open to other styles.” This participant did not feel supported or understood. She felt “restricted and stifled…There was a lack of freedom to try something new because it might not fit in with what’s approved of (by the supervisor). I had concerns about expectations. I did not believe I would be permitted to try something out.”
Another participant feels that her supervisor does not support her use of creativity, “There’s an attitude like there’s no time for it…It’s not expected.” Consequently, the participant has no desire for innovation. She feels like she has to “tow the line and keep the status quo because creativity is not welcomed.” It shuts her down, which causes her creativity to be “null and void…I feel like a cog in the machine.”

b. Creativity Not Valued by Institution/Department

In this subcategory, two participants perceive their institution, organization, or department as not promoting or valuing creativity. Because value is not placed on creativity, participants feel “a lack of cooperation” and pressure “not to pursue creativity” but rather focus on other departmental priorities. This makes both participants hesitate to use creativity. As one participant expressed:

I think (creativity) is threatening to the institution, so it’s like I’m almost pressured not to pursue it. I feel like what’s expected is (to give) structured, concrete information…I’m defeated, like this is not the work that I want to do… I do desire innovation at my institution but they don't value or welcome it. This is a frustration of mine as I don't feel like I can make a difference there.

For example, this participant wrote a proposal to “improve retention and student success for all of our struggling students.” She found that new innovative approaches were needed in order to address the problem; however, at the point of her interview, “Nothing has been done with this report.”

c. Lack of Colleague Support

One participant described two incidents of feeling lack of support with colleagues. Both incidents have to do with feeling unsupported and isolated from her colleagues. For example, the participant shared an experience about a brainstorming session where her colleagues were not encouraging her ideas and were “being closed, inflexible, critical, rigid…It was self-
defeating…It was like I won’t bother saying my ideas or sharing thoughts. It’s like I withered creatively.” She felt isolated because there was “no dynamic interplay between me and them… I couldn’t build ideas…There was no opportunity for inspiration because they shut down my ideas.”

d. Rules and Expectations

Two participants reported four incidents in this subcategory. These participants indicated that certain demands and expectations of the department or organization have hindered their use of creativity. For one participant, “some rules, procedures and expectations like time limits (with clients) can be the antithesis of creativity.” He feels afraid or worried about breaking these rules because of the possibility of negative administrative consequences. It is stifling and gets in the way of being creative, “It was an obstacle to being in the moment because I had to think about, consider these rules…It’s frustrating.” Similarly, another participant stated, “There are spoken and unspoken expectations of the career counselling process in the department. It can cause me to feel pressured to focus on employers and on numbers as opposed to the client or the counselling process.”

These participants also feel stifled by the “parameters of the job” and the expectations that go along with these parameters, “I feel like I’m unable to do certain things because of my job expectations and the role that I’m in…so yeah it feels stifled, by that role. It’s a limitation on the creative process.” This participant feels like he could be more creative if he was allowed to “include and interject more perspectives and responses in sessions with clients in the way I would like to.”
e. Lack of Resources

One participant described four incidents of his organization not having sufficient monetary and technological resources. In terms of funding, there is no money in the department budget for materials or other resources:

There are a lot of ideas that get shut down, just get shot down because we can’t afford to do it…You get to a point where you just stop. I think that's where I'm at right now, to not even try because what's the point? So you stop coming up with the ideas. So it's almost like you kind of give up brainstorming or trying because there's no money anyway. Now it's become kind of a downer almost because you know that you're not able to roll with any ideas…I’m deflated I think, absolutely deflated over the last couple of years.

Technology is also a hindering factor for this participant because there is not enough access to certain technology that could advance the use of creativity. The lack of reliable, relevant technology hinders the participant because he knows he could come up with new ways to help his clients, but feels bound by the limitations of out-dated, insufficient, and ineffective technology. For example, “Our technology is so far behind, no access to laptops, slow Wi-Fi, slow computers. Just coming to strict resources we have one old copy of (software) on one old laptop on one old computer…(There’s) not enough access points to technology, to technologically creative applications.”

3. Personal Factors

Eleven incidents describe personal incidents that disrupt or hinder the participants’ ability to use creativity. Participants perceive the cause of these factors as unrelated to work and personal to them. They also describe these factors as hindering because they are disruptive to their work with clients.
Many participants identified internal factors that challenge their sense of creativity. For example, one participant described an incident where she was “not feeling confident and not able to get out of my own way. I was over thinking the session, and couldn’t stop my internal chatter.” Another participant commented that there are times when she is feeling “depressed, stressed, or anxious.” This can happen when she is not taking good enough care of herself physically or emotionally. It makes her “more rigid and less creative…I’m more task-focused and it is harder to be present with the client or focused in sessions…There’s no flow of creativity in the session.”

Many participants also shared that concerns in their personal life can negatively affect their use of creativity. As one participant describes, “Over the holidays I was feeling a lot of personal stress. I noticed that I was more distracted and was just going through the motions. This also happens when I’m fighting with my partner. I feel distracted. I get less sleep. Ideas don’t pop up as well and I don’t feel like following the ideas that do pop up.” This participant also feels less adventurous, and less willing to “try or go there.” Other participants feel similarly, and at these times, it is easier for them to “fall back on concrete approaches because they take less energy.” As another participant stated, “These sorts of personal factors outside of work I noticed at times impacted my commitment level, I guess, to doing a good job which includes creativity of course.”

Participants also perceived incidents that happen at work as disruptive to their own creative flow. These incidents fall into this category because it affects the client on a personal level. One participant finds both internal and external disruptions to hinder his use of creativity because it pulls him out of his creative space. Interruption immediately takes him out of the present moment, and the focus that he needs to use his creativity. He feels “frozen, and it’s
almost like I can’t function. It dislodges me.” For example, he works out of his home office, so he can get interrupted by “my family, friends, the doorbell, whatever.” Another example for this participant can be “interruption from the client themselves, like clients who change topics frequently or jump around, and clients who have multiple threads or issues that they present all at once. I can’t focus and it’s like I pull out of the moment.”

4. Lack of Time

In this subcategory, four participants detailed 10 incidents of not having enough time. For some participants, this meant time with clients, either in session or in their schedule, for example too many clients and seeing clients back to back. Participants feel they have to be selective about what creative interventions they can include, if any. This is frustrating to them as they are not able to use everything they would want to use or to engage the client the way they normally would. One participant explained feeling pressured and overwhelmed by the sheer volume of clients she had to see at the beginning of the academic year. She felt like she had to quickly meet their immediate needs, instead of being able to be innovative or try new ideas:

There are certain times of year, for example the beginning of the school year, when it's crazy. So even though you would like to ask more or you might even think of some great innovative questions or things that you want to do with them, you don't have time. And I can’t even say come back next week because I don’t have time next week… so you just answer the immediate needs and questions that they came in for and then send them on their way, even if there are other things, other questions that I might want to ask or things I might be noticing. The typical example is someone comes in for resume review. They're trying to apply for an on-campus job but you're talking with them and you realize that they’re really lost about something else… There are other things going on but you just really don't have time to go down that road with them. So you get the resume in good shape for the on-campus job and move on. And even if I wanted them to come back, there are no appointment times for them to come back.
Another participant echoes this when she described not having enough class time with clients “I feel like I don't have enough time. In an hour and a half I can't get everything done.” Also, her individual client sessions are only 30 minutes, so she is not able to engage with the clients in a creative way, “Half hour is just not enough time. I need to get them the information they are seeking first, and then there is no time left over for anything else.”

Many participants mentioned that they have to spend time on other job responsibilities. This is distracting and takes time away from the client, and affects their ability to use creativity. One client attributed her other job responsibilities, including event coordination and other projects, with distracting her when she is with clients:

When I am planning an event or I have a lot of tasks or projects. When I'm in session with the client sometimes it's hard not to think about, oh yeah, when I'm done with this I have to e-mail or do other tasks around the event or project. Those things come into my mind, so unfortunately I'm not thinking about the client as much as I should or would like to. And then I'm definitely not getting any creative thoughts because I'm barely keeping up with what they're saying…so being present with the client is really challenging. So if I'm not present with them then I'm not being creative with them because I'm not really hearing about their issues. I'm not letting my mind be freed up to how I can help them because my mind is full of other things and tasks that I have to do. So I'm on autopilot doing routine stuff, and keeping focused is challenging.

Another participant also expressed having “so much to do and not enough hours to do it.” Specifically, she has to “accomplish other administrative or routine tasks that are a part of my job responsibilities like writing reports.” She engages in these tasks and so “can’t think of clients or career development in general. I have to focus on other things and not have the freedom for my mind to wander.”

Finally, participants in this category did not have enough time to do the activities that they know will inspire their creativity. One participant describes how writing helps to fuel her creativity. When she doesn’t have the time to write she feels “frustrated and uninspired. For
example, in the last year and a half there were a lot of staffing changes, which translated into a lot of politics and an increase in work demand. So I just had no time to write or really do anything that allowed me to be creative.”

5. Professional Development

Four participants reported having limited access to professional development. Eight incidents described a perceived lack of networking, collaborating or consulting with colleagues, and attending workshops, conferences, and trainings. All of the participants in this category indicated that they felt hindered with regard to professional development because they do not have the time or departmental money. They feel unstimulated, frustrated and uninspired. Therefore, they tend to use the same methods and the same questions, and are unmotivated to try new things. One participant described the impact of not having money in the department budget to attend professional development events:

The most creative I ever feel is when I'm coming back from a conference. Because that's where I pick up new ideas and talk with colleagues and there is none, there is none. It’s like I'm the only career counsellor that hasn't been to professional development in five years. So I thought, my creativity is squashed because I know that that's how I come up with ideas.

This participant feels disconnected from the career development field. Another participant feels a similar disconnection:

I feel like I'm in kind of a desert wasteland. As I mentioned I haven't been to a significant professional conference in three and a half years. And I'm really feeling the effects of that. I mean that's the whole point of why professional development exists. Every time that I've gone to a conference, I come back with new ideas, new things, new tools for creativity. And I think we as practitioners need that. So I'm feeling a little stale… I feel a little dried up. I'm using my same bag of tricks that I've used for a number of years, and I want to put new tricks in my bag.
One participant expressed frustration in the lack of work time to research resources and collaborate with colleagues. She has to use her own time to find and share resources, “I’m always having to go out and look for different things, it's time-consuming…It's coming out of my own time…We don't have that much time within our division to share resources. It's hard to get it done. So institutionally there's a barrier, a hindrance…institutionally we don't have time for professional development.”

6. Burnout

Two participants reported four incidents of feeling burned out as a result of work. The feeling of being overwhelmed with clients made one participant feel like a “robotic counsellor.” She forgot to challenge herself. She “relied on habit and got stuck in a routine because it is easier and more comfortable. I got tired and bored…It’s like going through the motions, unmotivated. And I don’t feel like using creativity.” The second participant described being overworked, stressed and exhausted:

I just remember times I was just so tired being at work. I think being excessively fatigued as a counselor both emotionally and physically hindered my interest in introducing creativity because I'm just exhausted. I didn't have enough to give. So I was burned out… I didn’t have energy to care so I didn’t care.

For this participant, she also felt burned out at times because she felt the work she was doing was not valued by her supervisors:

I've had some burnout in my work environment…I felt like the work I’m doing doesn’t matter and I think that definitely impacted my energy level and my feeling like I was connecting with clients, and that isn't good when it comes to creativity. It isn't positively linked to high levels of creativity or effectiveness in that area.
4.3 Wish List Item Categories

Table 3. Wish List Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wish List Categories</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>% of Wish List Items</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Colleagues</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Supportive work environment</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Resources</td>
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<td>4. Professional development</td>
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<td>5. Physical work environment</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<td>31%</td>
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<td>6. Time</td>
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<td>8. Clients</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Autonomy</td>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF WISH LIST ITEMS: 40**

1. Colleagues

Participants described colleagues as a factor that would be helpful to their creativity. Six participants reported six items, making this the largest wish list category. Participants would like to have more collaboration with their colleagues around creativity. Specifically, all the participants in this category expressed a desire to have access to colleagues in the career field who are doing similar work and engaging creatively with similar client populations. They would like to meet informally with others who also value creativity in order to feel “supported, inspired and motivated to develop creativity.” For one participant, being a part of a group of colleagues “would challenge me to grow…They could mentor me and I could mentor them.” It would provide participants with a place to get feedback and ideas from other people. As one participant expressed:
I want to know about others who teach career counselling classes to college students; what are they doing in their classes? I want to see them do it. I want to hear the questions that they get…I want to share best practices…I could see and hear about what they do, see how it works, and it would give me ideas.

Another participant echoed this when she stated, “I would like more professional development with creative colleagues, other career counsellors who approach it in a similar way. It would stimulate me mentally…I could share ideas, get support, validation and feedback. It would help get rid of that fear of failure…and free me up to continue to be creative.” This participant expressed her desire to have an informal case study group or informal consultation group with colleagues in the field. They could discuss creative interventions that have worked and those that have failed.

For many participants it is important that they have a group of colleagues with whom they meet on a regular, consistent basis. One participant commented, “A conference or workshop is good but it would be really helpful to have someone in my same situation and that we could meet up more than once or twice a year.” She felt that this would “broaden what I know, give me inspiration, just really help me feel understood, supported by them.”

2. Supportive Work Environment

Thirty eight percent of participants would like to have a more supportive environment. In this category, five participants discussed nine incidents of how a supportive work environment might be helpful for their use of creativity. For these participants, there would be more value, support, and encouragement placed on creativity by staff, supervisors, and/or the organization as a whole. For one participant, support at work would come in the form of “mutual contribution and respect” from all the other staff in the office. For another participant, his supervisors “would have more faith and confidence in me and my abilities…they would foster a more creative
environment and encourage my creative potential.” This would help him feel encouraged to experiment more and go further. Many participants shared this feeling of wanting more encouragement from the people at work, “I’d like more staff who value creativity more…I’d feel encouraged and supported. It would bring the creative spark back.” As one participant shared:

A positive and supportive work environment means to recognize that the work that I do is valued. That means it matters that I'm doing creative work with clients and that there's positive results, and not just to me but to the people that I'm working with and the people that are supervising me. So in terms of being evaluated, am I being evaluated by the positive work that I'm doing with clients or does it not matter? Is the work that I'm doing valued?

3. Resources

In this category, four participants described seven wish list items. These participants would like to have access to more monetary, material, and technological resources. Many of these resources involved technology, “I would say resources in general, specifically online resources such as online libraries…It would lend to my arsenal of resources. It would increase my toolbox, which then could spark my creativity.” Some participants mentioned creative materials such as “magazines, construction paper, pens, and a sand tray.” This would help participants feel more spontaneously creative because the materials would already be there. For one participant, having creative materials in the room would “help me adapt creatively to client needs and styles…I could help more nonverbal clients.” Having these materials would also inspire her to “approach problems in new ways and increase my creative flexibility.”

Most of the participants in this category mentioned wanting more funding for creative resources. This would be helpful for them because they wouldn’t have to purchase things on their own if they wanted something. They would have the resources available to come up with new
activities, “You'd be able to do things, and the way it is now you have to be able to pull things together and find things yourself.”

4. Professional Development

Four participants contributed four wish list items to this category. Participants would like to have regular access to professional development and be able to attend events such as workshops, conferences, and trainings. Professional development would be helpful for these participants because they would be able to “hear about what others are doing to get new ideas and build on them... Just hearing about what others are doing would be helpful, like different activities or assessments that they're doing or different questions that they're asking their clients.” As one participant described:

I think a few years ago there was a conference session on using laughter and then that was something that was off the beaten track. I hadn't thought of it or thought about incorporating that into my sessions with clients. It’s ideas that you haven't thought of, or ideas that you have thought of but weren't sure how to implement, and talking to people who have done it successfully. And asking how did you do this? What are the pros and cons? How can I modify it? It would help working with my clients individually and then also the services and programs that we as an office present to the greater student body. That would be helpful. I think that when I get professional development it only benefits the clients more.

For other participants, attending conferences gives them more energy to try new approaches and interventions. For example, one participant would appreciate “learning new strategies, learning new engagement techniques, learning different cultural awareness types of issues, regional types of stuff would be a big help, to come back and really want to try new stuff that I just learned about.” For him it is also about being able to share his ideas with others, “It's nice to feel like you have stuff to bring to the table and to contribute as well. It's about sharing. It's like everything else; you get what you give.”
5. Physical Work Environment

In this category, 31% of participants indicated that they would like to have a physical workspace that is conducive to using their creativity. Many participants wanted their own office or creative space. One participant currently shares office space, and would like to have her own office:

I would say when I meet with students in these sterile rooms, they have no sense of who I am as a person or who I am as a counselor that they're entrusting themselves with. If I had my own office, I could have my motivational sayings on the wall, I’d have my books at my fingertips. I could have pictures to create a warm and inviting environment. And most importantly we have these computers in all these little rooms but they work very rarely and I can’t go to my bookmarks. So it's clunky because you have to wait for these computers. So I don't feel like I'm as effective as if I had my own office. These kind of blank sterile walls affect the dynamic. It affects my creativity…It would help with establishing rapport and trust and relationship building.

For this participant, having her own office would mean a greater sense of rapport with her clients. Another participant also described feeling more connected with her clients as a result of her physical work environment, “I think environment plays a role in creativity for me. It would put me and my client at ease. I think that it would feel more safe and the comfort level is related to a level of support. The environment affects the way that we interact because it’s going to affect the level of tension or the level of openness.”

Finally, a participant mentioned that she would love to have an office space outside of her home. This would give her freedom from the distractions of her house. She would be able to “create a separate space geared entirely toward client work.” It would help her “get into the space, be in the moment with my client…it would open me up.” It would also be a show of commitment to her practice. It would build her confidence and “help the validity of my identity as a counsellor.”
6. Time

In this category, three participants would like to have more time to devote to creativity or to the activities or factors that help them to use their creativity. Some participants described wanting more time to find creative resources and try out new activities:

The way I learn I need to try to do it; trying to facilitate it with a small group and see what questions they have, what's hard for them when they're doing it so that I can anticipate and rework it for the students…I'd be able to do more and not be stressed out about it. I’d be more relaxed. Sometimes you just need time to process and doing nothing so that your brain can work.

Other participants also shared this last sentiment of wanting more time to be mentally offline. This would allow them the time to “reflect and imagine and come up with new ideas.” One participant expressed a desire “for a regular creativity generation process for myself.” This would mean having specific time set aside for creativity, “It would make it explicit for me by making creativity purposeful, proactive, intentional…It would assign it importance and it would help me take myself seriously as a creative person.” For example, it could be a retreat day to give her a chance to be still: “This past fall, my practice was low and I went on a yoga retreat. Ideas came up for me. I felt a burst of creativity and expansiveness in the sense of time, instead of crunch of time…It was a lesson for me that I would benefit from making this a regular practice.”

7. Financial Security

Two participants indicated that they would like to feel a sense of financial security. For one participant this means being paid more money by her organization and having more clients
in her private practice. This would alleviate stress and allow her to focus and be present with her clients:

With financial support I would be able to build a private practice and have some foundation of money. So I'm not worried about making money or having insurance and I would have a sense of security. It would make me feel less stressed and I think would impact the work that I would do with my clients because I would be feeling relaxed...If I wasn't stressed then it would help me focus on where I was at, it would help me stay present with my client. As opposed to worrying or being exhausted from working on the weekends and trying to be financially secure.

The second participant in this category would like to have enough clients in her private practice so that she does not have to worry about making ends meet. Like the first participant, she would also feel a sense of security, which would mean less stress and worry.

8. Clients

One participant would like to see more clients who have a “more open perception of what career counselling can be for them and who would commit to the process and come back.” It would take away some of the barriers and encourage her to use creativity even more. It would also take the pressure away and give her a sense of time with her clients.

9. Autonomy

One participant described wanting “a sense of control and flexibility over my own schedule and time.” The participant would have the “freedom and luxury” to schedule her clients as she liked and spend more time with clients, “I just feel more creative when I have a sense of autonomy over time and process.”
4.4 Contextual Findings

All 13 participants contributed contextual information as part of the interview process. Participants were asked their definition of creativity, how they use creativity with clients, how they rate their use of creativity, and whether they view themselves as creative.

Definition

Participants were first asked to give their own definition of creativity. Participants described creativity as being open, curious, flexible, “constantly dynamic,” and comfortable with ambiguity. One participant described creativity as “keeping it open-ended and letting the client lead, being willing as the counsellor to be open, be in the moment and be okay with ambiguity.” Another participant stated, “I think creativity is being flexible to utilize different types of approaches to working with my clients. To not have one set strategy or set activity or protocol, but to really go with the flow.” Participants also spoke about encouraging clients and modeling creativity in order to help their clients find their own sense of creativity:

I need to be open and aware of myself, so that I am able to be open and creative with my clients…Then I can help move clients out of a stuck place by helping them think more openly and allowing ideas to come to clients so they gain new insights and perspectives….A sign for me that my creativity is at work is that I sense that they are thinking a little bit more openly about their situation. Either ideas have come to them in the session that they hadn't thought of before of how to handle a certain situation, or new insights or new ideas have resonated with them.

Many participants felt that creativity is being willing to take risks and try new things, “Creativity involves an element of risk by thinking of new and untested approaches and proposing them to the client.” They described creativity as “not leaning on the norm” and “breaking free of tradition.” As one participant conveyed, “It is also not doing what is expected or following tradition just because you’re supposed to…it’s doing something different from what
you’re expected to do.” Another participant stated, “It’s creativity when you're trying something new and different. You're not going according to some plan or some guideline about the way that you think career counseling should be.”

Participants also defined creativity as innovation, “It is thinking about new things, getting new perspectives, and making new connections.” Many participants also found creativity to include problem solving, or looking at the problem from a different and new perspective:

I think (creativity) also comes into play with problem solving. So not necessarily the methods I'm using with them, but if they have a problem maybe looking at it from a different perspective or several different perspectives or ideas. They can't find a job because of this thing and I'm trying to figure out, is there another solution? Maybe we can look at in a different way.”

It is interesting to note that while most of the participants recognize that creativity is a skill and that creativity can be defined in relationship to counselling, 12 out of 13 participants mentioned the traditional definition of creativity and the strong impact it has had on their sense of creativity. This is embodied in the following quote: “Now while I like that (new) definition and I try to live by that, I'm still kind of bogged down by my old way of thinking of what's creative…so even though I say it doesn't have to be artsy, in my mind I feel like it kind of does.”

Use of Creativity

Next, participants were asked to describe how they use creativity with their clients. Every participant in this study described using specific creative interventions. Many participants reported that they try to come up with their own approaches in order to better help their clients, “I have to be willing to think of unique ideas and strategies to serve the diverse needs of my clients.” Another participant uses unique approaches “to keep counselling fresh and relevant.”
A majority of the participants described changing existing creative techniques to suit the needs of their clients:

I use creativity all the time...when I deliver information in a new, more impactful, more effective way...I use creativity to look at something differently in order to move it forward, make it go deeper, make it more impactful...I find new ways of working with people, or modifying existing ways to suit client needs in order to help them achieve what they are looking for.

Participants also described that they often modify traditional interventions such as standardized assessments in order to make them fresh and more relevant for the clients. One participant expressed: “Assessment work can be very stale. With assessments, how can we go through them in a different way...So I do different things, ask different types of questions to the client than I used ask. Probing maybe a little bit deeper. Finding out more about family and things along those lines.” Another participant echoed this when she stated:

When I’m working with a client, I like to really listen to them and of course the four types of things I'm listening for are their interests, their skills, their values, and their personality. And we have specific tools for that, that don't really allow a lot of creativity. But I'll save that information and say okay how do we use this to move further, to go beyond this. And I’ll engage the student… I use my creativity to get them thinking.

Rating

Participants were also asked to rate their use of creativity on a scale from one to ten, where one was low use and ten was high use. Participants rated themselves twice throughout the course of the interview, once before beginning the critical incident section, and then again after the wish list section. Twelve of the thirteen participants changed their initial rating, with 8 participants increasing their rating and 4 decreasing their number. The participants who rated
themselves higher indicated that it was because they were able to reflect back, talk about their experience with creativity, and realize that they were using it more than they had initially thought:

I reflected on how I've used it and how important it is to me so that's why I would put it higher...After talking about it, it helps me remember how I've been using it. I guess with my career, when I look at my whole career, I think I have a high aptitude for creativity and a lot of potential.

The participants who rated themselves lower expressed that it was because they realized that the hindering incidents outweigh the helping incidents, “I bring myself down to five just thinking about things now. I think I was a 6 two years ago. I think I was a 7 four years ago…Now, at the end of the day, I'm not feeling terribly creative…The hindering factors are absolutely outweighing the helping factors.” These participants did not see a feasible way to access the wish list items, mostly because of lack of time and/or funding. There were also some participants who rated themselves lower because they feared that they would continue to face hindering incidents. As one participant described:

Now I almost think it's lower than what I thought before because I think of all the times that I don't get to use creativity in the past year. I feel like if I was doing counselling the way that I would want to do counselling, I would be an eight or nine. But I feel like it's not like that right now so I'm going to give it a six...And I don't know how it's going to turn out in the fall. We'll get slammed with clients so I might be feeling the same way, like I don't have time to be creative. So it's up in the air.

Creative Person

Finally, participants were asked if they had always considered themselves to be a creative person. Nine participants reported that they have not always felt creative but developed it over time as a skill. This happened when they were able to distinguish creativity in career counselling as different from the traditional definition of creativity, “It changed for me when I expanded my
view of what creativity was.” One participant realized that she was creative when she started to consider creativity within the context of counselling, “I started doing counselling work and recognized I had a gift for intuition. I realized I was creative, and then I just got good at being creative in my counselling.”

Overall, all participants found the interview to be helpful because they were able to share their experiences with creativity. As one participant wrote after the interview, “Your questions were very thought-provoking, and it was a very interesting experience to be listened to so well…It was an indulgence for me to have your responses support, validate, and extend my thinking. Kind of a balm for what is generally lacking in my work.” All of the participants were grateful for this opportunity, and ten of the participants stated at the end of the interview that they thought creativity was an important topic to research and felt that this study was needed. As one participant expressed, “This is such important work. Thanks for doing it for all of us.”
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

It is important to contextualize the findings of the study and consider the practical significance. In this chapter, the findings are examined with regard to how they fit within the literature on creativity. Unique findings are then considered, followed by practical implications on the field of career counselling. Finally, limitations of the study will be reviewed along with future research.

5.1 Fit with the Literature

The study found common themes among the participants’ definitions of creativity, which relate directly to the definition of creativity in the literature and the definition that was used for the purposes of this study. The findings also show that the participants’ use of creativity with their clients fits within the context of current literature on creativity in career counselling, particularly the need for innovation and renovated approaches, and the need to augment traditional interventions.

Definition of Creativity

The findings show that the participants’ definitions of creativity support the definitions of creativity discussed in the literature, and consequently the definition of creativity used for this study. Creativity includes divergent thinking (Gladding, 2005), which is defined in this study as “thinking in a broad, flexible, exploratory, tentative, inductive, and non-data-based way that is oriented toward the development of possibilities” (Gladding, 2005, p. 3). Divergent thinking is represented in all of the participants’ definitions of creativity, particularly when they referred to being open, curious, flexible, dynamic, and comfortable with ambiguity.
In the literature, creativity is also referred to as the counsellor’s willingness to responsibly go beyond the parameters of what they are used to doing or what is expected of them (Lumadue, Munk, & Wooten, 2005). Participants in this study seemed to affirm this aspect of creativity, as most participants felt that creativity is the ability to take risks, try new things, and do things differently from how they are normally or traditionally done. As one participant summed up, “Creativity is to go outside of the normal standard parameters of working with clients.”

In addition to divergent thinking and breaking free from expectations, the literature also refers to “Little C” or everyday creativity, which involves the development of novel ideas and daily problem solving that is valuable to the individual (Hennessey, 2010). Counsellors try to find new ways to help their clients work through their problems (Lumadue, Munk, & Wooten, 2005). In this study, many participants referred to creativity as innovation, or developing new perspectives, coming up with ideas, and making new connections. Participants also mentioned creative problem solving as an important aspect of creativity.

Finally, many authors contend that creativity is not a trait or a talent, but rather a skill or learned activity that should be acknowledged, learned, and nurtured over time (Carson & Becker, 2004). This idea is supported in many of the findings of this study. For example, participants considered themselves to be creative when they let go of traditional definitions and began to see creativity as a skill. Additionally, many of the incidents discussed in the experience category suggest that creativity is developed over time. The more experience participants’ had with creativity, the more comfortable they felt and the more they continued to use it.
Use of Creativity

There are many articles that call for renovated career counselling approaches, and urge counsellors to respond creatively by developing new approaches in order to better help their clients (Savickas, 2002; Niles, 2003). In this study, participants’ descriptions of how they use creativity with their clients pertain mostly to using interventions and techniques that encourage creativity and creative thinking. They develop their own unique approaches, as well as revise existing creative interventions to match the needs of their clients.

Participants also described modifying existing interventions that are based on traditional theories, especially with regard to standardized assessments. This fits with the argument many authors make that traditional theory should be augmented with creativity and interventions that promote non-linear thinking (Savickas, 2002; Niles, 2003; Heppner et al., 1994). It seems from this study, that many participants are realizing that traditional approaches like assessments are not enough to effectively help their clients. They are taking the assessment tools and enhancing them through creativity.

5.2 Unique Findings

As there is no known published research on the experience of career development practitioners in using creativity, it is possible to consider most of the findings in this study as unique to the existing literature. As such, this section will detail the unique findings in terms of the most salient patterns and themes as opposed to incidents and categories.

The first pattern that stood out in the findings is the impact of personal factors on the participants’ sense of creativity and their ability to use creativity with clients. This can be deduced from the occurrence of personal incidents in the findings, including personal factors,
techniques, and traits. Overall, 12 of the 13 participants attributed some personal factor as impacting their ability and willingness to use creativity in a professional capacity. An interesting part of the helping personal factors, which range from natural creativity to work ethic to doodling, is that they cause the participants to feel more creative and to open themselves up to creativity. For example, personal activities provide an opportunity and space for creativity to occur within the participant. Personal traits connect the participants to their own creativity and are the impetus for them to want to use creativity in the first place. Every one of the participants who described personal factors commented that when they do not have access to their particular method, technique, or personal trait (e.g. they are feeling stressed or burned out), they have a more difficult time accessing their own sense of creativity. They are not able to enter or stay in a creative space, which made them feel less willing to use creativity with their clients.

Another significant theme centers on the influence of clients. A majority of participants described clients as either helping or hindering creativity. In general, participants appreciated clients who were open and receptive to creativity, and willing to engage in the creative process. They felt a higher level of rapport and a greater sense of confidence, comfort and safety in using creativity. It is interesting to note that when participants felt that a client was reluctant or not receptive to their creative approaches, most of the participants (6 out of 11) commented that they had to find a new way to reach the client. The participants considered this as a challenge to their use of creativity, when perhaps it could be argued that these incidents led the participants to be more creative. It is also interesting that these participants all stated that working with these clients was more exhausting and frustrating, yet the participants succeeded in finding a way to engage the client and ultimately help them move forward.
In general, colleagues seem to be an important factor in the use of creativity. Participants enjoy collaboration, sharing ideas with colleagues, and consulting about clients. They see this as supportive and encouraging to their creativity. Contrarily, most participants find it disappointing when this support and encouragement is lacking and would like more positive interaction with colleagues. Most notably, participants expressed a desire to have regular access to an informal network of colleagues. Participants describe wanting to connect with peers in the profession who use and value creativity, and who work in a similar environment as the participant. They felt that they were lacking this community of colleagues, even though they appreciated their coworkers and the networking at professional development events.

A majority of participants indicated that professional development was significant to their use of creativity. All of these participants desired professional development opportunities, although only some had access to it. Those with access found professional development to be not only helpful in their use of creativity, but also in their feelings of motivation, inspiration and connection. Interestingly, all of these participants chose to actively seek out creativity in their professional development, whether at conferences, reading articles on creativity, or researching creative resources. The participants who did not have access to professional development expressed that this was a result of a lack of funding and insufficient time at work. They felt they had to use their own time and money for professional development, and not all of them could afford to do this. Professional development can also relate to the findings that knowledge of the creative material and experience using creativity are helping factors. Many participants saw professional development as a vital way to expand their knowledge and understanding of creativity, including access to a broader range of creative tools. Participants felt more comfortable using creativity if they had this knowledge and understanding of creative tools.
Further, the more experience they gained using these creative tools; the more likely they were to continue to use creativity with their clients.

Another important theme in the findings was the influence of a supportive work environment. Only one participant felt like they had a supportive work environment that valued creativity, with the majority of participants finding their work environment hindering because colleagues, supervisors and the institution did not value and support creativity. There were four participants who did not mention work environment at all. It is interesting to note that of those four participants, three work in private practice and do not have the same supervisor, colleague and institutional influences. Resources are also tied in with the importance of work environment. All of the participants that described hindering incidents or wish list items pertaining to resources mentioned that they would feel like their creativity was more supported at work if they had more departmental funding and more access to creative material and technological resources.

Most participants felt that time was important with regard to their work with clients. The more time the participants had with clients, the more creative they could be. Also, time was a source of frustration for participants. Mostly this was because they did not have the time to do those things that they knew would help them to feel creative and to use creativity in their work with clients (e.g. professional development and personal activities.)

Finally, there were interesting findings related to the contextual component and overall impact of the interviews. Many participants struggled with letting go of the traditional definition of creativity. They understand the importance of creativity and continue to use it with their clients even though they do not necessarily feel like they are a creative person. Overall, the interviews inspired a higher sense of creativity, mostly because participants could describe their own definition of creativity and relate it to their professional experience. They could articulate
the role that creativity has played in their career and see how important it has been to their sense of satisfaction at work. The interviews also shed light on the absence of creativity and lack of support at work, with many participants realizing that they are not doing the kind of counselling that they would like to do.

5.3 Practical Implications

There are some important practical implications resulting from this study. A majority of participants found the interview itself to be helpful because it gave them a chance to reflect on what helps and hinders their use of creativity. It could be beneficial for other career practitioners to focus their awareness on what helps them feel more creative, and how they can use that creativity in their work with their clients. This is on a personal as well as professional level, as many of the incidents reported by participants centered on personal aspects that help or hinder creativity. Another finding that might help practitioners is that many hindering factors in this study related to the participant feeling like they could not do the activities that allow them to feel more creative. In light of this, it might benefit counsellors to not only identify what helps them use creativity, but how they can nurture those things in their personal and professional lives.

The perceived support from colleagues can also inform career practitioners. Collaboration, consultation, and encouragement from colleagues seemed to be an important factor for participants. Specifically, participants mentioned the desire to have access to an informal group of similar colleagues with whom they can share ideas and specific techniques, as well as receive validation and support. Career practitioners should consider forming these groups as a source of validation, inspiration, motivation and support. This finding could have implications for professional associations as well. Career development associations might
consider creating local groups or services that focus on creativity with specific client populations. For example, a local listserv or meeting that focuses on using creativity in career counselling with a university population. The National Career Development Association might also consider creating a national division on creativity in career counselling, much like the American Counseling Association has the Association for Creativity in Counseling.

Another practical implication comes from the findings on work environment and professional development. Work environments that support and value creativity appeared to be a significant factor to participants’ use of creativity. Therefore, it might be helpful for university career centers and employment services organizations to receive training or professional development around the importance of creativity in career counselling and career development. Also, with regard to supportive supervision at work, it might be beneficial for those in supervisory roles to consider the results of this study. For example, findings show that professional development is a hindrance because of a lack of time and money, not a lack of desire or interest on the part of the participant. Therefore, supervisors might find ways to support professional development and make it more accessible.

Finally, the findings from this study might inform education and training programs. Experience and knowledge was the largest helping category, with 54% of participants describing 11 incidents of their professional experience and knowledge of the material. All of the participants had at least 7 years of experience, and an average of 11 years of experience. Many participants commented that they had hesitated to use creativity when they first started working with clients. They expressed that they did not feel confident in their ability to be creative and had not experienced creativity as an effective way to help clients. However, the more experience they had with creativity, the more they began to use it. Also, it is interesting to note that none of
the participants mentioned their formal training or education programs as a helpful factor in their use of creativity. Given these findings, it might be useful for career development training and education programs to start to incorporate creativity into the standard curriculum. This would allow practitioners to learn about the changing definition of creativity and the role that creativity plays in career development. It could also help counsellors become more aware of their own creative spirit and what factors help nourish their creativity and what factors detract from it. Career practitioners could receive formal training on how to appropriately use creativity with clients and receive supervision. Then perhaps new professionals could leave their education programs with more experience, which might help them feel more confident and more comfortable to engage in creativity.

5.4 Limitations

It is important to consider the limitations of this study. The study is limited by its intentional focus on career practitioners who self identify as using creativity in their practice. This could have affected who decided to volunteer for the study. For example, career practitioners who use creativity but who might not completely identify as creative, or who still hold a traditional definition of creativity might not have volunteered.

This study also did not consider education level. There is a lack of diversity in education and training, with a majority of participants having master’s degrees in counselling, which might have affected the helping and hindering incidents. For example, participants specifically attributed counselling skills and experience as a helping factor, and many other participants referenced counselling terminology such as rapport. However, this narrowed scope does give specific insight into how career practitioners with formal training experience creativity.
The study did not collect any demographic or contextual information on the cultural identity of the participants, and thus cannot speak to any cultural influences that might affect their use creativity. This information could have been insightful as culture could play a role in helping and hindering factors. For example, most of the participants indicated personal factors as affecting their use of creativity with their clients. It is possible that participants could relate these personal factors to their cultural identity.

Finally, the study did not consider the professional experience of the participants. A majority of the participants work in university settings as career counsellors. Additionally, a majority of participants have over 10 years of experience. It is possible that these participants have similar experiences of creativity given their common backgrounds, work environments, and time in the field. If the study had intentionally gone outside of these parameters, perhaps the comprehensiveness of the categories could have been strengthened.

5.5 Future Research

Given the exploratory nature of this study and the lack of current research on career creativity, the results of this study suggest several possible directions for future research. First is the continued need for research on the counsellor experience of creativity. This study focused on how participants define creativity and what helps and hinders the use of creativity. It excluded many other questions that might be helpful in understanding their experience. For example, why do career practitioners feel it is important to use creativity, or what do career practitioners (who do not self-identify as using creativity) think of creativity in career development?

The findings of this study also show that experience is a significant helping factor for participants. Therefore it might be beneficial to look at how new professionals experience
creativity. This ties in with counsellor education and training. The importance of experience and professional development (e.g. learning creative interventions), combined with the fact that none of the participants mentioned formal education, suggest that an important direction of future research could be creativity in formal education and training programs. Future research could explore how career practitioners currently learn to use creativity, the role of creativity in their formal training programs, and how these programs are incorporating creativity into the curriculum.

Finally, this study found the counselling relationship as a helpful factor to creativity. The results also show that the participants’ perception of clients plays a significant role in their use of creativity. In light of this, it might be helpful to investigate the counselling process and the interaction between practitioner and client. Future research might include exploring the counselling process with clients who are open to creativity and those who are reluctant to use creativity. It could also be interesting to see how clients react to creativity and the effect of this reaction on the counsellor’s use of creativity. In addition to providing an understanding of the counselling process itself, this research could serve to continue narrowing the gap between research and practice.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study garnered many useful insights into the experience of career practitioners, which can contribute to and advance the continuing conversation on the role of creativity in career counselling. The following two quotes from participants are an effective and eloquent way to conclude this study on creativity:

“I think that most people are creative and they're just having trouble overcoming their barriers because they’re thinking about their problems in a linear way, or they are thinking of their problem in the way that we are, how we are supposed to look at it. So creativity helps them think about it in a different way. At least hopefully make them feel more empowered to visualize something differently. I think that there is great power in people recognizing that they are creative in life. When someone can recognize that in some way, I think it's very powerful in terms of their potential for what they can do and see for themselves. From there it's endless.”

“Creativity is invoking possibilities, curiosity, adventure, and joy. It involves imagination, hope, and feeling inspired… (It’s) opening up another perspective, looking at career in a different way, reflecting in a different way, using hope. It gets us away from blocks, shifting us away from limiting beliefs… It helps clients open up and imagine.”
REFERENCES


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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Guide: Career Development Practitioner Creativity

Participant #: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Interview Start Time: __________

Preamble: As you know, I am exploring the ways in which career professionals use creativity in their practice. This is the first of two interviews, and its purpose is to collect information about your experience using creativity when working with your clients.

Contextual Component

1. As a way of getting started, perhaps you could tell me a little bit about your experience as a career professional.

2. You volunteered to participate in this study because you identified yourself as using creativity in your career practice. What does “creativity” mean to you?

3. On a scale of 0 – 10, where 0 is a low use of creativity, 5 is moderate, and 10 is a high use of creativity, where would you place yourself?

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Critical Incident Component

Transition to Critical Incident questions: You rated yourself as a 5-6 (or whatever the participant rated him- or herself in question 1 (c) above).

1. What has helped you in using creativity in your work? (Probes: What was the incident/factor? How did it impact you? Can you give me a specific example? How did the incident/factor help you?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factor &amp; What it Means to Participant (What do you mean by ..?)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it help? Tell me what it was about .. that you find so helpful.)</th>
<th>Example (What led up to it? Incident. Outcome of incident.)</th>
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2. Are there things that have made it more challenging for you to use creativity? (Alternate question: What kinds of things have happened that made it more challenging for you to use creativity?)

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<th>Hindering Factor &amp; What it Means to Participant (What do you mean by ..?)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it hinder? Tell me what it was about .. that you find so unhelpful.)</th>
<th>Example (What led up to it? Incident. Outcome of incident.)</th>
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Summarize what has been discussed up to this point with the participant as a transition to the next question:

3. We’ve talked about what’s helped you use creativity (name them), and some things that have made it more challenging for you to use creativity (name them). Are there other things that would helped you? (Alternate question: I wonder what else might have been or might be helpful to you that you haven’t had access to?)

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<tr>
<th>Wish List Item &amp; What it Means to Participant (What do you mean by ..?)</th>
<th>Importance (How would it help? Tell me what it is about .. that you would find so helpful.)</th>
<th>Example (In what circumstances might this be helpful?)</th>
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Now that you’ve had a chance to reflect back on what’s helped and hindered, where would you place yourself on the same scale we discussed earlier? The scale is from 0 – 10, where 0 is a low use of creativity, 5 is moderate, and 10 is a high use of creativity, where would you place yourself?

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<td>Low Use</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High Use</td>
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What’s made the difference? (To be asked only if there is a difference in the first and second scaling question ratings.)

Do you consider yourself to be a creative person?
(Circle one) Yes No

Have you always considered yourself to be a creative person?
(Circle one) Yes No

If not, when did this change for you?

What happened that changed this for you?

**Demographics Component**

Occupation
Number of years in this occupation
Length of time in current job/employer
Industry in which the person works
Number of years in this industry
Age
Sex
Country of birth
If not Canada, (a) length of time in Canada; and (b) 1st language
Education level

Interview End Time: ______________ Length of interview: ____________
Interviewer’s Name: ____________________________
Appendix B: Informed Consent

CONSENT FORM

“The Experience of Career Development Practitioners in Using Creativity: What Helps and Hinders”

Principal Investigator: Dr. Norman Amundson, Professor
University of British Columbia
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

Co-Investigator: Lauri Mills, Graduate Student
University of British Columbia
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

This research is being conducted as part of Lauri Mills’ graduate thesis project in the Counselling Psychology Master’s Program at the University of British Columbia. The results of this research will be included in a masters thesis that will become a public document in the University library once completed. The results of this research may also be published in appropriate professional and academic journals.

Purpose
The purpose of this research project is to give career development practitioners who have experienced using creativity with their clients an opportunity to describe their experiences. Specifically, it will explore what has helped and hindered the use of creativity.

Procedures
This study will require one interview and a follow-up contact. The interview will be approximately 90 minutes long. During this interview, you will be introduced to the purpose of the study and upon giving your signed consent for participation, you will be asked to describe your experience of using creativity in an open-ended question format. You will be invited to discuss events and experiences that made it easier or more challenging for you to use creativity with clients. During the final part of this first interview, you will be asked to provide demographic information about yourself. This interview will be tape recorded, transcribed and given a code number to ensure confidentiality. Upon completion of the study these tapes will be erased.

The follow-up contact will be a brief discussion on the initial findings and will take approximately 20 – 30 minutes. Specifically, you will be emailed a 1-2 page summary of the categories and themes that emerged from your initial interview. This will provide you the
opportunity to review the summary, so that you can give input, feedback, and comments on the content, meaning, and relevance of these categories and themes to your experience. Your feedback can be discussed via email or telephone, whichever is the most convenient for you.

Your total time will be approximately two hours within a two month period.

**Confidentiality**
Any information identifying individuals participating in this study will be kept confidential. Only the principal investigator and co-investigator will have access to the data. Upon signing the informed consent you will be given a code number to ensure the maintenance of confidentiality. Participants will not be identified by the use of names or initials in any reports of the completed study. All research documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office at the University of British Columbia. Computer data files will be password protected.

**Compensation**
There will be no monetary compensation to participants.

**Contact for Information About the Study**
If you have any questions or would like more information about this study, you may contact Dr. Norman Amundson (Principal Investigator) or Lauri Mills (Co-investigator).

**Contact for Concerns About the Rights of Research Subjects**
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services.

**Consent**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice of any kind.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

________________________________________________________
Participant Signature Date

________________________________________________________
Printed Name of the Participant signing above

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.
A Study Exploring Career Development Practitioners Who Are Using Creativity

The purpose of this research project is to give career development practitioners who have experienced using creativity in their work with clients an opportunity to describe their experiences, specifically with regard to what has helped or hindered them in using creativity.

The investigators for this study are Dr. Norm Amundson, 604-822-6757, Professor in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia; and Lauri Mills, 604-724-7906, graduate student in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia.

We would be interested in hearing your experience of using creativity IF:

• You are creative in how you work with clients
• You are currently working with clients, either individually or as a group
• You are willing to talk about your experience of using creativity in a confidential 90-minute interview

If you would like to participate, or would like further information about this study, please contact Lauri Mills by email.
Appendix D: Sample Email for Follow-up Contact

Dear __________,

I hope you are doing well. Thank you once again for participating in my study. I really appreciated speaking with you, and hearing about your experiences using creativity. As we discussed, I have attached a summary of the helping and hindering factors that you shared with me in the interview, along with your definition of creativity and your wish list items.

There are two parts for you to consider when you read through the summary. First, please review your summary for the following:

1. Do the definition, factors and wish list items seem accurate to you?
2. Can you see yourself in this summary/Does this sound like you?
3. Have I missed anything of importance?
4. Is there any information that you would like to revise or omit from any of the factors, wish list items, or from your definition?
5. Is there anything you would like to add to this summary?

Second, you will notice that I have placed your experiences into categories (which are indicated at the end of each factor and wish list item). As you may know, part of the data analysis process is to create common categories based on your experiences, and the similar experiences of other participants. Please let me know if these categories resonate with you and adequately represent your experience by considering the following:

1. Does the category title and description make sense to you?
2. Does the category capture your experience and the meaning that the factor had for you?
3. From your perspective, are there any categories that do not appear to fit the factors?

The categories will be edited and adjusted accordingly, and your individual experiences will be integrated with those of the other participants.

Please let me know your thoughts at your earliest convenience. You can respond via email or we can speak on the phone. If you have any questions or would like more information or clarification, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Thank you again and have a great day!

Lauri