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A Heuristic Inquiry Into the Subjective Lived Experience and Expression of Authenticity as a Developing Dance/Movement Therapist

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A HEURISTIC INQUIRY INTO THE
SUBJECTIVE LIVED EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION OF
AUTHENTICITY AS A DEVELOPING DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPIST

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Abstract

The purpose of this self-study was to explore and understand my subjective lived experience and expression of the phenomenon of authenticity, which included identifying the components of my professional identity; discerning the challenges, barriers, and limitations to my full experience and expression of authenticity; establishing awareness of when I am and when I am not engaging fully with my authenticity; and developing a sense of authenticity within myself that is adaptable to a variety of situations and relationships. Moustakas (1990) six-steps of a heuristic investigation were implemented in this qualitative inquiry. Data was collected using art-making methods and analyzed using manual data analysis adapted from Giorgi by Forinash (2012). The most salient theme that emerged was that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts in authenticity practice. This overarching theme was supported by (a) the importance of the core-self, (b) the interplay process within authenticity, and (c) identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of authenticity. As a human-being working with other people and the human condition, in my developing professional role as a dance/movement therapist, I discovered that authenticity is a complex and intricate process and practice; and when it is implemented in my professional identity it enhances my work and relationships as a developing dance/movement therapist.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In my clinical work, and in life, I have always valued *authenticity* (see Appendix A). I define authenticity as a practice of aligning my way of being with my true *core-self* (see Appendix A). This means that I engage in the process of making the conscious choice and effort to embrace the presence and existence of all of myself, personally and professionally, in an intrapersonal and interpersonal sense. It is a practice that exhibits ownership of my personal uniqueness, honesty, integrity, love, vulnerability, acceptance, compassion, and genuineness towards myself in order to promote this in my relationships with others. However, in the professional world, authenticity can be stifled as clinicians choose just how much of themselves and their feelings are appropriate to self-disclose—as enforced by ethics, institutions, supervisors, colleagues, and even clients and their families.

In various stages of my clinical training, I had to confront the issue of authenticity in my *professional counselor identity development (PCID)*, (see Appendix A). For example, while working at my internship site, a children’s hospital in Chicago, I experienced cultural clashes with others, causing me to feel as if I could not allow for the coexistence of my personal self with my professional self. One scenario involved the family member of a patient; the patient was asleep, and this family member, out of curiosity, initiated a conversation with me to learn about *dance/movement therapy (DMT)*; (see Appendix A). This family member was persistent in referencing my gender, how beautiful he perceived me, and how he could not fathom my lack of desire to perform as a dancer. Another scenario that I experienced many times, involved the question, “What kind of Asian are you?” The third scenario involved a conflict between my perception of healthy parenting and how certain cultures parent their children. On a personal level, I did not agree with the harsher parenting style I often witnessed in the African-American

and lower socioeconomic families served at this children's hospital. On a professional level, I occasionally observed the children being negatively affected by these parenting styles, yet due to clear and explicit instruction from my supervisor layered with ambiguity in the perception and expectations of my role as a DMT intern, I felt limited by the institution as to how and what I could do. In these experiences, I did not seemingly practice authenticity because I chose to hide how uncomfortable I felt and how my response resulted, in part, from not feeling safe in disclosing and exposing myself.

Another experience reflected less of a cultural clash and more of a general conflict in the treatment of individuals as a result of my personal values and beliefs. While attending a staffing meeting for one of the clients at a day program for adults with traumatic brain injuries in Chicago, the family member of the client who was in attendance monopolized the staffing in order to verbally attack the client—her sister, and she used the staff as tools to berate this client in order to compare, contrast, and make an example of how unhealthy she perceived her sister. I attempted to mindfully, diplomatically, kindly, responsibly, and ethically stand up for the client—to practice authenticity, though I was unaware of this at the time. After I had spoken, this family member immediately dismissed and devalued what I had offered, and she continued to cruelly criticize her sister. This left me feeling as if what I contributed as an emerging dance/movement therapist was all for naught, and the *expression* (see Appendix A) of my authenticity through the disclosure of my values and beliefs was not worthy in my PCID.

The third experience illustrated my personal struggle with the acceptance of my *whole self* (see Appendix A) as an individual with an interdisciplinary background in DMT and counseling psychology. As a DMT intern at the children's hospital, a multidisciplinary setting, I did not feel as if my developing *professional identity* (see Appendix A) was accepted and valued

wholly. Instead, I perceived this setting to desire dance and movement as an adjunctive and recreational service to physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychology and psychiatry, and child life services; rather than DMT as its own interdisciplinary service that could draw upon all of the other disciplines included in a child's treatment and care. While I attempted to creatively and flexibly allow for my whole self to exist as a DMT intern (e.g. a service that uses the body and movement to enhance mental health and wellness), I was encouraged to limit this because what I thought I could offer was deemed beyond my scope of practice. Having to censor this skillset felt not only disappointing, but disingenuous.

This final recollection reflects the toll it takes to be a human who values and works with the human condition. As a DMT intern, I faced feelings of guilt when I was having a tough day, making mistakes, negotiating my own work-life balance, and/or experiencing early symptoms of compassion fatigue. I questioned if I could take a break to recuperate, despite the acknowledgment of my human limitations. I felt a need to power through because of my own perception of my need to function effectively, ethically, empathically, and compassionately at my internship. In succumbing to my human weakness, was I failing as an intern and a therapist? I was navigating how I could recognize, honor, accept, and own who I am and how I am as a human—be authentic—while working with other people in the role of a therapist.

In all of these instances, I felt like for the sake of ethics, cultural competence, and the limits of safely self-disclosing, I needed to limit my own consideration for my cultural beliefs, values, worldview, and sense of well-being as a developing dance/movement therapist. This was significant because when I did not engage in the practice of authenticity in my professional identity, I did not feel as if I could be fully present or effective with the clients, their families,

and staff that I worked with. In fact, I felt like my work was being compromised because I questioned who I am and how I am, personally and professionally.

My experience is supported by the literature, which shows how guilt and a lack of satisfaction is experienced in counselors-in-training and therapists who felt unable to honor their authenticity (Pierce, 2016; Yehuda, 2013). Firman (2009) and Kern (2004) further identified that limiting authenticity in PCID may result in an unhealthy, incomplete, and less resilient professional identity. Given my experiences, and the fact that others have had analogous challenges, I wondered, how could I allow for my experience and expression of my whole self—beliefs, values, worldview, vulnerability, suffering, personal movement profile, body knowledge, *personal identity* (see Appendix A), professional identity, etc.—despite the situations and relationships that challenge it?

Embarking on this self-study provided me with a means to explore the phenomenon of authenticity as I understand it in relation to my PCID as a developing dance/movement therapist. It also enlightened how I might engage with my practice of authenticity as a human in my professional development as a counselor and dance/movement therapist within complex and culturally diverse systems. Finally, this research led me to differentiate between the phenomenon of authenticity and the art of self-disclosure. Counselor self-disclosure is a direct and explicit expression of one's authenticity; however, expression of one's authenticity can occur in a variety of ways that include how a professional relates to another person, how the clinician facilitates one's interventions, how the counselor interprets material that arises in the session, and how the therapist uses one's own body and movement in the therapeutic setting. In other words, self-disclosure is an acquired skill of what a therapist does as a person and a professional; while

authenticity is a process that addresses who and how a therapist is personally and professionally, which may rely upon the artful skill of therapist self-disclosure.

Theoretical Framework

As the sole participant of this investigation, a vital element to completing this study was recognizing my theoretical frameworks. I embraced an integrative existential-humanist and systems theory approach in my counseling psychology paradigm, and I relied upon the DMT Chacian and Ways of Seeing frameworks.

Counseling psychology. The existential-humanist worldview emphasizes the empowerment of people to act on their world and determine their own destinies (Ivey, D'Andrea, & Ivey, 2012). The existential framework is premised upon the notion of being in the world, in which there is a simultaneous process of humans acting on the world as the world acts on them (Ivey et al., 2012). In a therapeutic context, this means that therapists encourage clients to perceive themselves in relationship to the world and consciously and intentionally act and exist from their own self-evaluated standards and beliefs (Ivey et al., 2012). As a developing dance/movement therapist, I recognize the presence of a dual and simultaneous process of the world and the individual acting upon one another; and I align with the emphasis on the individual consciously making the effort and choices to act and exist within this interplay process through the guidance of their own self.

Carl Rogers' humanist approach has had a great influence on my development as a dance/movement therapist. Rogers' later work on person-centered therapy highlighted the use of the present-moment, a more active and self-disclosing role for the counselor, and increased consideration for broader issues in society, such as cultural differences and the impact of power on the clients' sense of well-being (Ivey et al., 2012); which aligns with my intrinsic values as an

emerging dance/movement therapist. Ivey et al. (2012) also noted the central task of self-actualization in the Rogerian approach that has been expanded upon by researchers to encompass the mutual actualization process of all people involved in a relationship (e.g. client and therapist, client and client) because of the relational interactions. For me, emphasis on the co-actualization process through person to person connection and the active, genuine, congruent, and self-disclosing role of the counselor as a foundational component to the humanist approach have influenced who I am and how I am as a person in the professional role of developing dance/movement therapist.

Finally, I have always been curious and intrigued by complexity and the impact of parts and relationships on a whole system, which had a strong influence throughout this research study. In my counseling psychology framework, I embrace the *Internal Family Systems (IFS)* (see Appendix A) therapy approach, developed by Richard Schwartz (Schwartz, 2011; Schwartz, 2013). This framework is a systems approach that considers the mind as dynamic, complex, and comprised of multiple parts (Schwartz, 2011; Schwartz, 2013); and it closely aligns with the way that I have understood my construction and perception of the world in this heuristic inquiry, personally and professionally. Furthermore, the goal of IFS is to help an individual to wholly embrace oneself through the eight C's—curiosity, compassion, courage, confidence, clarity of wisdom, connectedness, creativity, and calmness (Schwartz, 2011; Schwartz, 2013); which I deem important in my work as an effective developing dance/movement therapist as well as in my practice of authenticity.

Dance/movement therapy (DMT). DMT is the psychotherapeutic use of dance, movement, and creativity as a process to further the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of an individual that is grounded in the assumption that the body and mind are

connected and interrelated (American Dance Therapy Association, 2016). I understand this to mean that DMT emphasizes the interconnectedness between the body and mind in order to utilize the body, movement, and creative process to enhance and improve an individual's mental and physical health and wellness. My DMT theoretical approach is rooted in the Chacian and Ways of Seeing frameworks delineated by Marian Chace (Chace, 1993; Chaiklin & Schmais, 1993) and Suzi Tortora (Tortora, 2006), respectively. The most foundational and fundamental element to Chace's approach to DMT was the breakdown of communication into two levels—nonverbal and verbal (Chace, 1993). According to Chace (1993), nonverbal communication is an always present expression of an individual, whereas verbal communication can be disguised, or objectively have no connection to one's true feelings. The Chacian approach is premised on four core-concepts—body action, symbolism, the therapeutic movement relationship, and group rhythmic action (Chaiklin & Schmais, 1993). The therapeutic movement relationship and group rhythmic action have greatly influenced my approach to DMT, especially in how I navigate my experience and expression of authenticity as a developing dance/movement therapist.

The therapeutic movement relationship is developed by the therapist who kinesthetically and nonverbally attunes, connects, and enters the patient's world, to then sensitively complement and interact with the person nonverbally and verbally (Chaiklin & Schmais, 1993). In a way, the therapeutic movement relationship resonates the therapeutic relationship described by Rogers (1961), and it sparked my curiosity in maintaining my own individual authenticity that is differentiated from others. Group rhythmic action, or the experience of rhythmically moving in synchrony with others, allows for the individuality and personal uniqueness of a person who experienced difficulty or reluctance to conform to the thematic spatial design of the group movement by honoring any rhythmic contributions in the therapeutic movement relationship

(Chaiklin & Schmais, 1993). I believe that the Chacian approach acknowledges the mutual relationship between individual and collective authenticity, because an individual can practice personal uniqueness in their self-expression through movement and still be accepted and included as a member of the DMT group.

Tortora's (2006) *Ways of Seeing* framework addresses every person's need to be acknowledged and understood as a unique individual through the manifestation of one's personal movement style or profile. This approach emphasizes the profound importance of avoiding the defined and structured "dictionary system" (p. 14) that codifies a universal meaning for movements and movement qualities for everyone (Tortora, 2006). Both Tortora's and Chace's approaches clearly emphasize, allow, and honor personal uniqueness, which is closely intertwined with my understanding of authenticity as a developing dance/movement therapist. Also, the added emphasis on nonverbally recognizing and honoring the individuality of each person in an interpersonal relationship complemented and echoed the influence of Rogers's humanist approach in my counseling psychology theoretical framework.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this research study was to explore how I understand and negotiate the expression of my *subjective lived experience* (see Appendix A) of authenticity in my role as a developing dance/movement therapist. I hoped to bring awareness to the components of my professional identity and learn to recognize how I know when I am and when I am not engaging with my full experience and expression of authenticity. It was hoped that some of the challenges, barriers, and limitations to the full expression of my whole and authentic self would be illuminated and facilitate the establishment of a sense of authenticity within myself that is adaptable to different situations and relationships. Finally, by the end of this research study, I

planned to develop a working definition of authenticity from my findings in order to contribute to the existing and current literature on the topic as it may relate to PCID in DMT.

The guiding primary research question for this investigation was, how do I understand my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity as a developing dance/movement therapist? This was supplemented by the following secondary research questions: What are the components of my professional identity? How do I know when I am and when I am not engaging with my experience and expression of authenticity? What are the challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity? How can I create a sense of authenticity within myself that is adaptable to different situations and relationships?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The initial focus of this literature review will be on the current understandings of PCID in creative arts therapies, counseling, psychotherapy, and social work. There will be a brief overview of this process over the course of the professional lifespan; however, the primary emphasis will be on the early stages of development (i.e. counselors-in-training and novice or new counselors). Next, obstacles in PCID will be discussed, followed by a review of authenticity and its implications within the context of an individual's PCID.

Professional Counselor Identity Development (PCID)

Most practitioners and researchers have agreed that the counselor identity formation process can be outlined by using a variety of developmental stage models (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010; Moss, Gibson & Dollarhide, 2014; Orkibi, 2014; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Wagner & Hill, 2015). In the theories presented by Auxier et al. (2003), Gibson et al. (2010), Moss et al. (2014), and Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992), stages of development for the process of becoming a practitioner in the mental health field have been identified as counselor-in-training, new or novice counselor, and advanced or experienced counselor. Furthermore, there is consensus that PCID is a complex, reflexive process of integrating personal and professional experiences, roles, and identities across the professional lifespan—past, present, and future (Auxier et al., 2003; Boyer, 2008; Firman, 2009; Gibson et al., 2010; Henreich, 2012; Kern, 2004; Lochte, 2017; Moss et al., 2014; Nel & Fouché, 2017; Orkibi, 2014; Osteen, 2011; Pierce, 2016; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Stokes, 2013; Wagner & Hill, 2015; Yalom, 2002).

Across the professional lifespan. Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) and Yalom (2002) agreed that experience and learning, with the added dimension of time and practice, is one of the

only and most important ways to actualize an integrated professional counselor identity. Kern (2004) proposed embracing authenticity and acknowledging the whole self as an additional layer to the actualization of an integrated professional counselor identity. This includes integration of vulnerability (e.g. mental illness) into the counselor identity, rather than risking incongruities as a result of compartmentalization of parts of one's identity in PCID (Kern, 2004).

In an earlier study, Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) interviewed 100 counselors and therapists across the professional lifespan, ranging from counselors-in-training to advanced practitioners. They extracted twenty themes within the process of PCID (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). Most significantly, the authors found that throughout the professional lifespan, the professional identity becomes increasingly congruent with personality and cognitive schema, or personal identity; this study described PCID as growth toward professional individuation (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). Additionally, a noticeable shift occurred as advanced clinicians learned and grew from the experience of being human and working with the human condition, which manifested through the movement toward increased boundaries, productive self-protection, as well as clarity of responsibility across the professional lifespan (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992).

A qualitative grounded theory research study of professionals by Moss et al. (2014), generated a theory of transformational tasks, further supporting the multitude of themes and experiences, already identified, that accompany PCID across the professional lifespan. The theory offered six themes—three themes that described movements that occurred as clinicians gained experience, and three themes that emphasized the catalysts for the movements (Moss et al., 2014). The themes that described the movement that occurred were (a) adjustment to expectations, involving a shift from the idealized counselor role to the reality of the practitioner's

role; (b) confidence and freedom, which increased with experience; and (c) separation versus integration, which reiterated the agreed upon dual and reflexive nature of the integration of personal and professional identities over time (Moss et al., 2014). The themes that emphasized the catalysts for movements included (a) experienced guide (i.e. having a positive and effective mentor or supervisor); (b) work with clients, which provided interpersonal interactions for learning, growth, and development; and (c) continuous learning or the infinite process of learning, growth, and professional development, which was identified as a vital element to practicing as an effective and ethical clinician throughout the professional lifespan (Moss et al., 2014). Conclusively, this study supported previous theories generated, and it provided specific tasks for specific stages of PCID that are paramount to the transformational process across the professional lifespan.

Counselors-in-training. PCID in counselors-in-training has been described as the stage of the transformative process when and where individual begin the journey of self-discovery and self-exploration personally and professionally (Auxier et al., 2003; Boyer, 2009; Henreich, 2012; Lochte, 2017; Orkibi, 2014; Osteen, 2011; Pierce, 2016; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992; Stokes, 2013; Wagner & Hill, 2015). According to Gibson et al. (2010), one way to categorize this journey is a path from external validation to internal validation. These findings echoed the themes initially extracted by Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) that individuals' orientation in the professional role and working style, as well as their conceptualization of issues, increased in rigidity and external focus in training and then declined. These themes pointed to the beginning practitioner's reliance upon external expertise, while senior practitioners depended upon their internal expertise. Both studies, conveyed that the early stages of PCID for counselors-in-training can be grueling and difficult because of several shifts and changes to their pre-existing personal

and possibly professional identities (Gibson et al., 2010; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). However, integrating personal and professional identities took place in the latter stages of professional counselor education (Gibson et al., 2010; Lochte, 2017). Gibson et al. (2010) added that, despite the unease that accompanied the early stages of the transformative process, development was driven by the individuals' commitment to the profession.

Wagner and Hill (2015) conducted a qualitative grounded theory study investigating the process of becoming a counselor-in-training as individuals entered graduate programs. Results supported the existing body of knowledge in that it described a process of disintegration and deconstruction of past identities, followed by reconstruction and reintegration of personal and professional selves (Wagner & Hill, 2015). Again, themes of a transformative process in the early stages of PCID were apparent.

In a qualitative research study of graduate level social work students, Osteen (2011) emphasized the centrality of values in the integration process of personal and professional identities. Several students encountered personal and professional value conflicts and resolutions in the integration process (Osteen, 2011). This study also highlighted the application of the intersectionality of multiple sources of influence (e.g. past personal experiences, personal beliefs and values, professional beliefs and values, professional training and skills) in the development of the professional counselor identity for counselors-in-training (Osteen, 2011). These findings were also supported by Boyer (2008) in a written reflection on integrating personal experiences into PCID as a social worker, and the interconnectedness of all experiences as they funneled into and enhanced the development of a new professional counselor identity. Boyer (2008) offered insights and examples into aligning professional and personal values, beliefs, and expectations to form a healthy, strong, and resilient professional counselor identity.

New or novice counselors. The line between counselors-in-training and new counselors is nebulous, typical of any developmental process. Yet, in an article addressing new counselors, Firman (2009) discussed the importance of new counselors' exploration and understanding of the early PCID process. As an individual continues to integrate personal and professional identities, while stepping out of the student role and into the professional role, Firman (2009) stressed that new counselors understand themselves in their new role through the exploration of purpose, meaning, values, skills, unique attributes of the counselor and a deep sense of self. Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) originally elaborated on this by delineating the significance of taking these components (e.g. personal experiences and professional training), outlined above, in conjunction with the relational interplay between the parts into consideration for an individual to understand one's self in one's own personal and unique process of PCID. Both agree that a deeper understanding and sense of self within the new professional counselor identity will support the development of a stronger counselor identity that can exist authentically and protect or defend against inherent obstacles, such as fear and anxiety, fragmentation of the professional counselor identity, and insecurity, in PCID.

Creative arts therapies. A search of the literature revealed a gap in the discussions and research on PCID in creative arts therapies. Existing literature was limited to small sample sizes or focused on specific cultural influences, warranting a need for increased research into this topic. Nonetheless, existing literature showed many similarities to what has been discussed in the general sense of PCID because of counselors' and creative arts therapists' overlapping experiences and training (Orkibi, 2014).

Orkibi (2014) conducted a mixed-methods investigation to test the applicability of a preexisting theory on PCID on graduate level creative arts therapy students in Israel. The study's

results yielded several strong confirmations for the applicability of Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) theory across the three phases of PCID in counselors-in-training—lay helper, beginning student, and advanced student (Orkibi, 2014).

The lay helper phase displayed the highest number of strong confirmations for the applicability of this theory on creative arts therapy students (Orkibi, 2014). Although, due to role-confusion, there was only a moderate confirmation in the applicability of this theory in the role and working style dimension of this developmental stage. Orkibi (2014) attributed this to the previous experiences and familiarity creative arts therapy students may have prior to entering the graduate-level program.

The beginning student phase demonstrated increased variability in the confirmation of the applicability of this theory (Orkibi, 2014). Orkibi (2014) noted that many of the responses from the students in this phase communicated feelings of flexibility, maintaining openness, and following one's intuition, which contradicted the theory being tested. This was, in part, due to the limitation of reflective self reporting in the method of this research study; however, Orkibi (2014) also related this to the increased emphasis on creativity in creative arts therapy training. Moreover, Orkibi (2014) observed that confirmation of the applicability of this theory for PCID in the advanced student phase was similar to that of the beginning student phase.

Although Orkibi (2014) noted several limitations to this study, it strongly confirmed the potential applicability of Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) theory for creative arts therapy students in the lay helper phase. More variable, yet moderately strong confirmation occurred regarding the potential applicability of the theory to the beginning and advanced student phases in creative arts therapy students. This study warranted a need for further research and discussion on PCID in the creative arts therapies.

Stokes (2013) performed a qualitative self-study to investigate the process of incorporating and integrating past, present, and future roles and identities as a developing dance/movement therapist. Like the theories on PCID, Stokes (2013) discovered that the process of integrating personal and professional identities also occurs in the formation of a dance/movement therapist identity, though she argued that this process takes place physically in addition to cognitively and psychologically. Stokes (2013) added that past experiences, roles, and identities (e.g. dance instructor, spirituality/religious background) may enhance her future professional role and identity.

Further research into PCID within creative arts therapies and the distinctive modalities (i.e. dance/movement therapy, art therapy, music therapy, drama therapy) is needed. It is typical for creative arts therapists to encounter and experience training and education in both counseling psychology and a specific modality of art as therapy; hence, research into the PCID for this specific and unique population is of utmost importance.

Identified Obstacles in Early PCID

The process of identity formation for counselors and professional in related fields, specifically, in the early stages of development (i.e. counselor-in-training and new or novice counselor), can be wrought with difficulties and struggles (Auxier et al., 2003; Boyer, 2008; Firman, 2009; Gibson et al., 2010; Henreich, 2012; Kern, 2004; Lochte, 2017; Moss et al., 2014; Osteen, 2011; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Stokes, 2013; Wagner & Hill, 2015). Many researchers have attempted to summarize and normalize the challenges that counselors-in-training and novice or new counselors experience, such as anxiety and fear; questioning one's self-concept; idealistic, rather than realistic expectations; and personal and professional uncertainty (Auxier et al., 2003; Boyer, 2008; Firman, 2009; Henreich, 2012; Kern,

2004; Lochte, 2017; Osteen, 2011; Pierce, 2016; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Wagner & Hill, 2015). While these can occur throughout the development of the professional lifespan, the novice counselor has had limited time and space to develop a healthy professional identity diminishing one's ability to defend against the trials, tribulations, and occupational hazards of the profession (Firman, 2009; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Yalom, 2002).

Ambiguity and uncertainty. Ambiguity and uncertainty, an inherent aspect of the process of PCID, is a catalyst for specific obstacles encountered by novice counselors (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). The most notable hurdle for new counselors is the ambiguity of the human condition because counselors must learn to think nonlinearly and non-sequentially (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) also addressed how increased scrutiny and evaluation by instructors, supervisors, peers, and the individual—in combination with the ambiguous, unique, and complex process of PCID for each person—catalyzes sentiments of bewilderment for the counselor-in-training and novice counselor. Additional obstacles include lack of clarity in the definition of an individual's identity or self-concept (Auxiet et al., 2003; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003); incomplete, fragile, and fragmented practitioner-self (Firman, 2009; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003); and over-involvement, over-identification, or under-involvement with clients (Boyer, 2008; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003).

Boundaries and role confusion. Boundaries and role confusion, related to ambiguity and uncertainty, is another identified and agreed upon obstacle in PCID (Boyer, 2008; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) noted that, typically, the term boundaries has been used to describe the “not-to-be crossed line between proper and improper contact between practitioner and client” (p. 48). However, the term also refers to “how counselors and therapists regulate their emotions when relating to a client” (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003, p. 48)

and the differentiation between the clinician's self and the other—a point of contention for new counselors and counselors-in-training. Boundary issues can be described as weak, poor, porous, and even overly rigid (Boyer, 2008; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003).

Dissonance and disequilibrium. Dissonance between personal and professional selves, through expectations and values, was a common obstacle in PCID that can lead to disequilibrium within the counselor-in-training and novice counselor (Osteen, 2011; Wagner & Hill, 2015). The cause and effect relationship between dissonance and disequilibrium can give result in difficulty with smoothly and fully integrating an individual's personal and professional identities. Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) referenced the dissonance between idealized and glamorized expectations and reality. Expectations of being liked by the client, making large and fast improvements in the client, and preconceived notions that the practitioner holds all of the responsibility for the improvements and changes in client, are all examples of unrealistic expectations that many counselors-in-training and new counselors set for themselves (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003).

Human limitation and vulnerability. One of the most pervasive challenges and limitations in PCID is recognizing, accepting, honoring, and allowing for a practitioner's humanness and vulnerability. Kern (2004) highlighted the strength that can develop out of vulnerability; however, when the developing clinician does not integrate or acknowledge their vulnerability, it becomes a challenge to the incomplete and full integration of one's PCID. Pierce (2016) and Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) emphasized how fear and anxiety of weakness perpetuates the struggle with allowing for their own personal human limitations in counselors-in-training and novice counselors. Firman (2009) explicated that counselors have their own unique, personal and past experiences that often bring them to the counseling profession (e.g. personal experience with mental illness). Professionals may sit in the same condition as their client(s)—

part unique self and part conditioned by-product of life (Firman, 2009). In other words, clinicians are human and will inherently experience and encounter their own confrontations with their humanness and vulnerability; therefore, acknowledging one's human limitations is necessary in developing a healthy counselor identity.

Boyer (2008) normalized the human experiences of vulnerability, the impact of negative personal life events, grief, and trauma, and discussed the amplified limitations of vulnerability when a clinician does not process these experiences prior to encountering it in one's work. Likewise, Pierce (2016) identified emotional exhaustion and loneliness as typical examples of human limitations and vulnerability that counselors-in-training experience in their PCID. Beginning practitioners face the difficult task of learning to negotiate the fine line of transparency between the expression of a clinician's humanness and professionalism, which is a vague, subjective, and individualized experience.

One of the skills and abilities a beginning clinician starts to develop is practicing dual awareness—that of the intrapersonal relationship with one's self and the interpersonal therapeutic relationship (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). Development of this skill is natural to the process of PCID and also a challenge because it requires exploration and discovery of the fine line between empathic attunement to the other and one's own self-care needs (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). Kern (2004) and Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) noted that in the process of PCID for the novice counselor, individuals exhibit a fragile, incomplete, compartmentalized, and fragmented practitioner-self, magnifying and intensifying the effects of vulnerability. When the effects of vulnerability and human limitation or weakness are combined and layered with the obstacle of dissonance and disequilibrium, the negative experiences of PCID for the new counselor may be even further amplified. Practicing self-awareness and self-reflection as well as

discovering the strength in vulnerability (e.g. enhanced ability to empathize, understand, and relate to the client(s) on a human and personal level) have been presented as methods of welcoming humanness and vulnerability into one's professional identity (Boyer, 2008; Firman, 2009; Henreich, 2012; Kern, 2004; Moss et al., 2014; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992; Wagner & Hill, 2015; Yalom, 2002).

Authenticity

Authenticity is used to refer to a host of different concepts that overlap to a certain degree; making the task of defining authenticity as problematic as it is ubiquitous (Safran, 2017). Higgins (2016), Jungers and Gregoire (2016), and Safran (2017) explained that authenticity is sometimes equated with being original or unique, and many of the preconditions for authenticity—such as genuineness, sincerity, truth, honesty, integrity, spontaneity, creativity, autonomy, transparency, consistency, loyalty, and commitment—have fueled the lack of clarity surrounding authenticity. This phenomenon has also been conceptualized as choosing one's own life, being true to one's self, and real (Safran, 2017). Comprehensively addressing authenticity is beyond the scope of this literature review; therefore, I will be focusing on the understandings and applications of this phenomenon that are applicable to the purpose of this research study.

Early understandings. Kierkegaard and Heidegger are credited with the conceptualization of authenticity as an existential virtue in the 19th and 20th centuries (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016; Pierce, 2015). Both delineated authenticity as a property or fixed trait that one does or does not possess (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016; Pierce, 2015). For Kierkegaard, inauthentic existence was associated with conforming to the collective group, or crowd, while authentic existence involved being true to who one truly was—an individualistic approach to the phenomenon (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016; Pierce, 2015). Heidegger characterized authenticity as

the act of taking responsibility for one's potential of being and being inauthentic as relinquishing one's potential of being (Junger & Gregoire, 2016; Pierce, 2015). Taking responsibility for one's potential of being meant engaging in the never complete process of becoming, being unique to one's self and no other person, and possessing one's possibilities for being (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016). Both Kierkegaard and Heidegger juxtaposed individual authenticity to the conformity of the crowd and critiqued the collective mentality; they placed responsibility on the individual to achieve authenticity through being true to one's self (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016; Pierce, 2015).

Current understandings and definitions. Contrary to Kierkegaard and Heidegger, many authors agreed that the phenomenon of authenticity cannot be understood as a property, trait, or fixed entity that one does or does not possess; instead, it must be considered as a process or a practice (Brown, 2010; Higgins, 2016; Medlock, 2012; Pierce, 2015; Rogers, 1961; Starr, 2008). Schmid (2001) proposed Carl Rogers' later work in humanistic counseling psychology as a catalyst for altering understandings of authenticity in psychology and psychotherapy. Rogers (1961) seemed to reference authenticity in his discussion on becoming a person through his emphasis on the therapist's genuineness and congruence to the self in the therapeutic relationship. He also appeared to initiate a new way of conceptualizing this phenomenon as a process that emphasizes presence, unconditional positive regard, and increased transparency on the part of the therapist in the therapeutic relationship (Rogers, 1961).

Similar to early understandings, staying true to one's self, and standing against the stream of social and cultural expectations and norms, remains important (Brown, 2010; Higgins, 2016; Medlock, 2012; Pierce, 2015). Pierce (2015) went further to present authenticity as a concept that relies upon the interplay process between the individual and the collective, during which individual and collective identities and authenticity are mutually constitutive. Pierce (2015)

contended that authenticity and inauthenticity cannot be placed on the individual(s); rather these qualities reside in the relationship or encounter between individuals (i.e. authentic and inauthentic relationships).

Medlock (2012) defined authenticity as a way of being and orienting to an ideal higher self, which is understood as a set of values freely chosen by the individual through self-defining, existential decisions, and commitments. Authenticity is anchored in an individual's ability to express oneself autonomously (Medlock, 2012). However, this personal autonomy is influenced by a back-and-forth process involving the individual, within the cultural context and relationships with others, and the individual's coherent, integrative, and congruent self-narrative—constructed out of the perspective and understanding of self and others (Medlock, 2012). Essentially, authenticity relies upon one's ability to truly express oneself, autonomously (Medlock, 2012). The construction of one's true self is impacted by the dialogical process between the systems that one exists in (i.e. cultural contexts and interpersonal relationships) and one's own subjective understanding of personal schemas, which were systematically built upon this very dialogical process (Medlock, 2012). This understanding of authenticity is rooted in present-moment awareness (Medlock, 2012).

Brown (2010) also referenced the significance of presence, contextualizing authenticity as a practice that requires individuals to let go of expectations and beliefs of who one should be and embrace who one really is in the present-moment. According to Brown (2010), authenticity practice constitutes (a) focusing on the true self, (b) having the courage to be imperfect, (c) setting boundaries, (d) allowing oneself to be vulnerable, (e) exercising compassion, and (f) nurturing the connection and sense of belonging with the acceptance that one is enough.

Starr (2008) defined authenticity as a never-ending, life-long process of self-discovery that includes personal potential and acting on that potential. Additionally, this process requires ownership in accepting responsibility for, and the consequences of, choices (Starr, 2008). Starr (2008) noted suffering due to vulnerability as an unavoidable part of authenticity. Authenticity manifests itself through demonstrating congruency in ideals, values, and actions in relation to self and others (Starr, 2008).

In sum, current understandings and definitions of authenticity vary. It is significant to understand this phenomenon as a dynamic process or a practice, rather than a static and fixed trait, property, or entity. Also, emphasis on the construction and guidance of an individual's true-self is important; however, it is also noteworthy to consider the dialogical process of an individual within complex and intricate systems. Authenticity can neither be understood purely as an individual process nor as a collective process, because it is a present-moment and relational interaction between the individual and the collective.

Authenticity in movement and DMT. Connections between authenticity and movement have been implied and touched upon in Movement Pattern Analysis (MPA) and DMT, though there remains a gap in the literature that further explores and deepens this understanding. In MPA, Warren Lamb theorized a correlation between an individual's movement patterns and the "essence of a person" (Moore, 2005). He discovered a person could consciously and discretely assume or fake whole body postures, or body attitudes, and gestures or small actions confined to one part of the body to make a good impression (Moore, 2005). Yet, Lamb also identified a brief moment of congruence between posture and gesture, a posture-gesture merger (PGM), that was unselfconscious and reflected characteristics and qualities that were true to the person (Moore, 2005). When there was a lack of PGM observed, Lamb noted a person to present as contrived or

putting on an act (Lamb, 2006). Lamb had implied a connection between authenticity and an individual's movement through the understanding of nonverbal communication as an expression and manifestation of one's authenticity through the analysis of movement patterns.

Connections between authenticity and DMT have been outlined in the therapeutic movement relationship (TMR) and the process of *how* one allows for the whole self to be present in different relationships and contexts. In a phenomenological study exploring the TMR in DMT, therapists' and co-researchers noted authenticity as an element encompassed within the larger core theme of presence (Young, 2017). Young (2017) noted therapists' presence was experienced as bringing the whole self into the therapeutic setting in order to "be with" another, which echoed Medlock's (2012) current understandings of authenticity as a present-moment experience outlined above. Authenticity in DMT requires the therapist to engage in a process of inviting one's self to be present and sensitive with others, the whole self, and the therapeutic movement relationship in body, mind, and spirit.

Value of authenticity in PCID. Many researchers expressed that authenticity can provide clinicians with a strong and healthy professional identity because of the preconditions that accompany and result from this phenomenon, such as personal uniqueness, self-discovery, self-awareness, integrity, and autonomy (Boyer, 2008; Firman, 2009; Henreich, 2012; Kern, 2004; Medlock, 2012; Pierce, 2016). Rogers (1961) initially seemed to advocate for increased authenticity in one's professional counselor identity because it encompasses qualities of genuineness, congruence, openness, self-awareness, and a commitment to self-actualization. Medlock (2012) and Yalom (2002) supported this notion and added that authenticity allows for the person to be present in the professional role as a therapist. Authentic self-development includes the presence of an individual's personness through the manifestation and presentation of

one's unique self-expression while also incorporating cultural, political, ethical, and religious sensitivity in the therapeutic relationship (Medlock, 2012). When counselors integrate authenticity through an appreciation of individual differences and the fulfillment of human potential with an underlying concern for ethics, they allow for sensitivity towards the self, the other (e.g. the client), and the therapeutic relationship (Medlock, 2012). Ultimately, the value of authenticity in PCID is the formation of a counselor who is aware and informed by the mission of counseling and feels able to engage one's own personal and unique practice as a professional (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016).

Henreich (2012) conducted a qualitative autoethnography to explore the process of self-acceptance as a means to exist authentically in her developing professional role as a dance/movement therapist. She questioned how her effectiveness as a clinician would be impacted when her authentic expression and existence was challenged in a professional context (Henreich, 2012). She found the greatest impingement of authenticity in her professional identity was her own intrapersonal clashes (e.g. values) between her experience and ability to freely, comfortably, and openly express the true experience (Henreich, 2012). Lack of intrapersonal harmony, as a result of conflict to integrate dissonant parts, diminished her ability to exist authentically, limiting her sense of effective functioning (Henreich, 2012). She translated this as not being a good therapist (Henreich, 2012).

Firman (2009) encouraged beginning counselors to engage in the process of developing a unique professional identity that is rooted in authenticity and genuineness. To achieve this, Firman (2009) suggested reconnecting and staying connected to the individual's purpose and motivation for becoming a counselor. Firman (2009) added that the authentic counselor learns to consider personal and professional strengths and weakness, personality, preferences, skills, and

best practices with the added dimension of genuineness and authenticity. This communicates that the value of authenticity in PCID, especially in the early developmental stage as a novice counselor, can allow individuals to practice self-compassion and self-acceptance towards the whole self.

Implications of authenticity in PCID. Firman (2009) and Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) identified modeling and imitating others as a powerful and preferred early learning method. While emulating other professionals is a common learning technique in the context of PCID, it conflicts with current understandings of authenticity. In reality, authenticity is not always the easiest choice, because of the dominant culture that dictates everything and sets expectations to which to conform (Brown, 2010). To reconcile modeling while being true to oneself, Firman (2009) warned the new counselor against assuming the professional identity of a favorite teacher or an old role model, because it will not fit the novice nearly as well as it fit them. Firman (2009) went on to encourage the new counselor to know more about oneself in order to discover the authentic professional counselor identity that is unique and tailored to that individual.

Jungers and Gregoire (2016) and Medlock (2012) articulated the positive and negative ethical implications of authenticity in PCID. Counselors who act with authenticity are more adept at reflecting on the mission to support human worth and dignity, choosing to support that mission, and using caution to not rely upon professional group membership, unthinkingly, as a justification for their ethical decisions (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016). Authenticity practice in counselors' PCID fosters (a) reorientation to the clinician's reflection on how to stay personally invested and ethically sound, (b) maintenance of a passionate and personal dedication to the mission of the counseling profession, (c) full recognition and acknowledgement of the variety of

available potential possibilities for resolving ethical dilemmas, and (d) accountability by taking ownership for ethical decisions (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016). Medlock (2012) also noted accountability for one's ideas and standards, and to an ethic that ensures mutuality and respect in the pursuit of shared purposes and values, as a result of authenticity. Jungers and Gregoire (2016) also identified the possible negative implication of authenticity, such as clinician's distorted sense of morality, and therefore, failure to apply commonly agreed upon ethical standards in decision-making. This articulated how individual authenticity without inclusion and consideration of collective authenticity, may be a pitfall; but if both are practiced mutually, authenticity practice as a whole would avoid this negative implication.

Conclusion

This review of the literature warranted further inquiry into PCID in creative arts therapies, especially the specific modality of DMT. PCID has been researched and discussed comprehensively across the professional lifespan including theories, understandings, obstacles, and themes that are typical of this process. Nevertheless, there is a gap in the literature exploring this process in creative arts therapies and DMT.

Exploration of the body of knowledge on authenticity has resulted in a plethora of opinions, understandings, and definitions of this phenomenon, though this is rather problematic because of the vagueness and difficulty in truly applying it to this research study. A clarified working definition of authenticity is needed to ground this topic for future inquiries and research. Moreover, research on PCID in direct connection to authenticity is lacking; yet, there was evidence that supported the value of authenticity in PCID.

For this research study I developed the following primary research question regarding this topic: How do I understand and express my subjective lived experience of authenticity as a

developing dance/movement therapist? This question was supplemented with the following secondary research questions: (a) What are the components of my professional identity? (b) What are the challenges, barriers, and limitations, to the expression of my authenticity? (c) How do I know when I am and when I am not engaging with the expression of my authenticity? (d) How can I create a sense of authenticity within myself that is adaptable to different situations and relationships?

Chapter Three: Methods

Methodology

This qualitative self-study aligned with the social constructivist paradigm and utilized Moustakas's (1990) heuristic research methodology. According to Creswell (2013), this paradigm embraces multiplicity in realities due to the subjective and varied experiences constructed by the individual's world view. Given the subjective and varied nature of the phenomenon of authenticity as it relates to my PCID—and because I chose to investigate my own personal construction, perception, and understanding of my expression and subjective lived experience of authenticity as an emerging dance/movement therapist—this paradigm and methodology were applicable to this research study. Furthermore, interpretive methodologies and methods, such as heuristic research have been noted to be relevant to the social constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2013)

According to Moustakas (1990), this methodology is built upon a foundation of self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery. More specifically, this methodology requires the researcher to “have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14). Through active engagement and immersion in the topic, the researcher's experiences provide information and insight to better understand the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). A heuristic researcher passionately, intensely, and wholly commits oneself to research the identified topic or phenomenon in a systematic, organized, and disciplined manner as it relates to one's own personal experiences.

Moustakas (1990) identified six phases of heuristic research: (a) initial engagement, (b) immersion, (c) incubation, (d) illumination, (e) explication, and (f) creative synthesis. The task of the first phase, initial engagement, “is to discover an intense interest” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31).

The researcher identifies a topic or phenomenon that has sparked curiosity, or resonated with the researcher, then shifts focus inward to formulate a question(s) regarding the topic of interest. In the immersion stage, “Everything in life becomes crystallized around the question” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). Moustakas (1990) explained that the researcher becomes fully absorbed and immersed in the phenomenon being studied by actively exploring deeper meaning and understanding of the topic. Moustakas (1990) emphasized the importance and use of the researcher’s intuition, “drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension” (p. 32). The third phase, incubation, is the process of retreating from the intense and concentrated focus that occurs in the previous phase (Moustakas, 1990). This promotes implicit and indirect germination of the topic within the researcher through tacit knowing (Moustakas, 1990).

Tacit knowing allows the researcher to wholly explore, understand, and identify the meaningful significance of the research through recognizing and acknowledging the value of a researcher’s implicit knowledge and intuition (Moustakas, 1990). During the process of illumination, tacit knowledge and intuition are fundamental components of the process because the researcher’s conscious awareness is open and receptive to subconscious material that would, typically, be ignored (Moustakas, 1990). According to Moustakas (1990), details and fragmented parts synthesize into a cohesive concept, and adjustments to old or initial understandings, themes, and knowledge may occur.

During the fifth stage, explication, the researcher examines and evaluates what has surfaced and manifested in the previous stages. The researcher sorts and sifts through nuances, textures, and variations of emerging material to extrapolate the core or dominant themes, then constructs a comprehensive depiction (Moustakas, 1990). Due to the researcher’s reliance upon

an inward, self-focus, attention must be paid to the researcher's own biases (i.e. awareness, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgment) during this stage of researcher (Moustakas, 1990). Then, during the final phase of creative synthesis, when the researcher is thoroughly saturated and familiar with the data, essences of the phenomenon can organically integrate, grow, and be realized (Moustakas, 1990).

Participant

I functioned as the sole participant in this self-study. I am a heterosexual, Asian-American, female in my mid-twenties. I moved to Chicago, Illinois from Seattle, Washington to attend Columbia College Chicago for my Masters of Arts (MA) degree in Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling. Throughout the initial engagement and immersion phases of this heuristic research study, my roles included the following: a second year MA student, a dance/movement therapy (DMT) intern, and a novice researcher. The remainder of the heuristic researcher phases generally occurred while I was a third year MA candidate.

My initial clinical/field experience was with a day program for adults with traumatic brain injuries located in Chicago, Illinois. My primary role was a DMT intern; however, I functioned in a variety of roles to support and assist the staff with programming (e.g. exercise, recreation, memory, community reintegration, etc.). I also interned with a children's hospital, located in Chicago, Illinois, on the inpatient medical and psychiatric units as a member of the Child Life team. In this multidisciplinary setting, I functioned independently and focused solely on offering DMT as an adjunctive service to patients and their families.

Other identifiers included my education background, theoretical approach in counseling psychology and DMT, previous work experiences, and values. In addition to the aforementioned graduate level coursework, I had a Bachelors of Arts (BA) degree in sociology with a minor in

dance. My counseling psychology theoretical approach drew upon existential-humanist and cognitive behavioral therapy. My DMT approach was principally Chacian, with a variety of other techniques incorporated during my group and individual sessions. Finally, previous experiences led me to hold value in exploring and understanding the systems that impact the clients and patients with whom I work (e.g. family systems, sociopolitical systems, cultural systems, etc.).

Procedure

Due to the flexible, subjective, and pervasive nature of a heuristic inquiry, some of the specifics of this procedure were inherently distinct to this investigation. Heuristic research studies allow for and encourage openness and adaptability in the actualization of each phase of this methodology, because of the deep and close personal relationship the researcher has with the topic. However, I imposed some structure onto the procedures outlined throughout this section.

The initial engagement for this heuristic research study took place over the course of approximately a year. During this period, my curiosity and awareness was heightened as I noticed my own dissonance with authentically integrating my personal and professional identities in my clinical placements and coursework. My initial self-dialogue and exploration of my curiosity through reading and writing, dialoguing with peers and mentors, art-making, and movement motivated me to continue to research the phenomenon of my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity as an emerging dance/movement therapist. This led to the development of my research questions, followed by engagement in the remaining stages of heuristic research through the process of data collection, analysis, and validation.

Data collection methods. Data were collected in the form of art-making, which included watercolor painting, looming, dance/movement, and journaling. Metaphors and similes,

analogies, free-association, and *SMIFT* (sensations, movements, images, feelings, thoughts; see Appendix A) were the identified modalities of journaling. Daniel Siegel (2007) introduced *SIFT* (see Appendix A) as an approach to bringing attention to the whole body-mind experience (p. 333). *SMIFT* is an adaptation by Susan Imus (2011, personal communication), from *SIFT*, which expands a person's awareness to include the body's movements and promotes embracing the dynamic experience of an interconnected body-mind. I created art in response to the research questions, focusing on my personal experiences and expression of authenticity in my role as an emerging dance/movement therapist, which aligned with the principle notion of self-dialogue within the heuristic methodology.

It is worth noting that some art and journal entries generated during the initial engagement phase, while an intern, were included as data for analysis, such as a watercolor piece I created during a pilot project in preparation for this research study and another that served as the background for a poster to present this proposed research study. Both depicted responses to the primary research question: How do I understand and express my subjective lived experience of authenticity as an emerging dance/movement therapist?

Journal entries from the initial engagement period document some of my first personal encounters with this research topic. Self-dialogue was used to examine the dilemma I faced surrounding my personal experience of authenticity in relationship to my professional identity development during my internship. Because these entries demonstrated self-dialogue, pointed to moments of immersion in this topic, and encompassed relevant responses to the primary and secondary research questions, I selected them to be included as data. One of the journal entries was written at home following an academic group supervision session when I was a DMT intern with the day program for adults with traumatic brain injuries. The remaining two were written at

home while I interned at the children's hospital when I experienced increased disparity between my authenticity and my professional role as a DMT student intern.

Data collection sessions stimulated the immersion of this self-study when I intentionally and actively allotted time and space to create art in response to the primary and secondary research questions. These sessions took place four times—once a week for one hour over the course of a month. This period occurred during my final month of coursework for graduate school, while I was also completing my internship at the children's hospital. Therefore, neither the day nor the time of day for data collection was pre-selected before starting this investigation. Rather, data collection sessions were determined each week for convenience (i.e. when time and space were available for each data collection session).

A list of possible and available art-making methods to choose from and use for data collection was established during the proposal and planning of this heuristic inquiry. The purpose of this was to implement structures that contained the potential openness and flexibility of this methodology. Nonetheless, neither the form of art-making nor the materials were pre-assigned or pre-determined for each session. Instead, I determined the method of art-making for each session at the beginning, which was based upon the depiction of my understanding of my experience and expression of authenticity in my data at that point. I also considered which art-making modality best conveyed and showed my response to the research question(s). All sessions focused on responding to the primary research question; nevertheless, occasionally, my attention would be directed to respond to a specific secondary question(s) through a creative and intuitive process. As a data collection session progressed, preliminary themes would start to surface and formulate during the art-making process.

Multiple media were permitted during a single art-making session. Again, this was dependent upon what seemed most fitting for the response to the question(s) being addressed during that session and what felt complete for the data collection session. For example, I made the conscious decision to not video record the movement phrase that I choreographed because I felt that the experience, or process of moving through the phrase was the focus of data collection rather than the content of the movement. Hence, I journaled my experience and response to the movement phrase through SMIFT each time I moved through it.

An added structure for this study involved establishing time limits for each session. Before engaging in data collection, I set a timer for one-hour to start and complete each art-making period. This was a conscious effort to manage my tendencies to become deeply immersed in my work and lose sense of time. Although, if a session required additional time, I would allow for approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to wrap up the art, movement, and/or journal entry.

Data analysis methods. Data analysis took place once a week after each data collection session and before the next art-making session on a separate occasion. Manual data analysis for qualitative research adapted by Forinash (2012) from Giorgi was used during each data analysis session to categorize and extract themes. According to Forinash (2012), “the first step is to take the data and review them in their entirety (p. 152). For this study, all the data created from the art-making sessions to that point—including the art and journal entries from the initial engagement phase—were compiled and laid out to be briefly reviewed experienced, and reread collectively. My intention in this step was to search for any themes across art modalities and throughout the entirety of the data.

The next step was to review the data again more slowly and deeply, focusing in on each piece of data separately, leading to saturation (Forinash, 2012). This required paying close attention to specific qualities of the art pieces and journal entries. For example, I returned to my watercolor paintings and noted the colors in the artwork, the form that the colors took on the paper (i.e. techniques used), the saturation and blending of the colors on the paper, and the boundaries the paper created. This was done separately and together for the watercolor paintings to observe any similarities or differences that could foster theme development.

In examining my looming, I considered each stitch of the fabric that made up the whole piece in addition to the gestalt of the creation. The tautness of the stitching or weaving, the pattern of the colors of the yarn throughout the fabric, and the loom structure that bordered the fabric were regarded. For my journal entries, I surveyed words and phrases that appeared recurrently as well as topics that seemed dominant in each entry. I also reviewed the entirety of the journal entries to discern any themes across all entries. The dance/movement was a repeatable phrase, so data were collected through reflections on my SMIFT while I moved through the phrase. Thus, the second step of analysis for this form of data was similar to that of the journal entries—reoccurring words and ubiquitous themes identified from each recorded SMIFT response were considered as well as across all SMIFT reflections.

Forinash (2012) stated that following saturation of the data, the researcher will begin to organize and categorize the data based upon the previous step. This step was the most taxing and variable because shifts in my perspective and/or my approach to the data would vary from day to day, and thus, constantly led to adjustments and modifications to the groupings. This process required persistence, patience, and flexibility to allow for the organic settling, amendment, and distillation of themes. New data also changed the initial groupings from week to week; however,

organization, categorization, and theme development became more definitive and clear over time.

After data were collected and analyzed, and I felt preliminary themes had been discovered and explored, I transitioned to the incubation stage—a period of time when I focused my attention on teaching and assisting therapeutic dance classes for kids and adolescents with special needs. I returned to my data approximately two weeks after commencing the incubation phase, and upon returning, I felt more adept at organizing and categorizing the data to address the themes I extracted. This facilitated increased understanding and insight into my preliminary findings as I transitioned to the illumination phase, when crystallization of the themes gave way to the explication stage of this heuristic study.

This process of explication was similar to the next step of manual data analysis. Both Moustakas (1990) and Forinash (2012) explained that the researcher's next step is to reconstruct the experience or phenomenon being investigated. Moreover, it is imperative that the researcher seek validation and feedback to heed any bias that may have influenced the comprehensive depiction (Forinash, 2012). The researcher's reconstruction of the phenomenon will, hopefully, thoroughly explicate an enlightened view of the phenomenon, highlighting the core concepts and distinctive qualities of the experience being investigated (Forinash, 2012).

My process of explication and creative synthesis occurred simultaneously. I developed a three-part composite depiction to reconstruct and realize my new and deeper understanding of authenticity in my PCID. I choreographed a dance, created a watercolor painting, and wrote an open letter addressed to the authentic me, which facilitated the embodied understanding of what I discovered in this self-study. To address my bias and receive validation and feedback, I first

presented these creations to my researcher consultant, and then to an audience at a thesis performance and art exhibition.

The choreographed dance piece was completed first, which embodied, expressed, and integrated the themes that I discovered during the data collection and analysis processes. This also promoted the organic and *implicit* (see Appendix A) realization, re-experiencing, and integration of the findings from this research study, rather than quickly jumping to *explicit* (see Appendix A) meaning making. I then created the watercolor painting, which conveyed how I visualized the themes. This second composite curbed my cognitive process by staying with imagery instead of words. The watercolor painting served as a bridge between my body and mind experience as I took the implicit discoveries that emerged from the movement experience and put it to paper. Finally, I wrote an open letter addressed to the Authentic Me that encapsulated my reconstruction of my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity as a developing dance/movement therapist.

Setting

Data collection and analysis took place in various rooms in my apartment. Main factors that I considered when choosing rooms to work in included space, privacy, and distraction. I prioritized space when I needed to move, lay out materials for art-making, or spread out finished pieces for analysis. Due to my longstanding, close relationships with my roommates, I was not concerned with privacy. Privacy was problematic when guests were over. Distraction was also inevitable at times.

Practicing direct and open communication about scheduling and dedicating time to working on this investigation and storing materials was effective in cultivating and maintaining privacy throughout this heuristic inquiry. Ironically, although my materials were stored in an

unlocked space, I was more concerned with myself having constant access to the data than others having access. Therefore, a requirement for myself was setting boundaries and limits around working on this thesis. Validation meetings with my research consultant took place in her private office, and the thesis performance and art exhibition was located at Columbia College Chicago.

Validation Strategies

Validation was introduced during the data collection and analysis process, and continued throughout the explication and creative synthesis phases. Validation occurred predominantly through meetings with a research consultant, with an additional layer of resonance that was incorporated into the presentation of my findings at a thesis art exhibition and performance.

I met with my research consultant four times for one-hour. Three of the four meetings were scheduled during the immersion phase of this study, and the final consultation was scheduled following explication and creative synthesis—after I completed reconstruction of my experience with the three-part comprehensive depiction. I applied the feedback from this final meeting to further clarify the themes.

I included validation during the immersion stage with my research consultant to help me explore preliminary themes, even if they were unclear and developing, by affirming or challenging what arose throughout the process. Additionally, these early meetings provided constant and consistent checks of my biases as they surfaced throughout the study. The purpose of the final meeting was to support and challenge my findings.

The first meeting took place following the initial week of data collection and analysis to establish a starting point for emerging themes. The second meeting was scheduled at the end of the four-week data collection and analysis period, and a third meeting was added because

discussions about preliminary findings were not completed in the previous session. The final meeting was scheduled, and my explication and creative synthesis processes felt complete.

The consultation meetings consisted of an open dialogue about the themes that emerged. I took notes during each session, summarizing the points of validation or affirmation and/or challenge or contradiction. These notes were used and applied as points of reference as I continued to synthesize my findings into clear and comprehensive themes.

After a final meeting with my research consultant, I presented my artwork and three composites of my comprehensive depiction to an audience of eight people at the thesis performance and art exhibition. Feedback and responses were sought and encouraged, which fueled a discussion about my process, discoveries, and themes. This event allowed me to be witnessed by a group and gain new and enhanced insights to further distill and crystallize my findings and answers to my research questions. It offered resonance and supportive validation because of the minimal exploration, engagement, and active immersion, on the part of the audience, with the phenomenon of authenticity in PCID.

Ethical Considerations

In the data collection and analysis processes, personal bias and ethical considerations were addressed. As previously mentioned, choosing to conduct this research in my home compromised some of my privacy and the security of my data; however, allowing for clear communication between myself and my roommates fostered increased privacy and security throughout this research process. Additionally, I did not reference previous research to determine my art-making process and modalities, because I hoped to wholly immerse myself in my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity as a developing dance/movement therapist. Thus, the modalities used were purely self-selected. Nonetheless, it was hoped that

personal bias and subjectivity were addressed by including validation throughout the data collection and analysis processes through periodic meetings with my research consultant.

While planning my validation strategies for this heuristic inquiry, the relationship between me and my research consultant was an ethical consideration. Due to the personal growth and transformational experience involved with this study, my personal therapist functioned in the role of research consultant. I selected this individual because of her understanding of my personal struggles and relationship with this topic and her wealth of experience and knowledge as a former thesis adviser. Additionally, she is an alumna of the Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling program at Columbia College Chicago and she is credentialed and licensed as a dance/movement therapist and counselor in the state of Illinois. To address duality of roles, we drafted a written agreement that explicitly established boundaries, clarified roles and obligations, and specified costs prior to scheduling consultation meetings (see Appendix B). We agreed to maintain open, clear, and direct lines of communication to discuss if, and when, discomfort arose due to the dual roles—whether it was me or my research consultant that felt uncomfortable.

Finally, the ethics surrounding authenticity and self-disclosure emerged as a point of ethical consideration in this research. The American Counseling Association (ACA) has outlined six principles that serve as the foundation for ethical behavior and decision making, (a) autonomy, (b) nonmaleficence, (c) beneficence, (d) justice, (e) fidelity, and (f) veracity (American Counseling Association, 2014). Throughout this research I became increasingly aware of how explicitly functioning authentically to myself as a developing dance/movement therapist, in accordance with my personal beliefs, values, etc., may be a breach of ethics for the clients and patients that I work with. Yet, I encountered my innate need and desire to allow for my whole and authentic self to be present in the therapeutic setting. This study required

maintaining sensitivity and paramount deliberation to the crux of how I can remain authentic while upholding the American Dance Therapy Association and ACA codes of ethics (American Dance Therapy Association, 2016).

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this heuristic inquiry was to explore and understand the phenomenon of authenticity within the context of my professional identity development as an emerging dance/movement therapist. My intention was to bring awareness to how I understand and negotiate my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity as I integrate my personal and professional identities. Challenges, barriers, and limitations to the full expression of my subjective lived experience were also investigated and addressed. Additionally, I sought to bring awareness to how I know when I am and when I am not being my authentic self, as well as discover an adaptable way to create a sense of authenticity within myself.

Several themes were distilled from the data analysis and validation processes, which answered the research questions. The overarching theme that emerged was *a whole greater than the sum of its parts*; three accompanying, interrelated, and secondary themes were (a) importance of the core-self, (b) the interplay process within authenticity, and (c) identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the phenomenon of authenticity in my PCID.

A Whole Greater than the Sum of its Parts

The overarching theme, a whole greater than the sum of its parts, was referenced across all methods of data collection. This through-line represented recognizing, accepting, honoring, and taking ownership of my *whole-self* in my role as a developing dance/movement therapist—as opposed to reducing and oversimplifying who I am and how I am, based on the fundamental parts—because each piece is interconnected. My professional identity constitutes a whole construction of my personal components (i.e. personality, past experiences, past and personal relationships, values, beliefs, etc.), professional attributes (i.e. theoretical approach in DMT and counseling psychology, skills and training, practices, etc.), and the relationships between these.

The complexity of the whole me, in my professional role, has proven far more significant than my sum of the parts.

Appendix C illustrates the interconnectedness between the similes and the visual art on two levels, denoted by the color coding of the boxes and arrows in the image. On the first level, I extrapolated a clear and explicit interpretation of what the artwork symbolized, and vice versa, from the visual art. For example, the similes, “Like the colorfully woven threads that make up my fabric or tapestry” and “Like my own personal flag that represents me as a whole person” depicted the colorfully, woven, loomed fabric outlined in blue. The words outlined in orange share a relationship with the similes, “As if I’m a *Glassybaby* (see Appendix A) individually hand-blown, so one is not exactly like another,” and, “Like my fashion, style, wardrobe, closet, etc.” The watercolor paintings, outlined in green and yellow, are both connected to the similes, “Like the unique and different puzzle pieces that click together to create my own puzzle,” and, “Like the layers of my jawbreaker that provide flavors and colors and combinations of both,” then, “Like I’m a cast-iron skillet, seasoned by past relationships and experiences uniquely blended together.” In this way, there is distinct integration on a micro-level within each color—blue, orange, green, and yellow.

On a larger scale, the themes are intertwined through the phrase, *a whole greater than the sum of its parts*, outlined with a multicolored box that incorporates the four colors for each individual section. This phrase served as a central point that bridged all four of the colored boxes together, thus establishing a shared relationship among all of the pieces shown in the image. In considering the micro-level and macro-level relationships between the images and the similes within each colored box, and between all of the colored boxes, the notion of the overarching theme became apparent. Each part was critical to my understanding of my subjective lived

experience and expression of authenticity, but the complexity of the intricate relationships could not be forgotten to clearly and comprehensively know my encounter with the phenomenon of authenticity in my PCID. Thus, the complexity of my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity practice is a phenomenon that I came to understand as a whole process, which is far greater than the elemental parts, because of the interplay process between me and the factors that catalyze or inhibit my full experience and expression of this phenomenon.

Figure 1 Watercolor painting created as a composite in the three-part comprehensive depiction



Figure 1. Illustrates the crucial interplay between the elements in the artwork—saturation of colors, blending of colors to formulate new ones, and integration of different techniques (i.e. splatter-painting and brush strokes) within the whole image.

The three parts of my composite depiction further emphasized this overarching theme. Figure 1 illustrates how the colors and techniques in the image are all valuable to the

consideration of the image; however, saturation of colors, blending of colors to formulate new ones, and integration of different techniques within the whole image interplay with each other. This was a clear example that highlighted how each part and the relationship between parts impacted the greater whole of the final image.

In my choreographed and improvisational dance/movement piece (<https://youtu.be/tQyZQ80m7oA>), I came to the realization that I must allow for the whole process and experience to unfold in order to develop a complete and comprehensive awareness. For example, I brought attention to my sensations, movements, images, feelings, and thoughts—all distinct and separate entities of awareness—to document my process of the movement experience. It was the interaction of these components of SMIFT that was valuable in informing me of my way of experiencing and knowing. Another example is that the music, the choreography or content, and audience were all valuable parts in the whole of the movement experience. Yet, it was the exchange between all of the constituent elements that fostered a greater and more comprehensive experience for me.

My song selection for this dance, “Human” (Perri, 2014, track 4) exhibited strong and clear lyrics that emphasized my personal struggle with navigating and negotiating my humanness, human limitations, and my ability to function effectively, healthily, strongly, and authentically as a developing dance/movement therapist. My choreography and improvisations were interplayed with this lyrical theme, as I used my movements to engage with the music in order to follow, respond, and complement the music. Finally, while performing this dance, I also aimed to make eye contact with the audience to develop the whole choreographic and improvisational performance. This fueled the revelation of my need to recognize and allow for the presence of my whole self within the entirety of my relationships, including their

complexities and intricacies, to foster authenticity in my professional role as an emerging dance/movement therapist. I need to discover how my whole and authentic self might engage in the process of following, responding to, and complementing others when in relationship.

Lastly, this theme was explicitly stated in the open letter to the Authentic Me (see appendix D): “Your authentic self—your humanness and personness—includes both your personal and professional selves, intimately and integrally *zshüzshing* (see Appendix A) together.” Also, in this open letter, I addressed the significance of my “layered and complex” core that is “colorfully” and intricately “woven together” and “it cannot be simplified to one component, factor, experience, belief, etc.” All of these examples denote the convoluted whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Importance of the Core-Self

My understanding of the core-self that emerged throughout this investigation was drawn from the IFS model, which describes an innate core to every individual system (Schwartz, 2013). Schwartz (2013) noted that the core-self has the ability to passively witness and actively lead, internally and externally (Schwartz, 2013). Furthermore, when the self is able to differentiate from the other parts, it has the wisdom and clarity of perspective necessary to lead or guide the individual effectively (Schwartz, 2013). Applying this to my understanding of authenticity as it relates to my PCID in the open letter to the Authentic Me, my core-self was emphasized as both the ground that my developing professional identity stemmed from and the essence of my personal identity and humanness that is integrated into my developing identity as a dance/movement therapist. The open letter articulated the importance of recognizing, accepting, honoring, and owning my core-self as a part of my whole-self and my professional identity because it is the fundamental core that enables and sustains authenticity practice as an emerging

dance/movement therapist. Who I am and how I am as a developing dance/movement therapist is deeply rooted in my core-self through my core-values, beliefs, worldview, movement preferences, and personness or personal identity. These are the components of my professional identity that enable me to differentiate myself and my work as a growing practitioner from others. The lack of acknowledgement of my core-self in my professional role will be detrimental in my ability to relate to others as my true and whole self, compromising my authenticity.

So, my core-self and how it relates and interplays with my other parts contributes to my ability to exist authentically; however, it can become overruled or overtaken by protective parts, thus leading to the inhibition or diminishment of my authenticity. It is important to note that contrary to IFS, this theme does not impart parsing out my core-self from the remaining parts of who I am as a developing dance/movement therapist, rather it speaks to recognizing, accepting, honoring, and taking ownership of my core-self as one of many distinct parts that interplays with other elements of myself. This is significant so that my core-self does not get lost or buried among the other elements.

In the watercolor painting (Figure 1), there is a clear central point that radiates outward to the edges of the paper. The image is representative of my core-self that supports the surrounding layers of personal and professional roles and identities. Without the central point to anchor the radiating strokes and splatters, the miscellaneous colors would simply be scattered about on the paper without a point of focus in the image. This can be metaphorically applied to the notion of the importance of my core-self to provide a place for all of the components of my professional identity to take root; the absence of this core-self would result in the loss of a foundation for my personal and professional identities.

In my movement experience, there was a dominant movement theme of core-distal patterning. The *core-distal fundamental pattern of total body connectivity* (see Appendix A) can be described as movements that grow and shrink between the core, or center of the body and the distal ends, or extremities of the body (Hackney, 2002). Examples of this movement include the movement when my arms and hands reach outwardly along the sagittal and horizontal dimensions (1:28-1:35) and the movement when I am laying down on the floor and I transition from the fetal position to roll onto my back (1:45-1:48).

Although this movement theme was dominant and had a strong presence throughout the dance, I experienced the importance of my core-self most prominently in two instances. The first occurred in the moment when my arms felt as if they were being pulled in opposite directions along the horizontal dimension (1:35-1:38). I experienced binding sensations and feeling conflicted, because I felt stuck, like a tug-of-war, between my arms being pulled outwardly and attempting to pull my arms back into my core, or plug them into my shoulders. In other words, I felt a lack of connection and support between my core and distal ends in this movement.

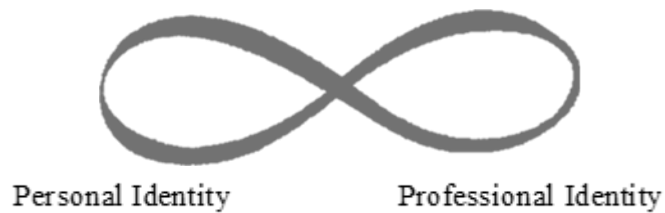
The second situation was demonstrated in grasping, grabbing, touching, and grounding movements with my hands over my whole body in near reach space, and then extending my arms and hands into far reach space before again drawing my hands back down and in towards my core (3:07-3:27). Contrary to the previous movement experience, I noted a *freeing flow* (see Appendix A) in my movements, which facilitated a sense of calm as I brought attention solely back to my core to then support and connect my distal ends. In that moment, I became increasingly aware of the importance of my core-self in my developing professional counselor identity, and how it supports me in expanding beyond myself to relate and engage authentically with others.

In the movement experience, my sensations of freeing and *binding my flow* (see Appendix A) was significant in informing me of when I am and when I am not fully engaging with my experience and expression of authenticity. I discovered that binding my flow was implicated with not recognizing, accepting, honoring, and taking ownership of my core-self; incongruities between my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity were increasing. On the contrary, freeing my flow implied increased engagement with my practice of authenticity by recognizing, accepting, honoring, and taking ownership of my core-self in my role as a developing dance/movement therapist. Enhancing my body awareness of sensations and movements that I experienced informed my self-awareness of how I was relating to my core-self, and thus, how I was engaging with my experience and expression of authenticity in my PCID.

The Interplay Process Within Authenticity

The theme of the interplay process within authenticity, in the context of PCID, arose with the lemniscate symbol that consistently presented itself in the data analysis process of all modalities of data collection (see Figure 2). The notion of an intersubjective, synergistic, and reflexive relationship between two, distinct, and integral components (e.g. personal identity and professional identity) emerged. It is important to note that the symbol was not strictly limited to my intrapersonal experience of personal and professional identity and was used to display a variety of relationships that involved an intersubjective experience (i.e. client-therapist relationship).

Figure 2 The Interplay Process of Personal and Professional Identities Represented by the Lemniscate Symbol



Through further analysis and validation, the interplay process within authenticity did not fit a singular lemniscate symbol because of all the various and multiple parts that contribute to the whole experience and practice of authenticity. It became apparent that the experience and expression of authenticity in PCID, when also considering the overarching theme—a whole greater than the sum of its parts—is a multifaceted, intricate, and complex layering of lemniscates. Figure 3 illustrates this construction of multiple lemniscates centered upon core point. The number of lemniscates can fluctuate to represent different components of an individual’s personal and professional identities that interact synergistically with one another when practicing authenticity. The left-side of the image shows the sum of the differentiated components in my personal and professional identity. However, this does not accurately depict my findings that were extracted from all of the data. Instead, the right-side of the image that is reminiscent of the watercolor painting with the core-self area and the radiating parts, accurately, presents the interplay process that occurs within and between the lemniscate symbols and the core-self. This allows for the relationships within and between components to be included and significant in the whole image.

Figure 3 The Layered and Complex Interplay Process Within Authenticity Through the Representation of the Interplay Process Within and Between Many Lemniscate Symbols



Figure 3. The distinct and various components of my personal and professional identities are symbolized by the differently colored lemniscates on the left. On the right is the complexly layered lemniscates with a central point, which shows the interplay within and between the lemniscates. This reflects in my understanding of my experience and expression of authenticity.

Identified Challenges, Barriers, and Limitations to the Expression of Authenticity

Fear. The greatest identified challenge to the expression of authenticity that emerged out of this investigation was fear. This was best summarized in the letter to the Authentic Me:

Fear of the unknown and uncertainty. Fear of not meeting expectations, whether these expectations have been set by you or set by others. Fear of not being enough. Fear of not being as good as the next person. Fear of your humanness. Fear of judgment, again, whether this comes from yourself or from other. Fear of vulnerability.

I identified fear as a natural and instinctual emotional response that manifested in all facets of my personal and professional identities in order to protect my core-self; therefore, fear was an authentic experience. However, fear became a barrier to the expression of my authenticity when it overtook my experience and ability to function effectively in my professional roles and identity. For example, as an intern at the children's hospital I sensed vulnerability as a human

who may be having a tough day, encountering early signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue, and/or struggling with my work-life balance through my subjective lived experience of authenticity. Within this, my fear of being vulnerable, my high expectations and standards to keep going, and my self-judgments that told me I would be a bad therapist overruled the expression of my authenticity to recognize, accept, honor, and take ownership of these experiences as real and present. The expression of my authenticity was challenged and limited when I attempted to diminish or disregard my fear response in an effort to limit my experiences of vulnerability as an emerging dance/movement therapist.

Rigidity. Rigidity—rather than flexibility, fluidity, and openness—in my personal and professional identities was another barrier to the expression of my authenticity as a developing dance/movement therapist. This notion became clearer through the stark contrast in the process and product differences following completion of the visual art, loomed fabric, and dance. In the visual art, the paper and the loom created a clear and defined border; and in the painting the finished product had a permanent quality to it. In other words, the completed images and fabric, once finished, could not be changed. Meanwhile, with the choreographed and improvisational dance, there was minimal to no permanency, because every time I performed and experienced the dance, the movement was never exactly the same. Instead, there was always a dynamic characteristic following the completion of each movement exploration of the dance. Although the space in which the dance was explored created a boundary, or contained the movement, the ability for the movement to adapt and change enabled the boundaries to also fluctuate and shift. Also, though the loom had an essence of permanence, I intuitively sensed a need to leave the fabric unfinished in the loom, which seems to bridge the contrasting quality of permanence between the watercolor painting and the choreographed and improvisational dance. This was

symbolic of the importance of boundaries in two ways: being a challenge and a resolution to this challenge.

Differentiation between my lived experience and expression of authenticity. In the validation process with my research consultant, I realized my intention and interpretation of my artwork did not always match her interpretations, which required clarifying discussions. An artist's expression may not always seem to match their own intention, interpretation, and experience through their artwork, because of the subjective nature of it; however, this should not devalue, discredit, or dismiss the artist's experience, intention, and interpretation. Likewise, my subjective lived experience of authenticity should not be disregarded because my expression of it may not always be congruent with my intention and experience of it due to the subjectivity of this phenomenon. Therefore, I recognized the value in differentiating my subjective lived experience of this phenomenon from the expression of it to recognize, honor, accept, and own my experience of authenticity as valuable and present in my PCID, especially when I could not express it as a result of the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The results answered the primary and secondary research questions. The overarching theme that emerged was *a whole greater than the sum of its parts*. Authenticity is extremely complex, and it cannot be reduced to a property or trait that an individual does or does not possess, which aligns with the current understandings and definitions of this phenomenon (Brown, 2010; Higgins, 2016; Medlock, 2012; Pierce, 2015; Starr, 2008). Instead, authenticity is a practice that involves the interplay process between my personal and professional identities to align my way of being with my true core-self, highlighting the two secondary themes: the interplay process within authenticity and the importance of the core-self. This is supported by Firman (2009) who identified authenticity in PCID in new counselors as a process of allowing the true-self to be the bridge between personal and professional counselor identities. Authenticity requires engaging in the process of making conscious choices and effort to embrace this *whole self*. This is in line with Brown's (2010) inclusion of authenticity as a component to whole-hearted living, requiring honesty, integrity, love, acceptance, compassion, ownership, and genuineness towards the self and others despite another secondary theme—identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of authenticity.

How Do I Understand My Subjective Lived Experience and Expression of Authenticity as a Developing Dance/Movement Therapist?

A key revelation was my need to discretely differentiate between my subjective lived experience and expression of this phenomenon. The analogy of the carnival game, “Ring the Bell” came to represent my understanding of my subjective lived experience of authenticity as a result of validation, resonance, and discussions at the thesis performance and art exhibition. In this game, a target is struck, which shoots an indicator vertically upward. At the maximum point,

the indicator rings a bell, but if the bell is not rung, the indicator still travels along the gradient to measure the amount of strength that was applied to the target when it was struck. My subjective lived experience of authenticity is represented by the gradient that the indicator travels along. If my authenticity bell is not rung, it does not mean that I am being or feeling inauthentic; instead the measurement of my authenticity is simply less than the maximum level. Thus, my experience of authenticity is a practice of being and feeling more or less authentic along a spectrum. A finding that is supported by Schmid (2001) who identified one's experience and one's expression of the self as two components of this phenomenon, and incongruence between the two may buffer an individual's ability to wholly, openly, and fully engage with one's authenticity.

Referencing the overarching theme, a whole greater than the sum of its parts, I understood my subjective experience of authenticity as colorful, dynamic, and integrated. My subjective lived experience of this phenomenon was a process of embracing my whole self—all of the parts and the complex and intricate relationships between parts that contributed to who I am and how I am as an emerging dance/movement therapist. The secondary theme, the interplay process within authenticity (as symbolized through lemniscate symbols) detailed another way that interactions between parts intersect to form a whole professional identity. Essentially, my subjective lived experience of authenticity emphasized *multiplicity* (see Appendix A) and *plurality* (see Appendix A), confirming the literature that described the practice of authenticity in this way (Brown, 2010; Firman, 2009; Medlock, 2012; Schmid, 2001). In this self-study, plurality and multiplicity were defined and understood as the accumulation and existence of multiple parts, and the value of embracing one and the other(s), rather than focusing on one or the other(s). Hence, my initial perceptions prior to the completion of this heuristic

investigation—that oversimplified and reduced authenticity fundamentally to the categorization of authentic or inauthentic—were refuted because of this study.

I compare the expression of my authenticity to the fluctuating light display on a sound system, which measures the amplitude of the sound being projected. There are several factors that interact with one another to influence the amplitude measurement, such as volume, bass, and treble. Likewise, as a developing dance/movement therapist, there are a multitude of factors at play that will cause me to adjust the expression of my authenticity, such as ethics; context of the relationship and rapport; my perception of the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity; and my subjective experience of authenticity as an emerging dance/movement therapist. Again, the expression of my authenticity travels along a gradient or spectrum; however, it may not always explicitly be congruent with my lived experience of authenticity due to combined factors.

Although, I differentiated the expression of my authenticity from my subjective lived experience of authenticity, I understood both as parallel processes. They may occasionally align with one another, which is a goal, because it would alleviate some of the discomfort I experience in having to censor my full expression of authenticity. However, as described above, myriad factors impact fluctuations in the expression of my authenticity, and the paralleled gradients may not reflect identical levels. I attributed this to the compromise between my comfort, safety, and security of my core-self in my developing professional role, and the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity. Thus, the secondary themes—the interplay process within authenticity, the importance of the core-self, and the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations—provided me with answers to how I understand and distinguish the expression of my authenticity.

Finally, as I came to improve my understanding of my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity, a key element that was revealed was the interplay process within authenticity that lies in the relationship between the individual and the collective. I learned that authenticity practice relies upon intrapersonal and interpersonal understandings. I may be confronted with an inauthentic relationship, but inauthenticity does not wholly depend on me. Therefore, at the children's hospital, my feelings of being inauthentic because of the uncomfortable interactions with family members, supervisors, and patients that I encountered were examples of inauthentic relationships. This was supported by early understandings of authenticity developed by Kierkegaard and Heidegger in their juxtaposition of individual authenticity to the conformity of the crowd, though they placed the responsibility of authenticity and inauthenticity principally on the individual (Jungers & Gregoire, 2016; Pierce, 2015). Pierce (2015) understood authenticity "as a normative concept governing the relation of the individual and the group, rather than applying exclusively to either individual or groups" (p.442); thus, the findings that were extracted from this investigation closely align with the notion that inauthenticity lies in the relationship between the individual and the group (Pierce, 2015).

What Are the Components of My Professional Identity?

A whole greater than the sum of its parts. It was not enough to simply determine the components of my professional counselor identity because the relationships and interplay process between the components were as significant as the elements that constitute me as an emerging dance/movement therapist. I learned how my personal attributes integrated with my professional skills and training to foster my authentic and effective professional identity. I was also enlightened to how my past experiences inform me and impart information in my present role as a developing dance/movement therapist.

In order for me to achieve authenticity as an effective, empathic, and compassionate dance/movement therapist, I needed to embrace my whole self—personally and professionally, past and present. This allowed for the dynamic and mutual coexistence of all the components of my professional counselor identity, which was not a new and unique finding that emerged out of this study. It has been agreed upon that a greater value cannot be placed on the personal or the professional identity because it is the integration of both, as well as past and present identities, that is vital to enhancing an individual's PCID (Auxier et al., 2003; Boyer, 2008; Firman, 2009; Gibson et al., 2010; Kern, 2004; Lochte, 2017; Moss et al., 2014; Osteen, 2011; Pierce, 2016; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Stokes, 2013; Wagner & Hill, 2015).

The importance of the core-self. A significant revelation in this heuristic inquiry was the clarification and inclusion of my core-self as a component of my professional identity as an emerging dance/movement therapist. Yalom (2002) articulated the importance of therapists' selves and their own feelings in the process of psychotherapy. A therapist's self serves as the best source of reliable data about clients and the interactions that the therapist has with them (Yalom, 2002).

I discovered that my humanness, uniqueness, and the essences that allow me to practice authenticity—by being true to myself, genuine, honest, real, and who and how I am as a developing dance/movement therapist—are deeply rooted in my core-self. This notion is in line with the true self as a vital element to the practice of authenticity (Brown, 2010; Medlock, 2012). The accumulation of additional components, such as my dance background and knowledge, theoretical frameworks in counseling psychology and DMT, and other categories that I collectively identify with are simply surrounding and interacting with my core-self.

Ideally, I would be able to clearly organize these components and allow my core-self to exist among all of the parts, with clarity all of the time. In reality, my core-self becomes buried and lost beneath the clutter of all of the labels, categories, identifiers, and components of my professional identity, at times. This crucial finding is strongly supported by how Lochte (2017) identified integration and “decluttering” to facilitate and enhance her PCID. She acknowledged the importance of integration with clarity in order to answer the question, “Who am I as a dance/movement therapist?” This was one of the overarching questions that manifested in my exploration of how I authentically allow for the coexistence of my personal and professional identities.

Internal Family Systems (IFS) framework. I applied the IFS therapy framework because, as a systems theory, it complemented the primary and overarching theme and assisted me in understanding and exploring the complexity and intricacy of the components of my developing professional counselor identity interfacing with my core-self. In this approach, there is an understanding of the mind as a dynamic system comprised of parts (Schwartz, 2011; Schwartz, 2013). The exiled parts are conceived as the vulnerable parts that are dangerous to the survival of the individual (Schwartz, 2011); they can be equated to the components of my professional identity that may vulnerable blind spots, weak spots, or suppressed parts that I do not wish to be exposed (i.e. conscious vulnerability and imperfections). The protective parts are the defenders of the exiles that manifest through the individual’s behaviors (Schwartz, 2011). These present themselves when I feel as if I am being fake or less than authentic (e.g. relying upon my professional role as a façade). The third part is the Self, which is at the core of every individual that is characterized by a profound sense of calm, confidence, clarity, connectedness, and creativity, which can lead an individual with compassion, acceptance, and curiosity

(Schwartz, 2013). I interpreted this IFS Self as analogous to my core-self being more present as I engage more fully in my practice of authenticity.

It is important to note that in IFS, there are no bad parts (Schwartz, 2011). All parts have valuable attributes that contribute to an individual's ability to exist and thrive in this world (Schwartz, 2011). Likewise, in my PCID, all of the past and present, personal and professional, experiences, roles, and identities have guided me to this profession and will inform and inspire me as an emerging dance/movement therapist. In the application of IFS to my exploration, I was able to compassionately recognize, accept, honor, and own all of my parts as valuable contributors to my whole self and as components of my forming professional counselor identity. I discovered that my authenticity as an emerging dance/movement therapist is rooted and anchored in my core-self, while the parts and layers (i.e. components of my professional identity) surround the essence of my being (i.e. core-self).

What Are the Challenges, Barriers, and Limitations to the Expression of My Authenticity?

I learned that the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity are perceived threats to my own sense of safety, equilibrium, and security personally and professionally. These perceived risks influenced the safety and security I experienced within my core-self, and the state of my core-self impacted how I perceived the challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity on a day-to-day basis. For example, when my core-self felt threatened or unsafe because of an insecurity of not being good enough, failing to meet expectations, feeling vulnerable, or being judged, the expression of my authenticity was curbed in order to protect my core-self from unsafe overexposure. Similarly, if my core-self was already in a state of disequilibrium because of a diminished capability to negotiate my own work-life balance, compassion fatigue, or simply having a tough day, my experience and

perception of fear, shame, and/or any other potential occupational hazards to being wholly authentic as a developing dance/movement therapist were heightened.

Similarly, Pierce (2016) noted that when counselors-in-training were confronted with their own personal limitations, it their expression of authenticity due to the increased vulnerability that accompanies the practice of this phenomenon. These findings also align with Kern's (2004), which noted stigmas surrounding therapists and counselors coping with their own personal mental health and mental illness diagnoses as a challenge to whole and authentic PCID. Finally, Yalom (2002) delineated that the profession of a therapist includes inherent occupational hazards such as being confronted by one's own dark material, transference, and illumination of mistakes by patients and clients. This can cause, even well-experienced clinicians, to not exist authentically in their professional roles by not being real with those they work with and not allowing their own selves to be brought into their work (Yalom, 2002).

Furthermore, obstacles that are typical to the early stages of PCID—fear and anxiety, ambiguity and uncertainty, idealized versus realized expectations (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003)—were similar to the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity—fear, expectations and norms, and vulnerability. Therefore, it seemed that the dissonance I observed in my attempt to achieve authenticity in the context of my forming professional counselor identity was enhanced and manifested by the interplay process between the paralleled hurdles of simultaneous processes.

How Do I know When I Am and When I Am Not Engaging with My Experience and Expression of Authenticity?

I observed that authenticity as a practice cannot be categorized and broken down into a dichotomous and polarized experience. I realized that I am able to bring my attention to when I

am engaging with my experience and expression of authenticity in a sense of more or less, rather than all or nothing. The predominant way that I bring awareness to my way of knowing is through SMIFT, and I have applied the use of *Laban Movement Analysis (LMA)* (see Appendix A)—an objective way to observe, describe, and analyze movement (Tortora, 2006), which is often practiced in DMT—to gauge when I am more or less engaging with my experience and expression of authenticity. I know that I am engaging with my experience and expression of authenticity more when I notice a sensation of freeing my flow. The energy in my body moves outward toward my distal ends, my movement exhibits openness, and I feel connected to my core-distal connectivity (Hackney, 2002). Likewise, I am aware of when I am engaging less with my experience and expression of authenticity when I observe the binding of my flow. The energy in my body pulls inward towards my core, my body encloses, I feel disconnection from my core-distal connectivity, and I assume a screw-like posture—when I pretzel and twist my limbs together.

As discussed earlier, I mentioned my need to discretely differentiate between my experience and expression of authenticity. This differentiation was informed by the above body and movement observations in conjunction with the secondary themes—importance of the core-self and identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity. I started to comprehend my body and movement responses as implicit information, a sensorimotor way of knowing, that facilitated the explicit comprehension of how my core-self felt in the moment. When I engage more with my experience and expression of authenticity—where there is increased congruity and alignment between the two—I encounter enhanced sensations of free flow, openness, and connection to my core-distal connectivity. To refer back to the primary research question, I ring my authenticity bell and am measuring full amplitude on my

authenticity sound system because identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity are low, and my core-self feels safe and secure. Schmid (2001) highlighted the significance of the body in authenticity practice in order to facilitate acceptance of an individual's whole self, which supported the findings above.

I was also able to reflect that when I bound my flow, enclosed my movements, disconnected from my core-distal connectivity, and screwed and twisted my body posturing, my core-self was being confronted by the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity as a reflex. This was an explicit presentation of the interplay process between my core-self and the hurdles to the full expression of my authenticity that illuminated how I know when I am engaging less with the expression of my authenticity. In discovering this, I found that I was not engaging with my experience of authenticity less; in fact, by recognizing, accepting, honoring, and owning the protection of my core-self, I was engaging more with my experience of authenticity. This oppositional relationship—increased experience and decreased expression—created a personal tug-of-war within me, as I expressed my discomfort and true feelings through my nonverbal actions; yet struggled to articulate this verbally.

How Can I Create a Sense of Authenticity Within Myself that is Adaptable to Different Situations and Relationships?

To create a sense of authenticity within myself that is adaptable to different situations and relationships, I must first recognize how engaged I am with my experience and expression of authenticity. If I am minimally engaged, I must identify and acknowledge the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations, in the present situation and relationship, that may be inhibiting my full expression of authenticity. Despite these hindrances, to this full expression, I

must develop a way to recognize, accept, honor, and own my whole self as a developing dance/movement therapist to allow for my practice of authenticity across a wide variety and range of situations and relationships. Some mechanisms to assist with these processes include flexibility, creativity, and *The Moving Cycle* (see Appendix A) DMT framework.

Flexibility. One result that emerged from the theme of identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity was my personal need to increase flexibility and fluidity to strict and rigid approaches. For instance, in approaching my work with my clients and patients I would try to unwaveringly stick to my plan, my techniques, my expectations, etc., only to be confronted with feelings of unsuccessfulness and failure. Also, in trying to be authentic as a developing dance/movement therapist, I firmly held onto being individually authentic, and not always considering the concept of collective authenticity, which left me experiencing and categorizing this phenomenon into being either authentic or inauthentic. My perfectionistic thinking led me to adamantly deny, disregard, dismiss, and devalue experiences that showed vulnerability because I equated them with weakness. Stringently holding to one way of thought and approach can now be identified as a challenge, barrier, and limitation to authenticity practice in my PCID. By softening this stronghold to become more flexible, I can develop a means to practice authenticity across a greater number of scenarios and encounters as an emerging dance/movement therapist.

Flexibility and adaptability in boundaries as a developing dance/movement therapist is another important way for me to practice authenticity. Limiting the malleability of professional boundaries will inherently curb the expression of my authenticity in PCID. Increasing flexibility in my concept of boundaries does not imply weakening my boundaries, and in fact, it means the exact opposite: creating stronger boundaries that are resilient and adaptable to a variety of

situations and relationships. In some work environments, such as systems (e.g. hospitals, large institution, and social service programs), rigidity in boundaries may be a common expectation, practice, or norm of the work place culture. This was referenced in the open letter to the Authentic Me that identified my struggle with expectations, judgments, ethics, sociopolitical and cultural views or norms, and system protocols that may cause intrapersonal conflict and disharmony surrounding misalignments within my professional identity in order to maintain a level of professionalism. This misalignment between the individual within collective may cause incongruities within one's professional identity, challenging the expression and experience of an individual's authenticity in the professional role (Medlock, 2012; Pierce, 2015).

Creativity. Creativity was also identified as a crucial component to establishing a sense of authenticity that applies to a variety of situations and relationships. Brown (2010), Firman (2009), Schwartz (2011), and Yalom (2002) offered creativity as a way to foster open, honest, and true self-expression that also avoids rigidity, standardization, and conformity. In my experience of engaging with my full expression and experience of authenticity, individual and collective, I recognized how flexibility and creativity go hand-in-hand to enable me to adapt to whatever confines, structures, and limitations exist in the situation or relationship that I am in.

In a similar way that my movement can adapt to the confines of a space, and the loomed fabric was left incomplete for the possibility and potential of change, I can flexibly and fluidly adapt and adjust by exercising my creativity and creative process in my PCID. This provided a dynamic and adaptable means for me to indirectly and abstractly reference and express my authenticity, while also fitting within the rigid boundaries, or confines, of whatever place, system, and/or position I may exist. Furthermore, creativity fosters flexibility and adaptability to enable the presence, coexistence, and embrace of all of my parts and the relationships between

parts that comprise my whole self, including my core-self. In turn, this invites open, honest, and true self-expression, rather than crowding out or overcoming my core-self by the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity. These results point to how I might develop and establish an effective way to foster and cultivate authenticity across a variety of relationships and situations.

The Moving Cycle. The Moving Cycle, a DMT framework developed by Caldwell (1996), involves four sequential steps: awareness, owning, appreciation, and action. These resemble the four steps that I identified in my own process: recognizing, accepting, honoring, and owning, in order to promote increased engagement with my practice of authenticity in my PCID. I believe that there are aspects of The Moving Cycle that share elements to the phenomenon of authenticity practice as I have come to understand it; therefore, it may lend itself as a framework for understanding, exploring, and engaging with one's subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity.

The first step is awareness, and Caldwell (1996) noted that it is a body experience of sensing, identifying, and waking up in order to bring attention to something. This was similar to my first step of recognition as I brought awareness to the unease, disparity, and dissonance as a developing dance/movement therapist. I sensed that I was not being true to myself, that my personal identity and humanness was becoming lost, and I was unable to integrate a professional counselor identity that I felt fit who I am and how I am as an emerging dance/movement therapist. These sensations included: binding my flow of energy, enclosing movements, disconnecting from my core, and screwing or twisting my body posture.

The second step is owning, and it involves taking responsibility through the recovery of personal power (Caldwell, 1996). Although this term is the same as the one I used for my final

step, the placement of this step in this sequence corresponds to my second step of accepting. Caldwell's (1996) step of owning seems very closely connected to the phenomenon of authenticity, because she referenced the increased intensity that individuals may encounter as they return to experiences that limited them from being fully themselves in the present-moment. In my process, intensity grew when I was confronted with the root cause of the challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity in my PCID. For example, the conditioned fears and shame that I had deeply internalized in my personal development had carried over into my professional development. This step led me to seek out personal therapy in order to reclaim my power and take responsibility, as I accepted these as parts of me and components of my professional identity.

The next step of The Moving Cycle is appreciation, and it involves recovering an individual's ability to unconditionally accept themselves (Caldwell, 1996). This sequence of the process emphasizes and encourages self-love, self-acceptance, and self-compassion (Caldwell, 1996). In this study, I referred to this step as honoring because I learned to exercise love, acceptance, and compassion towards all of the parts that comprise my whole self; which was after recognizing and accepting all parts and their contributions as valuable to my PCID and practice of authenticity.

The final step, action, requires the individual to take the experience of the whole process out into the world by manifesting it in relation to others (Caldwell, 1996). In order to complete this cycle, the individual takes the implicit transformation and makes it explicit through embodied action and application to promote total mind-body integration. This correlates to my final step of owning, because it was brought to my attention that in order to fully engage in my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity, I needed to take action through

ownership of who I am and how I am as an emerging dance/movement therapist. I went about this by creating and presenting my comprehensive depiction of authenticity through the three composites and producing this traditional written thesis. Currently, I am also exercising and strengthening my practice of authenticity through the conscious choices and efforts to embody my authentic self in my PCID as a developing dance/movement therapist.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite this study's contributions to my understanding of my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity as it relates to PCID, there were several limitations to this specific investigation that must be considered and addressed. First, a heuristic methodology was employed, focusing on myself and my exploration as the sole participant. Results and findings, then, are not generalizable to everyone. As the only participant, cultural considerations were an additional limitation; my worldview, values, beliefs, and culture are unique and subjective to my personal experiences. Validation strategies were also limited. While I hired a research consultant, her feedback may have been influenced by our former relationship with each other as therapist and client. The minimally structured thesis art exhibition and performance was another concern, because audience responses were only offered by those who were willing and comfortable with verbally sharing with the group; therefore, some valuable feedback could have been withheld. This particular study would have benefited from increased scrutiny of the results and findings for bias through triangulation and/or a resonance panel.

The results of this heuristic inquiry will hopefully inspire further research that directly addresses authenticity practice in PCID and the creative arts therapies, and an initial recommendation for future research is to conduct this study on a larger population. This research study could be applicable to other dance/movement therapists and allied mental health

professionals, specifically in other creative and expressive arts therapies. A potential primary research question may be: How do creative and expressive arts therapists understand their subjective lived experience and expression of the phenomenon of authenticity in their development of their professional counselor identities? Another recommendation for future research is to longitudinally investigate the phenomenon of authenticity in PCID over the course of the professional lifespan. This could be guided by the following research question: How does the relationship between the phenomenon of authenticity and PCID evolve over the course of the professional lifespan?

A couple of findings emerged out of this study that were not fully developed. The first was the potential for differentiating between the subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity due to the identified challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of authenticity in my PCID. I am curious to know if this will change as I continue to explore my personal and professional practice of authenticity. A final recommendation for future research would be to explore whether or not authenticity as a practice can be separated and polarized into two distinct entities, and if so, what the significance of this would be on how one goes about practicing authenticity. My findings indicated that the practice of authenticity cannot be separated into two distinct categories—authentic and inauthentic—and is more appropriately measured using gradation. Meanwhile, in the literature on authenticity, researchers disagreed on the notion of authenticity being differentiated into authentic or inauthentic (Brown, 2010; Higgins, 2016; Jungers & Gregoire, 2016; Pierce, 2015; Starr, 2008).

Implications for the Field of DMT

Rogers (1961) valued authenticity, emphasizing concepts of genuineness, avoiding the use of the façade, and increasing transparency on the part of the therapist to engage in a person to

person therapeutic relationship. Yalom (2002) echoed this in his delineation of the lack of trust that manifests between a client or patient and the therapist when the therapist does not engage in the therapeutic relationship in an authentic manner, which may present in the following ways: therapists' avoidance to bring their selves into the therapeutic relationship; therapists' lack of acknowledgement of their own human condition and personal limitations; appearing unreal or ingenuine with the client or patient; standardizing treatment, approach, and encounters with the other (i.e. rigidity); and hiding behind the façade of technique and theory. Many of these implications of authenticity, outlined above by experts in the field of psychotherapy, were reiterated and echoed in this research study.

I discovered how the inclusion of authenticity practice in my PCID has enhanced my effectiveness and resiliency as I continue to grow into my professional role as a dance/movement therapist. First, I have realized the value and significance of recognizing, accepting, honoring, and owning my whole self in order to effectively do the same with those that I engage in a relationship with (e.g. clients, patients, peers, colleagues, supervisors, mentors, etc.). Practicing authenticity promotes the inclusion of the therapist's self, and allows for the expression of the other's self, through self-compassion and compassion, self-acceptance and acceptance, and self-love and love. Second, I have learned to embrace past and present roles, personal and professional identities, vulnerabilities, mistakes, and weaknesses as equally important in their contributions to who I am and how I am in my developing professional role. Through these revelations, I can foster self-care and a well-rounded and resilient professional counselor identity as a dance/movement therapist that is more adept at guarding and defending against the occupational hazards, such as compassion fatigue and burnout. This is all applicable to the field of DMT in how dance/movement therapists bring their whole selves into their work on a body

and mind level. Recognizing, accepting, honoring, and owning one's self in their *body knowledge* (see Appendix A)—the way that an individual understands and makes meaning of movement behaviors (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012)—as a way to inform their interventions and approaches to engaging in the therapeutic movement relationship, is one way that this may occur.

The most notable implication and application of this investigation for myself and the field of DMT was the acknowledgment of, and potential to model, my body as a way of knowing. I can sense how I am engaging with my subjective lived experience and expression of authenticity to then inform my conscious choices and efforts as I move forward with the information gleaned. I am empowered to use my creativity and creative process to navigate and negotiate the difficult situations and relationships when my whole and authentic self come across the challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity. Again, implementing recognition, acceptance, honor, and ownership of my experiences and nonverbal expression of authenticity to verbally and congruently articulate these is valuable to me and to those with whom I relate. In the field of DMT, the interplay between the body and mind as a way to gather information for an individual is fundamental. For me, this meant learning how to trust my increased awareness of my freeing and binding flow, my connection to the core-distal fundamental pattern of total body connectivity, and my body posturing (i.e. screw-like and twisted, enclosed, open, etc.) to understand how I am experiencing my whole and authentic self as a developing dance/movement therapist in relationships, both intrapersonal and interpersonal. In other words, a major lesson that emerged for me, that may serve as a model for others, is how I use my enhanced body awareness to deepen and further awareness of my true, whole, and authentic self.

Finally, this study offered The Moving Cycle (Caldwell, 1996) as a potential DMT framework that may lend itself to exploring, understanding, and engaging in one's practice of

authenticity. The Moving Cycle highlighted specific and sequential steps that use the body-mind connection to increase awareness, act upon the enhanced knowledge, and then engage in the transformative and integrative processes of authenticity and PCID. This DMT framework supported the practice of authenticity within the context of PCID as a whole-body experience and process.

Conclusion

The purpose of this investigation was to explore and understand my subjective lived experience of authenticity as a developing dance/movement therapist. It was guided by the primary research question: How do I understand and express my subjective lived experience of authenticity as a developing dance/movement therapist? This was supplemented by four secondary questions: What are the components of my professional identity? How do I know when I am and when I am not engaging with the expression of my authenticity? What are the challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity? How can I develop a sense of authenticity within myself that is adaptable to different situations and relationships?

Following the completion of this investigation, the findings have led me to develop a working definition of authenticity as I have come to understand it within the context of PCID. Authenticity is a present-moment practice intended to recognize, accept, honor, and own the whole-self across a variety of situations and relationships. It is mutually individual and collective, because it hinges upon an individual's relationship to the core-self (intrapersonal) and relationship to others (interpersonal). The practice is constructed upon the exercise of compassion and self-compassion, acceptance and self-acceptance, love and self-love, and ownership of the whole self, as uniquely and clearly distinguished from others.

Conclusively, I have gathered that authenticity is an ever-changing, fleeting, flexible, and dynamic practice across all situations, relationships, and domains of life. Specific to PCID, the notion that one of the many occupational hazards for therapists is existing as a human who works with the human condition, seemingly enhanced the value as well as the challenge of practicing authenticity. Like the art of dance, it is vital to heed to the notion of authenticity as a practice and a process; there will be good and bad, easier and more difficult, secure and insecure days. Yet, through commitment, passion, effort, and dedication the dancer exercises and practices to become better, stronger, and well-rehearsed; just as I, as a developing dance/movement therapist, will continue to engage with the exercises and practices of my own dance of authenticity.

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Appendix A: Definition of Terms

Authenticity

Developed from the findings of this research study, authenticity is a practice of aligning one's way of being with one's true core-self by engaging in the process of making the conscious choice and effort to embrace the presence and existence of one's whole-self, personally and professionally, in an intrapersonal and interpersonal sense. It is a practice that exhibits ownership of one's personal uniqueness, honesty, integrity, love, acceptance, compassion, and genuineness towards oneself to promote this in relationships with others.

Binding Flow

Binding flow is demonstrated “when the antagonistic muscle tightens and resists the movement of the agonist muscle, and the movement is restrained” (Amighi, Loman, Lewis, & Sossin, 1999, p. 14), such as carefully tracing a drawing (Barteneiff, 2002).

Body Knowledge

Body knowledge is the developed understanding of how an individual makes meaning out of movement through a process of categorizing, abstracting, and generalizing (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012). This occurs through personal and physical experiences in the world as an individual learns to discern similarities across different movements (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012). “With time and experience, each person finds a way to discern related and unrelated movements, and cluster those that are similar. These schemas will differ from person to person” (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 50).

Core-distal Fundamental Pattern of Total Body Connectivity

One of Irmgard Barteneiff's six fundamental patterns of total body connectivity, core-distal patterning articulates “that the whole body can be organized by a pattern of connectivity

that begins in the center core of the body and radiates out through the torso to the proximal joints, the mid-limbs and all the way to the distal ends of the extremities (Hackney, 2002, p. 68). Implications of this pattern include (a) beginning to locate one's own individual center for organizing movement, (b) differentiating oneself from the environment, (c) starting to discover a place of central importance within oneself where one can connect and organize all aspects of one's own movement, (d) beginning to establish one's own kinesphere or personal space bubble, (e) exercising one's whole body moving into and away from center to learn what is "me" and what is not "me," and (f) learning to follow one's own rhythm of coming into self and going out to the world (Hackney, 2002).

Core-self

One of the three cornerstones in the Internal Family Systems therapy framework that describes an innate core to every individual system (Schwartz, 2013). The core-self has the ability to passively witness and actively lead, internally and externally; and when the self is able to differentiate from the other parts, it has the wisdom and clarity of perspective necessary to lead or guide the individual effectively (2013).

Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT)

DMT is the psychotherapeutic use of dance, movement, and creativity as a process to further the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of an individual that is grounded in the assumption that the body and mind are connected and interrelated (American Dance Therapy Association, 2016).

Explicit

According to Siegel (2010), explicit refers to the secondary, integrated, and declarative level of awareness when material has been processed and understood consciously.

Expression

The act of expressing or conveying one's thoughts or feelings in words, art, music, or movement (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2017; Oxford University Press, 2017).

Freeing Flow

Freeing flow is demonstrated “when the agonist[s] [muscle] is less restrained by the antagonist or opposing muscle, [and] the movement is unhampered” (Amighi et al., 1999, p. 14), such as free finger painting (Barteneiff, 2002).

Glassybaby

Handcrafted, blown-glass votives and glasses uniquely inspired, designed, and colored by individual glassblowers in Seattle, WA (Glassybaby, 2017).

Implicit

According to Siegel (2010), implicit refers to the initial, primary, differentiated, nonintegrated, and nondeclarative level of awareness when material has not yet been consciously processed or understood.

Internal Family Systems (IFS)

A system approach to therapy developed by Schwartz (2011, 2013) that understands the mind as a dynamic, multiplicity system comprised of parts—the exiled parts are conceived as the vulnerable parts that are dangerous to the survival of the individual, and the protective parts are the defenders of the exiles that manifest through the individual's behaviors. A third part, the self, is at the core of every individual that is characterized by a profound sense of calm, confidence, clarity, connectedness, and creativity, which can lead an individual with compassion, acceptance, and curiosity (see Core-self).

Laban Movement Analysis (LMA)

Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a taxonomy that objectively describes movement and offers insight into human movement by breaking it apart to investigate the component elements (Moore, 2014). LMA embraces both the analytic—a third-person perspective, viewing the body movement from the outside, and a somatic—a first-person perspective, relying on insider knowledge (Moore, 2014).

The Moving Cycle

A DMT framework developed by Caldwell (1996) that involves four sequential steps to facilitate the healing process—awareness, owning, appreciation, and action.

Multiplicity/Plurality

Multiplicity and plurality were used synonymously to refer to the notion that a whole is composed of an accumulation of multiple parts (Schmid, 2001; Schwartz, 2013).

Personal Identity

Personal identity refers to an individual's values, theoretical stances, roles, and experiences outside of the professional identity (Auxier et al., 2003; Osteen, 2011; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992).

Professional Counselor Identity Development (PCID)

PCID is a developmental process of professional identity development specific to the counseling profession, and the stages can be identified as counselor-in-training, new or novice counselor, and advanced or experienced counselor (Auxier et al., 2003; Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). It is a complex and reflexive process of integrating personal and professional experiences, roles, and identities across the professional lifespan—past, present, and future (Auxier et al., 2003; Firman, 2009; Gibson et al., 2010; Kern,

2004; Moss et al., 2014; Nel & Fouché, 2017; Orkibi, 2014; Osteen, 2011; Pierce, 2016; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992).

Professional Identity

Professional identity refers to the values, theoretical stance, methods, and techniques used by an individual that is specific to one's profession (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992).

SIFT/SMIFT

SIFT is an approach developed by Siegel (2007) to bring attention to the whole body-mind experience through sensations, images, feelings, and thoughts (p. 333). SMIFT is an adaptation by Susan Imus (2011, personal communication), from SIFT, to expand a person's awareness to include the body's movements and promotes embracing the dynamic experience of an interconnected body-mind.

Subjective Lived Experience

Traditionally associated with the phenomenological research methodology, it is an experience understood from the point of view of the participant—how the individual constructs their own perception and life space, allowing for multiplicity in realities (Mertens, 2005).

Whole Self

The complex and intricate composition of parts and the relationships between these components of an individual, which may include: beliefs, values, worldview, vulnerability, suffering, personal movement profile, body knowledge, personal identity, professional identity, core-self, etc. (Brown, 2010; Firman, 2009; Kern, 2004).

Zshüzshing

The liminal experience of embracing one and the other(s), or all of the parts that constitute a whole.

Appendix B: Research Consultant Agreement

Columbia

C O L L E G E C H I C A G O

Research Consultant Agreement

Agreement for Participation in a Research Study as a Research Consultant

Title of Research Project:

A Heuristic Inquiry into the Expression of the Subjective Lived Experience of Authenticity as a Dance/Movement Therapist

Main Researcher: Elyssa M. Yeh, 206.393.7879

Faculty Advisor: Jessica Young, BC-DMT, LCPC, jyoung@colum.edu, 312.369.6893

Chair of Thesis Committee: Laura Downey, BC-DMT, LPC, GL-CMA, ldowney@colum.edu, 312.369.8617

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest and consideration to participate in my heuristic inquiry into the expression of the subjective lived experience of authenticity as a dance/movement therapist as my research consultant. This agreement will provide the information you will need to understand the purpose of this study, requirements of the research consultant role, possible risks and ethical considerations, and any additional costs and commitments agreed upon by the researcher and the research consultant for this specific study.

You are being asked to participate in this heuristic inquiry as the research consultant because you have a greater understanding of the researcher and the topic being investigated. Furthermore, your experiences, insights, and contributions are valued to provide validation and challenges of themes extrapolated. Thus, your role as a research consultant will consist of dialoguing and serving as a sounding board during the immersion, explication, and illumination stages of this heuristic inquiry.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this heuristic research study is to creatively explore my subjective lived experience of authenticity, and how I negotiate the expression of my authentic self as a dance/movement therapist. Additionally, challenges, barriers, and limitations to the

expression of my authenticity will be investigated and addressed. Finally, an operational definition will be developed from the findings of this self-study to contribute to the existing and current body of knowledge as well as inform future inquiries and research on the topic.

Following the completion of this research study, I hope to answer the following questions:

- How do I understand and express my subjective lived experience of authenticity as a dance/movement therapist?
- What are the components of my professional identity?
- What are the challenges, barriers, and limitations to the expression of my authenticity?
- How do I know when I am not engaging with the expression of my authenticity?
- How can I create a sense of authenticity within myself that is adaptable to different situations/relationships?

PROCEDURES

- Initial steps for this self-study will be to collect data in the form of art-making in response to the research questions. Then, data analysis will utilize the method of manual data analysis adapted from Giorgi by Forinash to categorize and extract themes.
- Part of your role will take place during the data collection and data analysis process. Following completion of two-weeks, and then at the four-week point, of data collection and data analysis scheduled consultation sessions at your office will take place. This will consist of discussion about the themes that have emerged from the data collection and data analysis to each of these points. Data will be brought to your office, in addition to the themes identified by the researcher, so validation or challenge of the themes can ensue during these sessions.
- In addition to the validation that occurs during the data collection and data analysis stages of this investigation, your role as research consultant will also exist during the illumination and explication stages. A composite depiction will be constructed to encompass all of the findings and themes pulled from this heuristic inquiry. Then, a final consultation session will be scheduled to provide validation and challenge to this composite depiction. Again, this will involve dialogue, and, a dance/movement piece, choreographed by the researcher, will be performed to incorporate themes and findings comprehensively.
- In order to responsibly and effectively apply feedback from these consultations, notes outlining confirmations, validations, and challenges to the themes discussed will be recorded.

POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS

One of the largest risks or discomforts to be considered is the duality of roles that you hold as a research consultant and personal therapist. Due to the personal growth that is involved with this study, you have been invited to participate in the role as research consultant. Moreover, because of your greater understanding of me and my relationship to this topic, including you as the research consultant is important to highlight. With that being said, due to the duality of roles, it is necessary as an ethical consideration to explicate clear and distinct boundaries/limits between roles. Further, it is critical to move forward with heightened awareness by addressing the intentionality of scheduling and using the consultation sessions as completely separate from personal therapy.

RIGHTS

Being a research consultant in this study is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may also refuse to participate at any time without penalty. If you have further questions, comments, or concerns that you wish to discuss about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the main researcher, Elyssa Yeh at 206.393.7879, elyssa.yeh@loop.colum.edu; or the faculty advisor Jessica Young at 312.369.6893, jyoung@colum.edu.

COST OR COMMITMENT

- The time commitment for this role will involve two to three, one-hour long, consultation sessions, over the course of a two-month period.
 - The first two sessions will take place during the data collection and data analysis period of this research study. Meetings will occur once a week every two to three weeks.
 - The third session will take place towards the end of the research study, following construction of the composite depiction of findings and conclusions. This meeting will occur approximately four to six weeks following the second consultation session.
- These sessions will occur in the office of the research consultant. This time will be devoted to dialogue and discussion to validate and/or challenge themes the researcher draws from data collection and data analysis.
- The agreed upon cost is \$80.00 per one-hour long consultation session. This will be paid upon completion of each consultation session between the researcher and the research consultant.

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research study as a research consultant. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss with the researcher. If I have questions or concerns that arise later about the research or my

rights as a research consultant, I can refer to one of the contacts listed above. I understand that I may withdraw from the role of research consultant at any time without penalty. I will receive a copy of this agreement.

**Research Consultant
Signature:**

Print Name:

Date:

**Principle Investigator's
Signature:**

Print Name:

Date:

Appendix C: Interconnectedness Between Similes and Visual Art

As if I'm a glassy body - naturally worn down, so exactly like over-hor

Like my fashion style, wearable, class, etc.

Personal my story

Unique fingerprint

Colorful

Relational

Fuzzy

Chameleon

genuine

ESUVASHY

concurrent

open & honest

real

Like the colorfully woven fabric that made up my fabric in tapestry

Like my own personal flag that represents me as a whole person

A whole greater than the sum of its parts

Like a jawbreaker that provide flavor & color of (combination) if both

Like I'm a cat - I'm a spilt random in past relationship & unpredictable & unpredictable of together

Like the unique & different piece that click to - better to - great my own piece

Appendix D: Open Letter to the Authentic Me

To the Authentic Me,

The me at the core of my-Self. The human and person beneath the layers. The layers of roles and identities draped and worn like a wardrobe through the fads of life. Sometimes these styles have been put on you because it is what you're supposed to wear—it's what you're expected to wear...what you've been told to wear. Sometimes you have chosen to wear these clothes because it is what is fashionable—what everyone else is wearing, and heaven forbid you don't fit in with the “cool kids.”

And yet, know that all of these styles do not look exactly the same on any two people because it is the human at the core, the person and the personality, that wears these clothes and makes each individual wearer, dare I say it, authentic. And also know that what the person is dressed in does not make the person their clothes.

This, my dear friend, is what is important to remember. I am who I am and not what I wear. Now, say that to yourself...I am who I am, and I am not what I wear. Say it until you believe it deeply, truthfully, honestly, and wholly.

You are a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Colorfully woven together in a distinctly beautiful and wonderful being. Your very core is layered and complex, and it cannot be simplified to one component, factor, experience, belief, etc. This is what I mean by authentic. To quote the brilliant and inspiring writer, Dr. Seuss, “Today you are you that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you!”

You. You need to recognize this—you need to acknowledge, accept, and own who you are. Your worth and your value, no matter what you've been told, can be seen, felt, heard, and experienced by who you are and how you are, and what you do does not define your self-worth. Of course, actions speak louder than words, so move and dance what you do and how you do with the intention, purpose, and integrity of expressing who you are at your very core.

Remember that authenticity is a practice—it is not rigid, neither cut and dry, nor set in stone. There is neither an authentic person nor an inauthentic person. The practice of authenticity is an act, a way of being, a way of moving, dancing, and living. The experience of being authentic will shift, adapt, change, and flow.

How you sense, feel, and know your authentic experience, though, cannot and will not exist without its pesky, protective, loving, and caring companion—the “inauthentic” parts. These parts of you emerge and feel inauthentic at times because they aim to authentically take care of you, protect you, and remind you of your innate humanness and personal identity at your very core. These tag-a-long companions aid in the adaptable transparency of expressing your experience of authenticity to protect you, to protect another, to protect a relationship. So, notice the curtain—its opaqueness and its clarity—between your expression and your experience of authenticity.

Use your creative process to be mindful and notice the shifts. Your creative process is one way you express your-Self authentically. Your moments of uninterrupted, unapologetic, and free-flowing creativity reflect the alignment and congruent instances of your experience and expression of being authentic.

You feel free and open to express your process of being and owning the authentic you when you can allow your very core, your Self, to be exposed, shown, presented, and received. Take note of how this is a reflection and expression of being authentic, and remember to also notice when it does not seem to exist genuinely, freely, honestly, fully, and fearlessly. For this may be a moment to observe and wonder about the discomforts of feeling inauthentic.

Allow your awareness antennae to be sensitive to you and your body's feelings, sensations, movements, images, and thoughts as you oscillate along the spectrum of authenticity. Be present and mindful with all of these pieces and parts—the relationships, the existence of one AND the other(s) as they flexibly and fluidly inter-Play with each other authentically.

Your authentic self—your humanness and personness—includes both your personal and professional selves, intimately and integrally *zshüezshing* together. Honor that. Honor your-Self and your-Selves.

Practice self-care because it is not selfish, it is self-compassion, self-acceptance, self-love. The cornerstones to practicing authenticity. Honor and own all of that. Practice authenticity on your own as your-Self, and then practice with others in your personal and professional roles. Seeing that practice makes perfect (though, is there such a thing as perfect? Yes, that is rhetorical.), practice accepting, loving, respecting, honoring, and owning you in ALL of its realms, facets, and relationships.

And remember that this practice is a process. Sometimes there will be difficulties to fully experiencing and expressing your authenticity. At times, simply living inauthentically seems like the better option because it is easy, because it is safe, and because you can ignore and disregard the challenges, limitations, and barriers.

Fear is one of the greatest challenges to the experience and expression of authenticity. Fear of the unknown and uncertainty. Fear of not meeting expectations, whether these expectations have been set by you or set by others. Fear of not being enough. Fear of not being as good as the next person. Fear of your humanness. Fear of judgment, again, whether this comes from yourself or from others. Fear of vulnerability.

Fear is in your feelings and emotions wheel for a reason. It is protective—it anticipates and works to cultivate safety and protection. Safety and protection for you, safety and protection for others, and safety and protection of relationships. (Hmm, sounds like that one troublesome companion—how did I refer to this? Ah yes, the “inauthentic” part. Maybe it is granted the power of fear...curious.)

Shame is another great antagonist to the expression of authenticity. Shame is learned and stems from the past. You learned the feelings and sensations of shame—you know, those icky feelings

of discomfort that you try to ignore and deny their existence. Those feelings and sensations that might trigger fear, embarrassment, anxiety...the list goes on. Shame is one of the greatest barriers to allowing your-Self to be seen, heard, and felt authentically.

Finally, your experience and expression of authenticity may be limited by the requirements of your professional role. Systems and protocols might limit your ability to act on your experience of authenticity. Ethics, clinical choice, and boundaries may elicit feelings and sensations of limiting the disclosure of you, your humanness, and core-Self (i.e. values, beliefs, body knowledge/body prejudice). You're left with thoughts and feelings that you—your authentic Self, your core-Self—are being challenged and curbed by “the man.” Sometimes, this may be the case...sometimes not. And yet, this calls for creating an outlet to honor your authenticity in whatever means fits the situation.

So, how will you create a way to honor your authenticity when these scenarios happen? What can you do?

Well, for starters, exercise the cornerstones of authenticity practice—self-care, self-compassion, self-acceptance, self-love, and ownership of your-Self. Allow for the practice of Siegel's curiosity, openness, acceptance, and love (COAL) when the challenges, barriers, and limitations to your experience and expression of authenticity come rearing their ugly heads. And, of course, remember to allow your creativity and creative process to bloom, grow, and thrive—take everything in stride because this is also a way to practice authenticity.

Authentic me, we live in a day and age where social, political, and cultural influences are enormous. We live in a time and place where judgment is quick, expectations are high, and it seems like there is a good or a bad, a right or a wrong, a black or a white stance for everything. Authenticity is not a practice of one or the other, it is a movement to embrace one AND the other, or all—all of the parts that make up the whole.

There will be times when this seems impossible. There will be moments when you feel alone and rebellious as you choose to own and honor your individuality, originality, truthfulness, genuineness, uniqueness, and congruence of your experience and your expression of you from your core to the end of every fiber of your being. There may even be situations where those who you trust and care about on the deepest level question your choices. Maybe it is you who questions your choices, and stands in your own way.

These will be the hardest, most difficult, most uncomfortable, and yet, easiest moments to seek the easy way out. However, there is a way to avoid betraying your-Self and others, and I challenge you to practice this, no matter what. Remember, that this is all intertwined with the choice to live authentically.

So, choose to be-YOU-tiful, especially if it requires getting creative in your Self-expression!

