

EXAMINING MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS
IN NON-TRADITIONAL AREAS OF APPLICATION:
AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY OF CREATIVITY APPROACH

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

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School of Family and Human Services
College of Human Ecology

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ABSTRACT

Marriage and family therapists (MFTs) over the past twenty years have increased their visibility by using their clinical skills and a systemic framework in other areas outside of therapy (i.e., business, school, medicine). Many of these individuals have pioneered roads of systems theory application through a creative process. Traditional creativity research has focused mainly on individual factors. However, Csikszentmihalyi's theories of flow and creativity have offered important insight on the systemic nature of the creative process. Recently, research regarding intrinsic motivation and group creativity has provided more insight on how Csikszentmihalyi's theory could be further developed. Furthermore, applying an ecological systems theory framework to his current model provides additional levels of influence to be examined in regards to maximizing creative potential in individuals and groups. Using deductive and inductive methodologies, an ecological systems theory of creativity is presented providing a framework for studying how MFTs that have successfully entered into non-traditional realms of systemic application go through the creative process of entering into their endeavors. Interviews with successful MFTs applying skills in non-traditional areas of applications were conducted using a modified phenomenological approach. Creative processes were outlined based on themes and patterns that emerged during the analysis. Implications of these findings are made regarding how to improve creativity in MFTs at the individual, academic, and professional field levels. In addition, implications are made regarding how to improve student recruitment and maximize potential in MFT trainees. Finally, implications regarding the maximization of productivity in university settings and applying systemic creativity to business, school, government, and education settings are presented.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the hope that there is more out there
than we sometimes believe or see.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

In Martin's (2000) play, "Picasso at the Lapin Agile," Albert Einstein and Pablo Picasso have a heated debate about the value of genius and talent. Einstein is on the verge of inventing his theory of relativity while Picasso is on the verge of painting his *Les Femmes d'Alger*. They eventually have a self-actualizing moment when they realize they have equally valuable abilities. However, during this act of the play, Elvis Presley enters the picture and challenges the notion that genius is not always found in an academic or philosophical setting by describing the historical impact he will have through his music. The play presents some interesting dilemmas that question the nature of creativity, genius, and societal impact. Is creativity a product of high cognitive abilities? Is creativity defined by the culture of the time period? Are there certain universal traits that produce creative individuals across various fields and disciplines? How do individuals experience the creative process?

Importance of Creativity Research

The importance of researching creativity is apparent as one begins to examine the impact of creative individuals, groups, and time periods on an historical level. It is difficult to quantify the value of Martin Luther King's philosophies or the inventions of Thomas Edison. It would be hard to imagine what our lives would be like without the creative flow of energy found in the Renaissance period or the Industrialized Revolution. Equally, it is an interesting question to ask what our lives would be like if certain individuals had been more creative. If creativity could be a trait that is developed, what societal, political, technological, artistic, or philosophical breakthroughs could have occurred if certain individuals were given the chance to be more creative. One merely has to look at the Dark Ages to see what a lack of creativity can do to society. Thus, understanding the nature of creativity seems to have important implications on multiple levels. If one could begin to develop methods to help improve creativity in an individual or group, progression in a particular discipline could heighten exponentially. Furthermore, the impact of creativity on a profession like marriage and family therapy could help raise clinical skills, supervisory practices, training strategies, and research endeavors to a new level of expertise while improving the potential of the field in general. Equally, understanding the process of how an individual or group becomes creative may offer insight on how to develop creativity.

Numerous researchers have attempted to understand the concept of creativity within individual, disciplinary, historical, and societal contexts. Multiple professions have examined creativity in order to understand how to improve various aspects of the individual and society. Business researchers tend to focus on improving leadership, marketing, and strategic planning skills through understanding the impact of creativity (e.g., Center for Creative Leadership, 2006; Ryan Center for Creativity & Innovation, 2006). A number of disciplines have examined creativity within the realms of intelligence and education suggesting that creativity may be a result of learning strategies or that it is a predictor of genius (i.e., Howard Gardner, Paul Torrence, David Feldman, Getzels & Jackson). Simonton (1984; 1990) has explored the impact of creative achievements historically through quantitative means. Other researchers have tried to map the cognitive processes involved in creative discovery and creative thinking (i.e., Herbert Simon, David Perkins). Although only a few research disciplines examining creativity have been mentioned, it is apparent that defining creativity as a universal term or single domain is difficult due to the wide range of foci regarding creativity research. However, it is apparent that creativity research is becoming an increasingly important area of study in many disciplines.

Defining Creativity

For many, the definition of creativity itself is a mystical, elusive term that encaptures numerous meanings and social constructs. Creativity can be viewed as an adjective describing various characteristics of a person or an idea. It can also be viewed as a result, in which creativity is produced after a sacrifice of time and effort. Others view creativity in terms of a passion or “fuel” that gives energy and motivation to an individual or endeavor while creativity can be seen as a process one experiences. Operationalizing the concept of creativity can be difficult. However, for the purpose of this study, creativity will be defined based on Sternberg and Lubart’s (1999) description of creativity as “the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints” (p. 3). Thus, creativity could include the creation of a novel idea, product, theory, application, etc. that is useful to some portion of society.

In regards to the creative process, multiple theories exist attempting to explain important factors that influence the development of creativity (Sternberg, 1999). The majority of these theories focus on individual traits and/or processes. In order to understand the process of

creativity, literature addressing systemic concepts were sought. Unfortunately, very little research exists that addresses factors outside of the individual's experience. This is probably because the majority of creativity research stems from the fields of psychology and business. Some business researchers have examined the importance of creativity within group processes which will be reviewed in Chapter 2; however, research addressing the systemic nature of creativity in general is lacking.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1996; 1999) has developed what he calls a systems theory of creativity. He defines a creative person as "someone whose thoughts or actions change a domain (i.e., music), or establish a new domain...however, that domain cannot be changed without the explicit or implicit consent of the field responsible for it" (p.28). It is interesting to note that Csikszentmihalyi's definition of creativity includes three required levels of influence: a) A creative person with certain traits, b) An act, idea, and/or product that changes an existing domain, and c) A discipline or field that accepts a change to a given domain. Thus, creativity not only indicates a novel idea, but it indicates a relationship between a person, an idea, and a system of others that nurtures the idea. In addition, his definition of creativity suggests that an actual product is formed through a person carrying an idea through its development. Thus, merely thinking of a new idea would not suggest that a person is creative by this definition; creativity requires a person to take a new idea into the real world and actually "create" something that moves society forward.

Unfortunately, Csikszentmihalyi does not fully examine the systemic nature of creativity. Although he includes the domain and the field as influences beyond the individual that provide feedback to the creative process, he does not include influences outside of the individual, field, and domain. Thus, in order to examine the creative process through a systemic lens, it became necessary to develop a more systemic theory of creativity by combining Csikszentmihalyi's theory of creativity with theoretical propositions formed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) regarding his theory of ecological systems. In addition, empirical literature addressing intrinsic motivation and group processes were used to add to Csikszentmihalyi's original theory to bring it up to speed with current research trends. The development of this theory will be described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Application of Creativity to the Field of Family Therapy

Recently, mental health disciplines have begun to research the nature of creativity in regards to the therapeutic process. The process of therapy has often been called both an “art” and a “science.” Traditionally, research has focused primarily on the “science” by emphasizing evidence-based practices through empirically supported treatments (EST’s) (Sanderson, 2003; Sprenkle, 2003). However, some researchers have begun to examine common therapeutic factors across treatments that may have an equal if not greater impact than the treatment model itself in determining positive outcomes (Blow and Sprenkle, 2001; Garfield, 1992; Lambert, 1992; Lambert & Bergin, 1994; Hubble, Duncan, & Miller; 1999). Common factors research possibly touches upon processes that could be considered the “art” of therapy. Some people may assume that the “art” of therapy is an inherent trait that cannot be developed. However, literature focusing on the development of the art is lacking. Understanding the “science of the art” may provide empirical insight on developing the art of therapy within marriage and family therapy (MFT) professionals. One possible common factor related to the art of therapy that has not adequately been explored within the field of MFT is the process marriage and family therapists (MFTs) experience as they develop and utilize creativity.

Although very little creativity research exists in the field of marriage of family therapy, the implications of understanding the creativity process could greatly improve the discipline. For example, if there are certain areas of creativity that predict success in therapy, supervision, research practices, and/or teaching, creativity factors could help improve a professional’s ability to perform. Furthermore, if such factors can be developed or improved, incorporating these developmental factors into training would greatly increase the aptitude of graduating marriage and family therapists. In addition, certain creativity factors may predict whether a student will have a greater chance in succeeding in a supervisory, teaching, research, or therapy arena. Thus, creative factors could also be used during the admissions process to help inform programs on how to view potential in students rather than merely focusing on GPA or GRE scores. Finally, many MFT professionals have applied their clinical skills and systemic lens to non-traditional areas of application both in research and practice. Researchers also have applied non-traditional theories to MFT models and theories in order to further develop the field. Understanding the creative process may help MFTs continue to become more systemic as they discover new ways of doing, thinking, and interacting. Finally, becoming more systemic as a field may open more

doors in clinical, research, and practice areas of application for both the individual professional and the field as a whole.

One interesting approach that has been used to understand creativity is through the careful analysis of individuals who exhibit patterns of success in disciplines that require creativity. Gruber (1981; 1988) has examined the mind of Charles Darwin in his creative works while John-Steiner (1985) has studied the development of creative ideas by analyzing scientific notebooks of individuals who have had creative break-throughs. The work of Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) explored the process of creativity among artists. More recently, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) finished an extensive study in which ninety-one videotaped interviews were conducted with exceptional individuals (i.e., Nobel Prize recipients, CEO's, high-ranking government officials, prestigious artists, etc.) from various fields in order to understand characteristics, processes, and environmental conditions correlated with creative success.

In light of Csikszentmihalyi's method of exploring creativity in successful individuals, the purpose of this research study is to examine creativity factors in successful MFT professionals who apply their skills and systemic lens to non-traditional areas of application. Non-traditional areas of application will be defined in a couple of ways. First, areas of research including theory (i.e., chaos theory) and domains (i.e., neuroscience) outside of the traditional models and theories taught in the core curriculum of MFT graduate schools will be considered non-traditional areas of application. Second, settings outside of the therapy room such as school, business, military, or medical settings will be considered non-traditional areas of application. Finally, clinical models and theory applied to areas outside of the general DSM diagnosis categories (i.e., chronic illness, obesity, school shootings) as a means of using clinical skills and theory to improve an individual or system also will be considered a non-traditional area of application.

Personal Interests Regarding Research Questions

The structure of this study has developed over time based on a number of personal experiences and interests. Because I enjoy being involved in my wife's professional endeavors as a modern dance choreographer, I bought Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) book, "*Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery an invention*" as a gift for my wife from a local bookstore about a year ago. It was priced at a discount and I did not think much of the purchase. After my wife and I read the book, I began thinking about some of the concepts presented in the book in regards to

the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. Earlier this year, I had been involved in a number of committees addressing research productivity among faculty members. I noticed certain faculty members produced quality work quickly while others produced few. In addition, I had been working on a study regarding COAMFTE-accredited PhD program rankings based on research productivity as well. It quickly became clear that some people produce high quality in high quantity much more than others. I recognized that these people seemed to really enjoy what they were doing and they did what they were doing very well. Thus, with thoughts of getting a job, wanting to enjoy my career endeavors, and desiring to produce quality work over my lifetime, questions began to come to mind in relation to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity:

- 1) How do some researchers create such novel, impacting theories, ideas, and/or research articles while others do not?
- 2) What is the process that occurs while these researchers create novelty?
- 3) What factors influence this creative process?
- 4) Are these factors that influence the process inherent factors or can they be developed?
- 5) If these factors can be developed, what can individual, groups, fields, etc. do to maximize their potential for creativity?

I think it is important to note that earlier experiences in my life also have shaped my desires to understand the process of novelty. I remember going to my grandmother's house when I was 7 or 8 years old and reading her set of encyclopedias for hours. I had a desire to learn and that desire to learn has continued throughout my life. I read a lot of books on theoretical physics, philosophy, English literature, and science fiction while reading more professional books on cybernetics, systems theory, and statistics. I notice patterns and themes across disciplines that I think could be combined or used to look at different phenomena differently. However, in my professional studies, I have noticed some resistance within the field of Marriage and Family Therapy to collaborate with "outside" professionals or non-traditional theories and ideas. I remember learning the stereotypes placed on social workers, psychologists, and professional counselors when compared to marriage and family therapists while in my Master's program. I also remember learning about systems theory and wondering why the field of MFT was not more systemic in regards to research collaboration and clinical application. Recognizing that some MFT professionals do collaborate with multi-disciplinary professionals and examine theories from different fields, I am interested in the process that these professionals experience as they pioneer new roads for the field of MFT. Personally, I have also sought to expand my experiences by tapping into the expertise of other fields and theories. Currently, I am finishing an MBA as a

means of furthering my education and having the opportunity to apply my skills in different settings and in combination with different theories.

Because I believe that the process of creativity within individuals, groups, and disciplines could improve the scope of practice among MFT professionals, studying the process that MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application became a natural fit. I have found principles and concepts based in systems theory and other clinical/theoretical models have personally changed how I see the world. I believe that applying these principles and concepts to other areas in society will lead to new ways of thinking, doing, and interacting on individual, group, and disciplinary levels. I am passionate about learning the creative processes that could maximize the creativity potential in the field of MFT as well as other individual, group, and societal endeavors.

Research Questions

In order to understand the creative process MFT professional in non-traditional areas of application experience, an ecological systems theory of creativity was developed which will be presented in Chapter 2. This framework has guided the research process and the formation of research questions. The overarching research question of this dissertation will be the following:

- 1) What is the process of creativity that MFT professionals experience as they apply clinical skills and a systemic lens to non-traditional areas of application?

In addition, the following research questions stemming from the overarching research question will be addressed:

- 1) What individual factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?
- 2) What relational factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?
- 3) What socio-cultural factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?
- 4) What professional factors related to the field of MFT and the domains of study in the field influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to better understand the phenomenon of the creative process Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) experience as they uniquely apply their skills to other disciplines, a review of the literature regarding creativity was performed. In addition, inductive and deductive strategies relating to the literature were used to form an ecological systems theory of creativity. This theory will be used as a framework to guide the research methodology in this dissertation. In this chapter, creativity in family therapy literature is explored. Second, current trends in creativity research are presented. Third, deductive and inductive strategies to theory development are described. Fourth, propositions regarding Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity are established along with propositions based on empirical literature regarding group creativity and intrinsic motivation. Fifth, propositions formed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) are reviewed and combined with the established creativity propositions in order to create an ecological systems theory of creativity. Finally, a review of literature addressing non-traditional areas of application for MFTs are discussed.

Family Therapy & Creativity

Most researchers in family therapy have focused on how creativity is used within the therapeutic process. However, research addressing how creativity can be developed within a marriage and family therapist is lacking. Although the purpose of this dissertation is not to address creativity as it relates to the therapeutic process, a brief review of how the concept of creativity has been examined in relation to family therapy is presented in order to understand the importance of creativity within the field of marriage and family therapy.

Morgan and Wampler (2003) argued the importance of fostering client creativity through the therapeutic process. They note that creativity has been shown to enhance problem solving as well as the ability to adapt and be flexible. Thus, helping clients become more creative would appear to improve therapeutic outcome. They cite the importance of humor, play, fantasy, and metaphor as interventions that tap into a family's creativity. The ability to induce positive affect (i.e., humor) in clients was significantly related to a family's ability to engage in more creative behaviors leading to more positive outcomes. Unfortunately, the process of therapists learning how to tap into creativity was not fully outlined in this article. Taibbi (1996) believed that therapists working with couples and families need to be more creative. He describes creativity, along with others, as being more flexible and being able to "fly by the seat your pants" (Carson,

2003). A number of researchers have noted that creativity can often lead to breakthroughs during the therapeutic process (Carson, 2003; Deacon & Thomas, 2000; Gladding & Henderson, 2000; Openlander, 1991; Taibbi, 1996). Sori and Sprenkle (2004) specifically discussed the importance of therapists being creative when using play therapy techniques with children as a means of change.

A few family therapy researchers have compared the healing process and catharsis that sometimes occurs during the therapeutic process to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow (1990). They note the importance of releasing creativity energy through the process of healing leads to an environment where change is likely to occur (Carson, 2003; Deacon and Thomas, 2000; Kiser & Piercy, 2001; Piercy and Nelson, 1999). Carson (2003) suggested that learning how to reach flow in the therapeutic process actually leads to change.

It appears that Carson (i.e., 1999, 2003) has produced the most literature on the relationship between creativity and family therapists. Carson (1999) outlined three important components of creativity in regards to family therapy: 1) The importance of divergent thinking within the therapeutic process; 2) Traits that help therapists be more creative; and 3) Factors related to improving a creative environment for change to occur with clients. First, divergent thinking has been mentioned by multiple researchers as an important component of creativity in general. Some of this research will be highlighted in the following section regarding creativity research outside of family therapy. Applying divergent thinking to the family therapy process appears to improve the ability of therapists to find multiple solutions and methods for treating clients.

Second, Carson (2003) summarized individual traits associated with creative individuals that stems from creativity research. Much of this literature will be reviewed in the following section of this dissertation as well. However, it is important to note that Carson placed emphasis on flexibility, willingness to take risks, and use of humor. Third, Carson believed that certain interventions used in family therapy require creativity (e.g., role-playing, art therapy, use of poetry, etc.). Carson also recognized that there are some apparent barriers to creativity within therapy including the following: 1) Time constraints; 2) Work overload; 3) Managed care; 4) Personal inhibitions; 4) Therapist burnout; and 5) Lack of resources.

Gladding and Henderson (2000) reviewed an interesting model for beginning therapists wanting to become more creative called the SCAMPER model (originally found in Eberle,

1971). The SCAMPER model stands for S – substitute, C – combine, A – adapt or alter, M – modify or magnify, P – put to other uses, E – eliminate/minimize, and R – reverse/rearrange. The main purpose of the model is to help individuals think differently about a certain situation. Thus, it appears to focus on the concept of divergent thinking that was discussed earlier.

Overall, most of the research in family therapy literature regarding creativity focuses on how creativity is used within the therapeutic process, therapy traits that induce creativity, and how creativity is related to the process of change. It is apparent that creativity in general is an important piece to the “art of therapy.” Understanding how one develops creativity as an MFT may help therapists and researchers become more productive and influential in their work. However, research examining the process of MFTs becoming creative is lacking. Gladding and Henderson (2000) do present some techniques for helping students-in-training become more creative. Unfortunately, the majority of this research focuses only on divergent thinking which appears to be just one of the factors related to the creativity process. More understanding is needed in regards to individual factors, creative processes, and relational factors of influence that impact the creativity of a MFT beyond the current status of the research that focuses on divergent thinking and a few individual traits.

Current Trends in Creativity Research

In order to understand the process MFTs experience as they become more creative, a literature review on creativity research in general was performed. Sternberg and Lubart (1999) described creativity as “the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints” (p. 3). The ability to produce novel work that progresses an individual, discipline, and/or society in their various endeavors is equally important to the mother raising a child, the CEO seeking business success, or the scholar desiring to produce rigorous theory and research. Wehner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Magyari-Beck (1991) examined 100 recent doctoral dissertations on creativity and found that different fields tended to use different terms focusing on aspects that seemed to be the same basic phenomenon. Thus, historically creativity has been studied in a “patch-work” process leaving concepts and variables scattered across disciplines without much integration and collaboration of findings and ideas. Sternberg and Lubart (1999) noted that creativity has not received adequate research attention due to a number of barriers including the following: 1) Early work on creativity was theoretically and methodologically weak; and 2) Uni-disciplinary approaches to creativity have

created narrow, “unsatisfying visions of creativity” (p. 12). More recently, they described some confluence research approaches to creativity in which multiple components and processes are examined across disciplines and come together to form more complex, holistic understandings of creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Gardner, 1993; Sternberg & Lubart, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1996; Gruber & Davis, 1988;).

Surprisingly, very few researchers have applied systemic and ecological concepts to the study of creativity as way to examine creativity through a holistic lens. Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1996) did apply some systemic concepts when examining the nature of creativity as an individual interacts with his or her culture and society. Gardner (1993) also has noted that many creative projects form through the tensions and traits within a system when examining the relationships between the individual, domain, and the field. Unfortunately, research examining creativity through a systemic lens is limited.

Other important pieces scattered among the literature that could enhance our understanding of creativity through a systemic lens include the importance of group dynamics (John-Steiner, 2000; Paulus & Nijstad, 2003; Stein, 1974; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffen, 1993), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1983, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and personality traits (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) in regards to creativity. In addition, some have stated a need to examine neuro-chemical processes and learning processes in the brain in relation to current theories of creativity (i.e., Bekhtereva et al., 2000). Overall, it appears that multiple researchers in business, education, social science, family science, psychology, neuroscience, etc. have uncovered pieces of important concepts and variables related to creativity. However, it seems that a lack of collaboration and multi-disciplinary strategies have led to narrow theories of creativity. In addition, work that has attempted to examine creativity holistically continues to leave out vital areas of research. Thus, a unifying, multi-disciplinary theory of creativity that can conceptually incorporate individual, group, and societal factors related to past research and study is needed.

In answer to Sternberg and Lubert’s (1999) call to form more holistic, multi-dimensional conceptual models of creativity that are based on rigorous methods of theory development, an ecological systems model of creativity is presented in this dissertation. Both inductive and deductive methodologies were applied during the formation of this theory relying on the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979; 1999) ecological systems model,

Csikszentmihalyi's concepts of flow and creativity (1990; 1996), empirical data regarding creativity in organizations and groups (i.e., Paulus & Nijstad, 2003), and empirical data relating to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (i.e., Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Numerous examples of deductive and inductive theory development have been presented in the literature (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Burr, 1973; Wallace, 1971). Both inductive and deductive strategies were used to form propositions based on previous works citing empirical data, conceptual frameworks, and theoretical concepts. New propositions were made by combining propositions and describing the relationships among propositions. Thus, the following section presents an ecological systems theory of creativity: 1) Deductive and inductive strategies are described; 2) A literature review of Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity, Bronfenbrenner's conceptual framework of the ecological model, empirical data related to group creativity, and empirical data regarding motivation are explored; 3) Along with the literature review, propositions are formed and/or stated based on past research and theory; 4) New propositions are formed and described in regards to the relationships that exist among propositions; and 5) A description of the newly formed theory are presented along with implications that arise based on an ecological systems theory of creativity.

Theory Development Strategies

Burr (1973) described deductive theory "as an attempt to explain why certain things occur by having a set of propositions and deducing that, if these propositions are true, certain observable events will validate those propositions" (p. 1). In other words, deductive theory development is going from ideas to data through a systematic process that attempts to reduce error and explain actual phenomena. Generally, deductive theory development begins with the formation of concepts, variables, and propositions. Concepts are terms that symbolize some aspect of reality. Variables are concepts that can vary in some manner (i.e., gender, age, etc.). Propositions are statements that assert some type of truth about the stated concepts and variables. In addition, deductive theory attempts to describe and explain relationships between concepts, variables, and propositions. Once certain propositions are formed and relationships are established, empirical data can be used to test the validity of the propositions.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) described the process of developing theory through inductive strategies as "the discovery of theory from data – systematically obtained and analyzed in social research" (p. 1). Thus, inductive strategies begin with examining the data established by a

discipline and formulating theory based on that data. Glaser and Strauss described the process of theory development as a “process of research” (p. 6). Hence, they believe that the theoretical concepts developed are “systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research” (p.6).

Since the development of theory through inductive methods relies on research data, the steps involved throughout the process mirror quantitative and qualitative research methods. Thus, comparative analysis, sampling and testing, experimental design, observation, etc. all can be useful tools in developing concepts that then lead to propositions and the formulation of theory.

Although both inductive and deductive strategies lead to theory development, there are strengths and limitations to each method. First, inductive methodologies lead to theories that are easy to generalize, to test, and to validate. However, because induction is based on research methods and established data, theory development may be stifled due to a lack of data. In addition, some theory may be based on bad data and lead to misconstrued theories. Finally, induction can lead one to ignore areas of a phenomenon that cannot be empirically tested so easily. Thus, it may lead a researcher to ignore certain concepts that should be part of a particular theory because they are not “testable.”

Deductive methodologies can tap into the expertise and observations of professionals involved with a certain phenomena. In addition, it provides flexibility and adaptability as one formulates propositions. However, because of the flexibility, theoretical concepts may be developed based on the biases of the researchers rather than the neutrality of observable data. Equally, rigor could become muddied, as the focus becomes more “idea” focused than empirical.

Finally, many researchers use both inductive and deductive methodologies together in order to develop theory. Wallace (1971) proposed a process in which both inductive and deductive methods are used to develop theory while using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This process uses a cyclical approach as the researcher moves up and down in a comparative process allowing for both induction from data and deduction from ideas. It would make sense that many researchers would find benefit in using both methodologies as they glean information from established data as well as formulate propositions based on ideas and experience. Thus, triangulation of data could occur and error rates could possibly be reduced.

In accordance with Burr (1973) and Wallace (1971), both inductive and deductive strategies (Burr describes it as retroductive) were used in forming an ecological systems theory of creativity. According to Doherty et al. (1993), there are a number of different kinds of theory that range from empirical generalizations, causal models, and middle-range to theories to formal propositional theories, analytical typologies, conceptual frameworks, and meta-theories. They noted that a middle-range theory usually involves more elaborate theoretical writing about a particular domain. The ecological systems theory of creativity in this dissertation is presented as a middle-range theory indicating a theory that has application in a specific domain (creativity) while allowing for movement and direction among different concepts, propositions, relationships, contexts, and factors.

Concepts and Propositions of Csikzentmihalyi's Theory of Flow/Creativity

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1990) originally developed a theory about optimal experience among individuals, which he termed as "flow." Historically, Csikzentmihalyi (1975) presented his research and theory of flow in the book, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*. Since his original work, a number of researchers have applied the concepts and theory to different areas including anthropology (Turner, 1974), sociology (Mitchell, 1983), evolution (Crook, 1980), and motivation (Amabile, 1983; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eckblad, 1981). More recently, flow has been applied to the areas of sports (Jackson, 1996; Jackson & Csikzentmihalyi, 1999), internet usage (Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 1997), online gaming (Hsu & Lu, 2004), instructional education design (Chan, 1999), and job satisfaction (Emerson, 1998).

Flow indicates a state of being in which a person excels at optimal levels due to a number of factors in the environment and within the individual. For example, a composer experiencing flow may describe times in which he/she is passionate about the work, eager to move forward, and accesses new ideas with ease. In some of Csikszentmihalyi's original work (1990), he examined multiple types of people who described having optimal experiences across culture, race, socio-economic status, and gender. His sample ranged from prestigious persons of honor to samples of unknown status including bike gang members and housewives. Following analysis of his research, he discovered that no matter the characteristics of his sample, persons described optimal experience in a similar fashion. The patterns that he noticed across groups later on developed into his theory of "flow."

Following the development of flow theory, he expanded the theory to include the phenomenon of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Between 1990 and 1995, a team of researchers videotaped interviews of ninety-one exceptional individuals ranging from physicists and Nobel peace prize winners to famous actors and writers. Following an “in-depth analysis” of the interviews, he described creativity as the ability a person has to create a new product, theory, way of doing, etc. within a certain domain (music, art, therapy) among a group of professionals that make up a discipline or field (e.g., physics, English literature, family therapy). Thus, in order to be creative, one must not only produce good ideas, but it must fit within a current domain and be accepted by a discipline of experts in order to have impact on society.

Csikszentmihalyi (1988; 1999) has described his theory as a systems perspective of creativity. He suggests that one cannot only look at the individual to understand creativity; it is necessary to examine the domain and the field that influence the individual and that give feedback to the individual. It is important to note that he sees the creative process within society as a form of cultural evolution. Thus, as new ideas, theories, products, etc. are introduced to a society, change occurs in a systemic pattern that leads to a new way of thinking, feeling, and/or doing within individuals, communities, and socio-cultural trends.

At the individual level, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) outlined some key principles that influence one’s ability to be creative. First, creative individuals tend to have complexity. In other words, they “show tendencies of thought and action that in most people are segregated; they contain contradictory extremes – instead of being an ‘individual,’ each of them is a multitude” (p. 57). He summarized what he believes are 10 dimensions of complexity similar to how Ornstein (1986) views the brain’s tendency to integrate separate and often conflictual thoughts and actions within the same person: 1) Creative individuals have a great deal of energy, but they often are also quiet and at rest; 2) Creative individuals tend to be smart, yet also naïve at the same time; 3) Creative individuals can be both playful and disciplined, or responsible and irresponsible; 4) Creative individuals alternate between imagination and a firm sense of reality; 5) Creative individuals can be both extroverted and introverted; 6) Creative individuals can be remarkably humble and proud at the same time; 7) Creative individuals tend to be androgynous; 8) Creative individuals tend to be both traditional and conservative while at the same time being rebellious and iconoclastic; 9) Creative individuals can be both passionate about their work while still remaining objective at the same time; 10) Creativity individuals tend to experience suffering

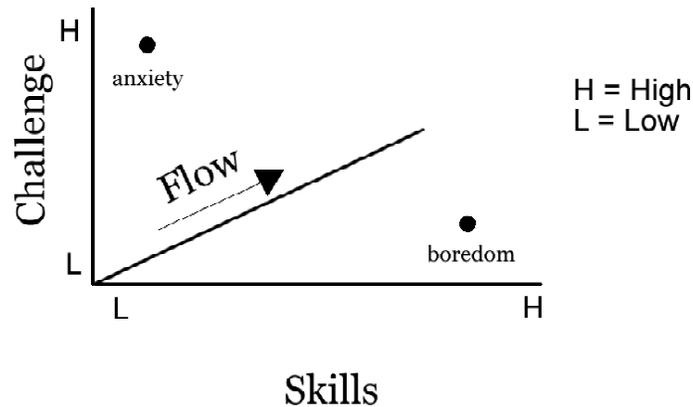
and pain while experiencing times of great joy. It is important to note that Csikszentmihalyi recognizes that creative individuals not only are complex in nature, but they have the ability and control to move from one end of the continuum to the next in order to achieve their endeavors. It is also important to note that the primary researcher developed the following propositions; Csikszentmihalyi never formed original propositions for his theory. However, he made research statements and conclusions that led to the development of the listed propositions.

Proposition 1: Creative individuals have the ability to operate through the entire spectrum of personality dimensions in what appears to be contradicting personality traits (e.g., extroversion and introversion) while maintaining the control to maneuver between continuum extremes in order to achieve their goals.

Second, stemming from his research on flow, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) believed that an individual must enjoy what he or she is doing in order to be creative and continue to be creative. This enjoyment seems to come from a motivation to progress through confronting challenges, the discovery of new ways of thinking and doing, desires to become better, and/or desires to move society forward as one adds to the cultural evolution. Referring to intrinsic motivation in his original theoretical work on flow (1975; 1990), Csikszentmihalyi believed ideal motivation (intrinsic) over sensory motivation (extrinsic) leads to autotelic experience in which one experiences flow. Autotelic experience is described as engaging in an activity for the sake of the activity itself. In other words, a person does not have to be motivated to do it; they merely do it because it has become a part of them.

In addition, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) outlined seven conditions for flow in creativity: 1) A set of clear goals; 2) Immediate feedback is needed to know how well one is doing; 3) A balance between challenges and skills (See Figure 2.1; based on the figure found in Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) in order to not have anxiety or enter into boredom; 4) An awareness of action in order for sustained focus to occur; 5) The ability to exclude distractions; 6) Forgetting of self, time, and surroundings generally occurs; and 7) Creativity becomes an autotelic experience in which a person engages in the activity as an end in itself out of pure enjoyment.

Figure 2.1 – Csikszentmihalyi Model of Flow



Proposition 2: In order to maintain flow in creativity, there must exist clear goals, immediate feedback, balance between challenge and skills, awareness of action, exclusion of distractions, a forgetting of self and time, and the opportunity for autotelic experience.

Third, Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 1999) placed importance on the individual's background including the environment where the individual is born, the ethnic and/or cultural identity of the individual, the opportunity to access resources based on SES and historical conditions, the opportunity to receive education or knowledge, and what Csikszentmihalyi described as an incentive to change the status quo. He noted that Gardner (1993) when describing the seven creative geniuses of the 20th century experienced struggled due to poverty, prejudice, and/or being singled out as different. Thus, a person who is comfortable with the status quo may not have the incentive to be as creative. However, it is unclear how he fits these influences into his conceptual model. Unfortunately, he does not form theoretical propositions or models that sufficiently incorporate these influences.

Finally, he believed a creative person must have access to a domain and a field. In regards to the field, Csikszentmihalyi (1999) defined the field as a part of society made up of individuals who practice a given domain and give social valuation to a new meme. Hence, society is the sum of all fields that operate within a given set of space and time. Csikszentmihalyi used the term "meme" to describe creativity in regards to what Dawkins (1976) described as units of imitations which are building blocks for culture. Thus, similar to genes, memes carry instructions for action within a culture and when a new meme that influences culture is presented, creativity has occurred. Csikszentmihalyi (1999) believed that in order for creativity to occur, society must accept this novelty through validation by a specific field of experts or the

public in general depending on the nature of the creativity. For example, a new theory in family therapy will be accepted if certain gatekeepers usually found in professional journals accept the methodology and concepts of the theory. On the other hand, a new product formed by professionals often needs validation from the public itself in order for it to be accepted or validated.

Proposition 3: In order for creativity to occur, society must validate the change that has occurred in a give domain either by a particular field or by the public in general depending on the nature of the creative product.

Within a society, there are certain factors that influence whether a society will consider something creative and accept the change or if creativity will even occur (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). First, the field must have access to economic resources to engage in creative endeavors. If a society is struggling to survive, they probably will not devote needed capitol to the study of music or poetry. Second, a field is likely to attract original minds if that given field seems promising. In other words, persons must be motivated by either extrinsic (money, fame) or intrinsic (enjoyment, progression) rewards. Third, if a society highly values a field (e.g., computer science), more original minds may be attracted to that field. Fourth, a field must have a level of autonomy. Some fields are often linked with government or religion and must pass the approval of political or religious sanctions making it difficult to explore novelty that goes against traditions (i.e., stem cell research). Fifth, organization is needed to provide structure and direction for a field. Without organization, chaos leads to the disintegration of the field. Finally, openedness and closedness influence how much influence or change can occur in a given field. In systems theory, an open system is more likely to adjust with change while a closed system will be resistant to change (Wiener, 1954).

Proposition 4: Whether a field will accept or have the ability to create a new meme depends on economic resources, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, societal values, autonomy, organization, and the openedness or closedness of the system(s).

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) defined the domain as an existing pattern in society regarding a particular cultural or symbolic aspect of that society. In other words, one cannot form an original thought “in a vacuum...it must operate on a set of already existing objects, rules, representations, or notations” (p. 315). In addition, because the domain represents a symbolic aspect of a culture or society, Csikszentmihalyi feels that in order for creativity to occur, a community of people

have to be affected by the novelty in regards to how they think, feel, and/or act (1999). For example, an individual that is a composer (individual) must not only produce an original piece of music (domain), but that novelty must influence a community of people within that culture where the domain exists. It is important to note that new domains can be developed; however, they generally form out of a domain that already exists.

Proposition 5: In order for creativity to occur, change must occur in an existing domain and affect the culture that contains that domain.

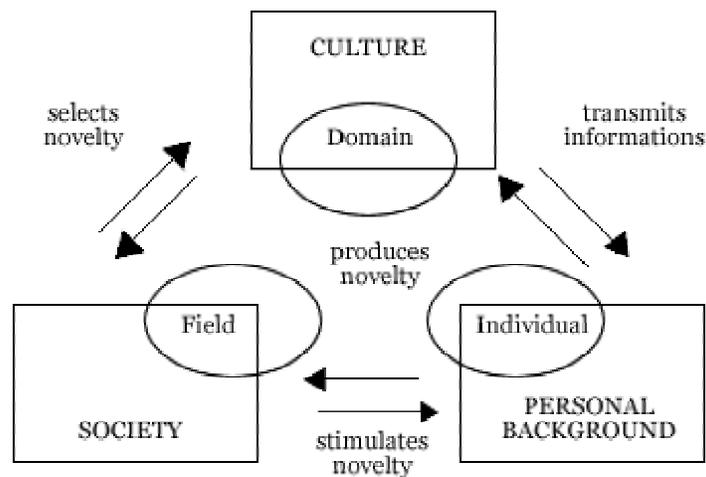
Csikszentmihalyi (1999) made some additional key insights about the role of the domain in regards to the creative process. He noted that culture is made up of various domains such as music, mathematics, religion, etc. Various changes to a domain depend on a number of factors including the following: 1) The stage of development the domain has attained; 2) The meaning a culture gives to a particular domain; 3) The accessibility of the domain; and 4) The autonomy of domain from the rest of the culture. For example, young scientists may be attracted to a domain that is relatively new in its stage of development, has received a lot of public attention for the potential of this domain (meaning), is easy to access through job opportunities, and is relatively autonomous from government restriction due to a lack of ethical or moral dilemmas in the study of this domain. Other domains may have more resistance in receiving adequate attention or resources because that domain may appear exhausted in terms of new products or ideas, it may seem to difficult to access, it may not receive a lot of importance or attention from the public, and it may lack autonomy due to government restrictions relating to moral dilemmas (e.g., cloning) or ethical issues.

Proposition 6: A cultural domain is influenced by the domain's stage of development, cultural meaning, accessibility, and level of autonomy in relation to other societal influences.

To summarize Csikszentmihalyi's systemic framework of creativity, there are three important components of his theory: 1) individual factors, 2) societal factors, and 3) cultural factors. Factors that influence creativity related to the individual include personal background, level of enjoyment and/or motivation (flow), and the ability to operate and move among the personality dimension continuums in a controlled, systematic manner. It is important to note that Csikszentmihalyi (1999) also recognized that other research and concepts regarding the individual can fit within his model including innate ability or talent, intelligence, divergent thinking, problem-solving abilities, personality, and motivation. However, although individual

traits are important, he noted that the creative individual must work in conjunction with a domain and a field. As stated, societal factors include all the fields and characteristics of those fields that make up that society while the culture is made up of all the given domains and characteristics of those domains. Thus, creativity will occur through a process of interactions between the individual, society (fields), and culture (domains) (See Figure 2.2; based on the figure found in Csikszentmihaly, 1999).

Figure 2.2 – Csikszentmihalyi Model of Creativity



Critique of the Csikszentmihalyi's Theory

In order to critique Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity, one must look at the standards and functions of theory itself. Once a theory meets set standards and functions, it is important to examine other areas of research and theory related to the concepts as a means of triangulating the data. Triangulating the data is often used in qualitative research as well as theory development as a tool to find multiple sources indicating similar findings (Patton, 2002). Thus, if multiple studies and theories seem to be capturing similar phenomenon, one could suggest that the concepts are more valid. Triangulating the data can also be used to inform theory development through a process of combining multiple findings to form new propositions in order to match the theoretical concepts with current data about that particular area of study. Thus, as new theory and propositions arise from the literature through empirical findings, theory should continuously be re-evaluated and adapted to meet current scientific understanding. In this section, Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity is critiqued by comparing his theory to formal standards and functions of theory in general. In addition, theoretical concepts and

findings outside of his theory are presented in order to understand how Csikszentmihalyi's theory could be further developed.

Klein and White (1996) noted that different theories serve different functions. Some theories are meant to accumulate information while other theories interpret and predict behaviors. Some theoretical models may examine connectedness across theories while others are meant to guide practitioners or professionals. Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) theory appears to have a number of functions. First, it accumulates the collection and analysis of research findings related to individual factors that correlate with creativity through the lens of the researchers. Second, it does provide some connectedness between his original theory on flow and the phenomenon of creativity. It appears that his theory on creativity really is an extension of flow within the realm of a field and domain. Third, the theory provides an interpretation of creativity by providing thick description of its concepts. In addition, the concepts themselves tend to promote "stories" about how creativity is developed, reinforced, and communicated which fall in line with Klein and White's (1996) definition of interpretation. Fourth, although the theory does not predict future events and experiences, many of the concepts discussed could be used to predict indirectly. For example, if an individual has particular creative traits within a domain and discipline that accepts those traits, it could be assumed that this particular individual will be creative and produce a new theory or product that moves the domain forward. Finally, the main function of Csikszentmihalyi's theory of creativity seems to focus on explanation. His theory attempts to explain the "why" and "how" in regards to the development and communication of creativity. He goes in depth on examining individual factors that might explain why one is more creative than another. In addition, he attempts to explain how some creative individuals are able to produce impactful discoveries based on the characteristics of the domain and the discipline.

Thomas (1985) established some standards for well-developed child development theories. These standards could equally apply to theories outside the domain of child development. Csikszentmihalyi's theory seems to meet a number of Thomas's standards. First, the concepts described within the theory seem to reflect the facts of the real world. In other words, it makes sense because it is easy to find these concepts among people one would describe as creative. Second, persons from a wide range of education levels and disciplines can easily understand the overall theory. Third, Csikszentmihalyi not only explains phenomenon regarding creativity, but his theory leads one to begin to make questions about predicting future behavior.

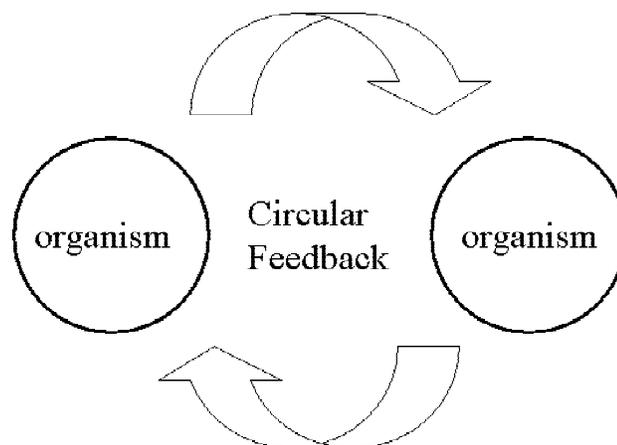
For instance, one begins to ask how a discipline can create an environment that encourages more creativity or how an individual can learn how to be more creative. Fourth, many of the concepts lead to practical guidelines for establishing environments that reinforce more creative behaviors. In addition, Csikszentmihalyi's theory is parsimonious, internally consistent, and is falsifiable. Thus, the simplicity of its concepts allow for internal consistency among concepts while allowing for the theory to be tested. Finally, probably the most exciting characteristic of the theory is that it leads one to ask more questions in more arenas with new lenses. In other words, it excites others to perform more research, discover new knowledge, and stimulate new ways of thinking and doing. One could say that studying optimal experience leads one to have optimal experience.

Klein and White (1996) recognized that different theories have different foci in terms of the level of examination. In other words, some theories attempt to explain or make predictions about individual behavior while other theories may have a relational or group focus. On the other hand, particular theories may attempt to address phenomenon at a societal level while other theories examine a combination of the mentioned levels. Csikszentmihalyi's theoretical approach to examining theory is described as a systems approach in which the individual, field, and domain are included as levels of analysis (Sternberg, 1999). However, it appears that the theory is more similar to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Compared to Csikszentmihalyi's theory, Bronfenbrenner's model includes more layers of influence such as a biological layer at the individual level, family and group levels, and community levels while he includes a more expansive societal and cultural layer. Although Csikszentmihalyi does discuss some aspects of larger groups within the field and domain concepts of his theory, his theory seems to be missing some important influences including biological, familial, and smaller group layers (i.e., group of co-workers, group of mentors, dyads, etc.) that could make the theory more holistic. It is important to note that Csikszentmihalyi (1996) did discuss the role of family and some small groups in his original work; however, he failed to include these concepts within his conceptual model. Furthermore, although he addressed societal and cultural levels by exploring the role of the field and cultural domains, more factors within these levels could be explored.

Csikszentmihalyi (1975; 1996; 1999) also discussed the importance of feedback as a systemic concept in which the field, the domain, and the individual influence each other. The concept of feedback loops originates from general systems theory and the study of cybernetics

(Wiener, 1950). Feedback loops suggest that any time two intelligent organisms are involved, one must examine three components: 1) The 1st organism; 2) The 2nd organism; and 3) The interaction between the two organisms. Thus, feedback loops suggest that one organism influences and is influenced by another organism in a circular fashion (See Figure 2.3). It is important to note that the organism could be a person, a small group of persons, a community, a culture of people, etc. Csikszentmihalyi's use of feedback loops opened up a conceptual door as the process of creativity began to be seen as both a relational process and contextual process. In other words, research examining individual traits becomes embedded into how those individual traits are influenced by other people and environmental factors as well as how the individual influences those levels of influence. Thus, as one adds additional levels of influence in regards to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, feedback loops between each of these new levels of study will also need to be examined.

Figure 2.3 - Circular Feedback



Within the field of business, numerous studies have examined factors and characteristics of groups that improve creativity (e.g., Paulus & Nijstad, 2003). Incorporating some of the concepts and findings from business into Csikszentmihalyi's theory would add to our understanding of the creative process within small groups. As stated, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model would be helpful with adding some of these layers while expanding some of the ideas within the societal and cultural levels of Csikszentmihalyi's theory. Finally, at the individual level, more research has been done on cognitive processes including the role of intrinsic motivation in regards to creativity. Expanding some of Csikszentmihalyi's concepts relating to

flow and creativity based on research relating to intrinsic motivation would bring his original theory to par with current research.

Overall, it appears that Csikszentmihalyi's theory of creativity was well-developed because it focuses on a number of levels (individual and societal) and has a number of functions (i.e., explains, predicts, finds connectedness, accumulates, and interprets). In addition, the theory itself meets a number of standards set by Thomas (1985) indicating that the theory is both internally consistent and can be validated through empirical research. The standards also suggest that the theory will likely evolve and develop even more because it stimulates new questions of research and seems to fit real-world phenomenon. It appears that the theory could be further developed in terms of creating a more holistic, ecological approach by adding more influential layers that impact creativity including families, small groups, and communities while adding more factors at the individual level. In addition, some of Csikszentmihalyi's concepts could be expanded by adding research related to group dynamics and intrinsic motivation while expanding his societal and cultural levels to be more inclusive of areas outside of the field or the domain. Addressing some of these important concepts within the given framework of the individual, society, and culture that Csikszentmihalyi established while incorporating some of the layers from Bronfenbrenner's model of ecological systems theory would create a need to establish relationships among the added layers. These layers would include the following levels of influence: 1) Individual level (biological, cognitive, emotional); 2) Micro-system (peers, co-workers, mentors, family, small groups, etc.); 3) Meso-system (process of how the different parts of the individual and micro-system relate to each other within the context of the larger systems); 4) Exosystem (Indirect organizations within society that influence the individual); and 5) Macrosystem (governement, cultural values, economy, etc.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model

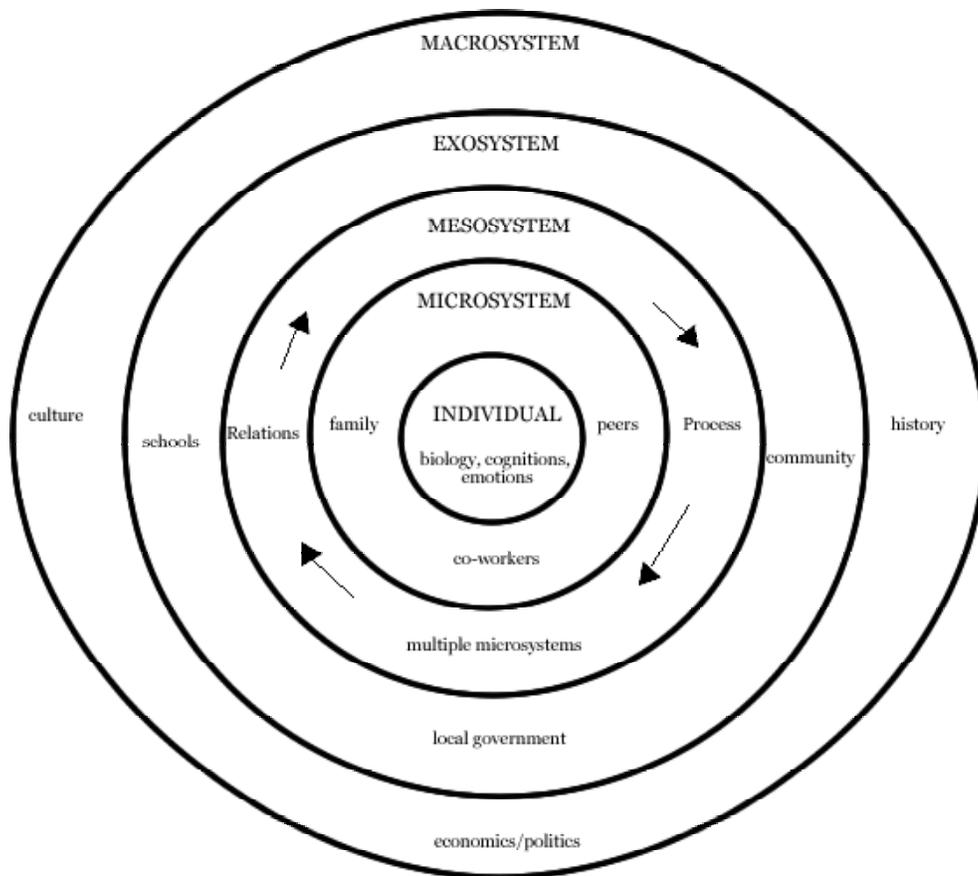
In order to combine Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) theory of creativity with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, propositions from Bronfenbrenner's original model need to be reviewed. Thus, a review of Bronfenbrenner's concepts and deductive propositions from his original work will be presented (1979).

First, Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the nature of human development within the context of an ecological system as the following:

Proposition 7: The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (p. 21).

Thus, it becomes important to examine the individual within the context of his/her environment and examine the relationships that exist between the individual and the different layers of the environment (See Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 - Ecological Systems Theory Model



Second, Bronfenbrenner (1979) incorporated persons that come in face-to-face contact with an individual such as peers, family, co-workers, etc. into the layer termed as the micro-system.

Proposition 8: A micro-system is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

Third, Bronfenbrenner (1979) described a system of Microsystems that interrelate with each other as a meso-system:

Proposition 9: A meso-system comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer groups; for an adult, among family, work, and social life) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25).

Fourth, the exo-system includes organizations and people that do not have face-to-face contact with the individual per se; however, either the actions of these settings affect the developing individual or the individual influences actions that occur in these settings.

Proposition 10: An exo-system refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the settings containing the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25).

Finally, the macro-system includes the beliefs and ideologies of a culture or group of sub-cultures that give form and context for what occurs in the micro-, meso-, and exo-systems.

Proposition 11: The macro-system refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies.

It is interesting to note that just as Csikszentmihalyi believes that creativity does not occur “in a vacuum” (1999, p. 315), Bronfenbrenner equally believes that human “development never takes place in a vacuum” (1979, p. 27). Thus, change, progression, development, etc. take place within the context of one’s environment as the individual engages in a process of differentiation while engaging in activities that reveal, sustain, and/or re-structure the environment.

Proposition 12: Human development is the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or

restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27).

Bronfenbrenner (1995) described two more propositions that he indicates are “an integration of conceptual elements successively introduced into ecological systems theory” (p. 620). These propositions describe how one develops over time and sources of development over time:

Proposition 13: Especially in its early phases, and to a great extent throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving bio-psychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. Examples of enduring patterns of proximal process are found in parent-child and child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, studying, athletic activities, and performing complex tasks (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 620).

Proposition 14: The form, power, content, and direction of proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the bio-psychological characteristics of the developing person; of the environment, both immediate and more remote, in which the processes are taking place; and the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 621).

Motivation Findings

In many of Csikszentmihalyi’s original works (e.g., 1975, 1990, 1996) the concept of motivation or intrinsic motivation is used to describe parts of the flow process related to enjoyment and creativity. It appears that what he describes as autotelic stems from ideas regarding intrinsic and extrinsic motivation suggesting that one will more likely be in an autotelic state if the person is engaged in an endeavor based on intrinsic motivation. Thus, a review of the findings regarding intrinsic motivation is needed to understand some of the empirical findings in order to make inductive and deductive propositions.

Amabile (1996) has found through some empirical study that there are three main important components that influence creativity: 1) Domain-relevant skills; 2) Creativity relevant mental processes; and 3) Task motivation. In regards to motivation, a number of researchers

(Amabile, 1985; Amabile, 1998; Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994; Conti, Amabile, & Pollack, 1995) have found that intrinsic motivation tends to produce significant differences in creativity outcome. Historically, Golann (1962) also has indicated that intrinsic motivation correlates with the production of creative products. Crutchfield (1962) described optimum motivation as different from extrinsic motivation and ego-motivation in which the goal is to master a task or gain understanding for its own sake. He believed that optimum (intrinsic) motivation facilitates creativity. This idea is similar to Csikszentmihalyi's concept of autotelic experience in which one engages in an activity for the sake of the activity itself based on enjoyment (1990; 1996). More recently, Collins and Amabile (1999) along with other researchers (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993; Ryan, 1995; Ryand & Deci, 2000) have continued to support the importance of intrinsic motivation in development and creativity suggesting that intrinsic motivation establishes an environment with greater potential for creativity to occur.

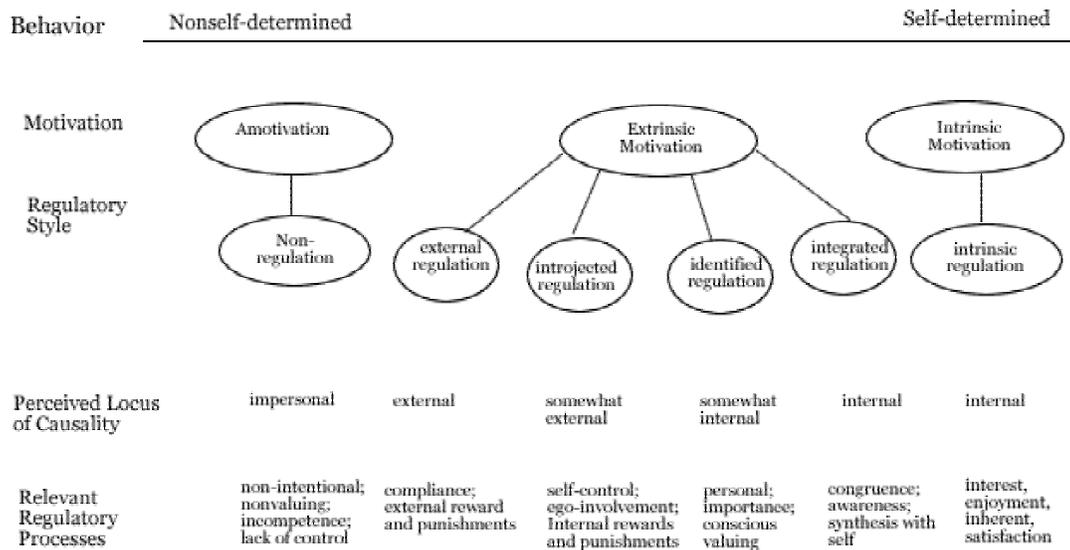
Combining Csikszentmihalyi's (1999; 1996; 1990) use of motivation along with studies done by Perkins (1988) that indicate the importance of enjoying the process in relation to creativity and effort, Moreau, Dahl, Chattopadhyay, and Gorn (2001) formed three hypothesis related to intrinsic motivation in their empirical study. Based on their findings, and the support from past research, the following proposition will be made:

Proposition 15: Individuals with high levels of intrinsic task motivation experience more enjoyment and exert more effort in performing a task than those with low levels of intrinsic motivation, which lead to higher levels of creativity.

Ryan and Deci (2000) have developed self-determination theory based on empirical studies that provides a conceptual model for understanding the relationship between motivation, regulation, locus of causality, and relevant regulatory process (See Figure 2.5; based on the figure found in Ryan & Deci, 2000). They also incorporated the idea of individual and social rewards within the extrinsic motivation realm. Multiple studies, mainly from education, have indicated that different forms of motivation (amotivation, extrinsic, and intrinsic) and regulation (external, introjected, identified, integrated, and intrinsic) lead to different outcomes in learning, performance, engagement, enjoyment, quality, etc. suggesting that the closer an individual gets to intrinsic motivation, the more likely he/she will perform well and enjoy what he/she are doing (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Hayamizu, 1997; Miserandino, 1996;

Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992;). This leads to self-determination which refers to one’s desire to continue to engage in activity over time based on the type motivation, regulation of motivation, perceived locus of causality, and experienced regulatory processes.

Figure 2.5 - Self-determination Model



Proposition 16: An individual will become more self-determined as they become intrinsically motivated, learn to intrinsically regulate, perceive an internal locus of causality, and experience their intrinsic regulatory processes.

Propositions related to Group Dynamics

Paulus and Nijstad (2003) noted that most research regarding creativity has focused on individual creativity. They suggest that a lack of attention to group factors may be related to evidence in the literature suggesting that groups may inhibit creativity. Janis (1982) found that pressure to achieve in a timely manner among groups might lead to non-creativity. Karau and Williams (1993) also found that group contexts might lower individual motivation while Stasser (1999) suggested that groups that share information tend to form similar ideas rather than finding unique solutions.

However, a number of researchers have noted the importance of examining creativity within groups since individuals are influenced by various groups including families, colleagues, co-workers, etc. (Gardner, 1993; John-Steiner, 2000; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffen, 1993).

Thus, although research exists suggesting that groups may inhibit creativity, understanding the

role groups play in the creative process may aid in understanding the processes behind inhibited creativity.

Paulus (2000) has suggested there is very little evidence that working in teams and collaborative learning are more efficacious in organizations than other modes of work. However, some researchers suggest that the processes that occur in groups are more influential in regards to the potential for creativity than the make-up of the group itself (Milliken, Bartel, & Kurtzberg, 2003). Thus, it appears that some research may not have controlled for the group process itself. Some research has begun to examine what types of group processes encourage creativity.

Diversity within a group on a number of contextual levels appears to enhance the potential for group creativity (Austin, 1997; Bartel & Jackson, 1989; McLeod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996; Nemeth & Nemeth-Brown, 2003; Stasser, 1992). Milliken et al (2003) identified the importance of “detectable diversity” and “cognitive diversity.” Detectable diversity is related to easily identifiable differences among individuals including social class, age, gender, ethnicity, etc. Cognitive diversity refers to differences in knowledge stemming from different educational backgrounds, work experiences, and training.

Proposition 17: If detectable and cognitive diversity are present within a group, then the potential for group creativity increases.

Numerous studies regarding relationships within different settings have highlighted the importance of trust and emotional safety (Bowlby, 1996; Edmondson, 1999; Johnson, 1996; Madjar, Oldham, & Pratt, 2001; Turner & Horvitz, 2001; Wieselquist et al, 1999). Milliken et al (2003) suggested that groups that form trust and allow for safe emotional engagement are more likely to encourage participation among group members and allow for more cognitive diversity. Research examining groups within families have found that children that feel secure in families allows for self-confidence and exploration to occur leading to creative exploration later in life (Ainsworth & Marvin, 1995).

Proposition 18: Detectable and cognitive diversity within a group are more likely to occur if the group has developed trust and emotional safety.

Forming Propositions for an Ecological Systems Theory of Creativity

Existing research regarding creativity is quite extensive. The purpose of this paper is not to provide a literature review of all the research regarding creativity. One could examine more research regarding group dynamics and traits relating to creativity stemming from business

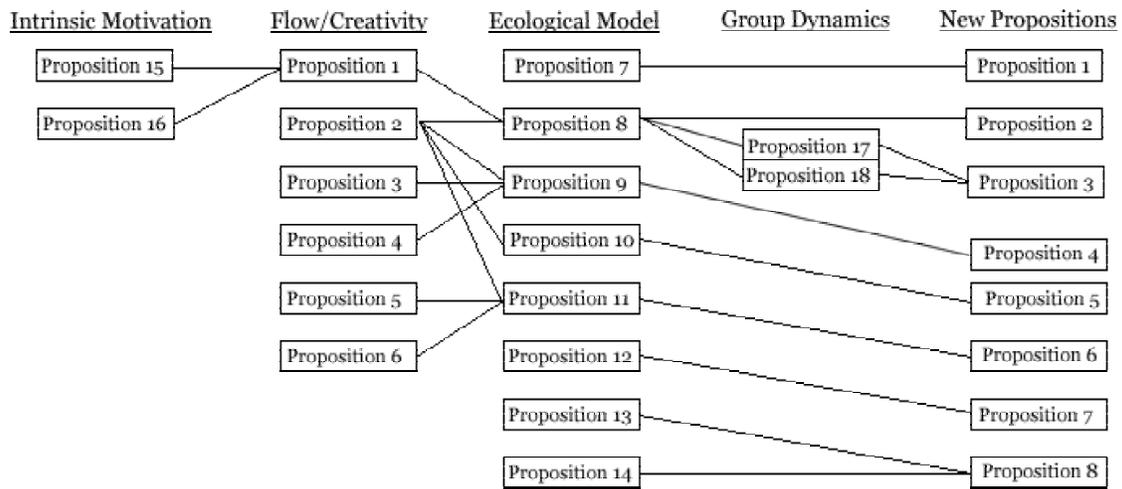
disciplines or other areas of research. Equally, one might examine familial resiliency relating to creativity in regards to problem-solving, family adaptability, and family openness. In addition, one could examine research relating to neuro-chemical processes regarding reward systems, motivation, enjoyment, and creativity. Brain-mapping studies could also be examined to understand some of the mental processes that occur in creative individuals.

Although a complete review is not provided, the conceptual model that will be presented provides a framework and a place for each area of research regarding creativity. The benefit behind an ecological approach to creativity is that it attempts to examine both individual and contextual factors at multiple levels and examine the relationships between these levels and factors. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to provide a conceptual model for the factors, levels, and relationships among factors and levels as a backdrop for continued study in the future. Hopefully, as creativity is examined through an ecological lens, new relationships and factors will develop over time to continue to progress the study of creativity.

Once propositions have been formed both deductively and inductively regarding Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, research related to intrinsic motivation, and research related to group dynamics (See Appendix A), propositions are combined to form new propositions in order to establish an ecological systems theory of creativity (See Figure 2.6). Each proposition contains sub-propositions in order to help elaborate each general proposition and establish initial relationships among concepts and variables established in the literature.

Figure 2.6 – Formulation of Propositions Map

Formulation of Propositions: Ecological Systems Theory of Creativity



Proposition 1a: In order to understand, maximize, and/or predict creativity, one must examine the ecological components influencing human development including factors related to the following: 1) An active, growing human being; 2) The changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives; 3) The relational processes between these settings; and 4) The larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.

Proposition 1 establishes the foundation and the skeleton for an ecological systems theory of creativity. Each proposition following proposition 1 is an extension of either the individual, the immediate settings of the individual, the relational processes among settings, and/or the larger contexts in which the individual is embedded.

Proposition 2a: An active, growing human being’s potential for creativity is influenced by his/her traits (biological, cognitive, emotional).

2.1: The potential for creativity increases as a person becomes intrinsically motivated leading to an enhancement in their level of enjoyment and exertion of effort.

2.3: Enhancement of enjoyment is more likely to occur when clear goals exist, immediate feedback is present, balance between challenge and skills are maintained, an awareness of action exists, and exclusion of distractions is monitored leading to a forgetting of self and time while moving towards autotelic experience.

2.3: An individual will become more self-determined to be creative if they become intrinsically motivated, learn to intrinsically regulated, perceive an internal locus of control, and experience an intrinsic regulatory process.

2.4 Individuals that are able to adapt to the influences of their environment through an ability to operate through the entire spectrum of personality dimensions while maintaining the control to maneuver between continuum extremes are more likely to achieve creative goals.

Proposition 2 focuses on the individual components of creativity. In Bronfenbrenner's original model (1979), he included the individual as part of the micro-system which also included family, co-worker, neighbor, etc. relationships. However, in order to tease out individual factors from the group factors, proposition 2 focuses on components related to the internal workings of the individual. Thus, concepts and research relating to flow, personal traits, and motivation make up the sub-propositions. Factors related to the interpersonal relations are addressed in proposition 3. It is important to note that proposition 2 provides a framework for additional sub-propositions to be made related to research regarding biological, cognitive, and/or emotional factors that contribute to creativity. Hopefully, as research transitions to theoretical propositions, more propositions will be added to help better understand the relationship between cognitive, biological, and emotional factors within the individual in relation to creativity.

Proposition 3a: The changing properties of relational groupings (e.g., co-workers, family, peers, dyads, etc.) found in the immediate settings in which the developing person lives impacts the creative process.

3.1: Relationships are more likely to experience creative processes if trust is built and maintained within those relationships.

3.2: The potential for creativity in relationships increases as cognitive and detectable diversity increases.

3.3: Groups of relationships are more likely to be creative if clear goals exist, immediate feedback is present, balance between challenge and skills are maintained, an awareness of action exists, and exclusion of distractions is monitored while being aware of the traits and abilities of the group.

3.4: In order for creativity to occur in a formally organized group (e.g., professional fields), acceptance by the given group has to occur.

3.5: Acceptance by a given field is influenced by the field's economic resources, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, societal values, level of autonomy in relation to other societal influences, organization, and openness/closedness of the field as a system.

Proposition 3 is based partly on the micro-system's influences outside of the individual including family and other important groups/dyads of impact. In addition, components of flow are applied to the group in order to begin to address how to help groups of people enter into the flow of creativity and maintain flow. Along with factors related to flow, Csikszentmihalyi's ideas relating to the field and society are included within the micro-system. The field seems to be a natural fit with the micro-system since professionals typically have active contact with entities in their given field within society. Finally, some group process research based on self-determination theory is added to provide further understanding of group creativity processes.

Proposition 4a: The interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person/group participates (e.g., family interaction with co-workers) impacts the creative process.

4.1: Individuals/groups are more likely to be creative if the individual/ group can implement the following in regards to the interrelations among settings: 1) Existence of clear goals; 2) Presence of immediate feedback; 3) Balance between challenges and skills; 4) Awareness of actions; and 5) Exclusion of distractions while being aware of the traits and abilities of each individual and the group.

Proposition four combines the meso-system from Bronfenbrenner's model with the factors related to flow and creativity stemming from Csikszentmihalyi's work. It is apparent that more research and understanding is needed in this area. Hopefully, future research will examine how the relationships among multiple entities influence the potential to be creative.

Proposition 5a: The creative process is influenced by settings that do not involve the group and/or individual as an active participant; a circular relationship occurs between the individual/group and these settings as events in both realms influence each other.

5.1: Individuals/groups are more likely to be creative if the individual/group can implement the following in regards to the settings that do not involve the individual/group actively: 1) Existence of clear goals; 2) Presence of immediate feedback; 3) Balance between challenges and skills; 4) Awareness of actions; and 5) Exclusion of distractions while being aware of the traits and abilities of each individual, group, and relationship among settings.

Proposition 5 combines the exo-system with concepts and factors related to flow and creativity. As with proposition 4, this area of influence on creativity has received little attention within the research.

Proposition 6a: The cultural and sub-cultural domains (ideologies, beliefs, symbols, and/or meanings) impact the creative process.

6.1: In order for creativity to occur, change must occur in an existing domain and affect the culture that contains that domain.

6.2: Change in a cultural domain depends on the domain's stage of development, cultural meaning, accessibility, and level of autonomy in relation to other societal influences.

6.3: Individuals/groups are more likely to be creative if the individual/group can implement the following in regards to the domains of a given culture: 1) Existence of clear goals; 2) Presence of immediate feedback; 3) Balance between challenges and skills; 4) Awareness of actions; and 5) Exclusion of distractions while being aware of the traits and abilities of each individual, group, and relationship among settings, and indirect settings.

Because Csikszentmihalyi (1996) did address creativity at the cultural level in regards to his concept of domains, more sub-propositions could be formed in relation to areas of influence at the macro-system level.

Proposition 7a: Creativity is more likely to occur as an individual and/or group acquire a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and become motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content.

Propositions seven and eight were formed out of Bronfenbrenner's later work (1999) regarding the bio-ecological systems theory when relating those ideas with creativity. Proposition seven suggests that it is important for groups and individuals to continually monitor different levels of influence within the individual and at the environmental level. Thus, creativity becomes a process in which individuals see themselves as part of a larger system. Equally, proposition 8 suggests that creativity is an evolving process at an individual and ecological level leading one to take part in cultural evolution.

Proposition 8a: Processes of engagement within the ecological environment will progress creativity as individuals/groups actively form more complex, reciprocal interactions between the bio-psychosocial organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in the immediate environment.

8.1: Interactions between the individual/group must occur on a regular basis over extended periods of time in order to form enduring proximal processes (e.g., parent-child interactions, peer-peer, employer-employee).

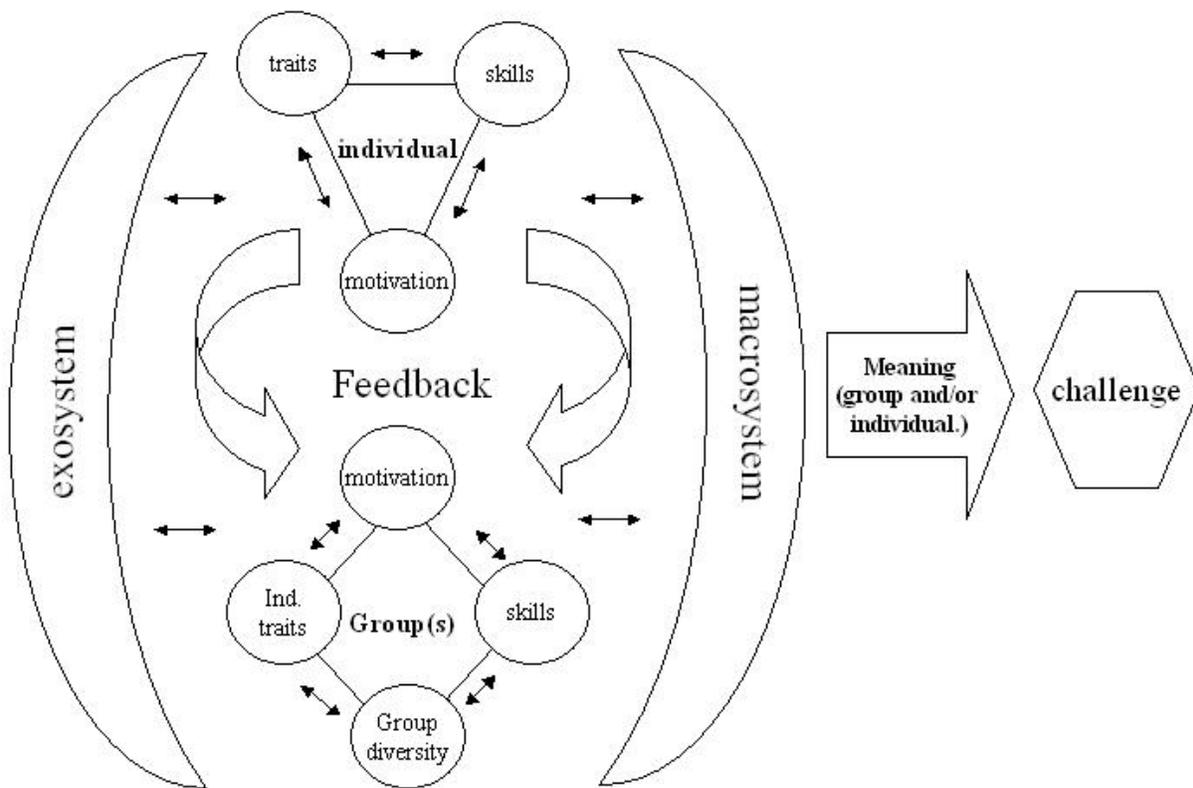
8.2: The form, power, content, and direction of proximal processes effecting creativity development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the bio-psychosocial person and the environment (both immediate and more remote) in regards to the creative outcome under consideration.

As stated, the newly formed propositions provide a systemic framework to examine creativity. Concepts and variables have been combined from multiple theories and areas of research to form such propositions. Many more concepts and variables based on research need to be analyzed at the individual and environmental levels in order to form new sub-propositions. It is apparent that the majority of past research has focused on individual factors. Thus, more research needs to examine relationships and levels of influence that have not received adequate attention at a systemic level. Through the lens of an ecological systems theory of creativity framework, multiple factors influencing creativity begin to emerge as concepts, findings, and variables lead to the formation of new propositions. Furthermore, a holistic lens allows for current findings and concepts to find a place as researchers continue to make sense of the nature of creativity. For a complete list of the newly formed propositions, see Appendix B.

In order to make sense of the newly formed concepts and propositions, a conceptual model was created in order to provide a visual representation of the relationships among the propositions and concepts (See Figure 2.7). As the model indicates, the individual level incorporates three major factors: 1) Traits (inherent and learned); 2) Skills; and 3) Motivation. Traits at the individual level would include what proposition 2.4 indicates as the ability to move across the spectrum of personality traits. In addition, this area could include both genetic and learned traits gleaned from the literature. Skills include some of the abilities listed in proposition 2.3 including an awareness of action, exclusion of distractions, etc. Finally, motivation refers to propositions 2.1 and 2.4 regarding intrinsic motivation, regulation, process, and locus of control. The feedback discussed in proposition 2.3 occurs in a circular fashion at multiple levels as

indicated by the arrows in the conceptual model. It is important to note that the balance between challenge and skills as discussed in proposition 2.3 is influenced by multiple factors. Thus, the entire conceptual model leads to an established meaning regarding a particular challenge. The meaning is influenced by the multiple levels in relation to the given task (challenge) as indicated by the larger arrow leading to the hexagon.

Figure 2.7 - Ecological Systems Theory of Creativity Model



At the group level, the same factors at the individual level are listed under motivation, skills, and individual traits. Individual traits refer to the traits of each member of the group. This group could be identified as a family, set of co-workers, etc. In addition, multiple groups will likely exist causing for further groups to be added to the model. For conceptualization purposes, only one group is included in the visual model. Group diversity is also a factor contributing to the characteristics of the group as described in proposition 3.2. Feedback from the group may come in the form of acceptance by a given field as described in propositions 3.4 and 3.5. Finally,

trust is likely to occur through the feedback process highlighted in the conceptual model as described in proposition 3.1.

Equally, the exo- and macro-levels as discussed in propositions 6 and 7 are also incorporated into the model while the meso-system discussed in proposition 4 is indicated by the feedback loops occurring between the multiple factors and levels. Thus, the model suggests that factors and feedback loops occurring at multiple levels help to form meaning about a particular challenge. This meaning provides structure and definition to the potential for creativity to occur while accomplishing a given task or challenge.

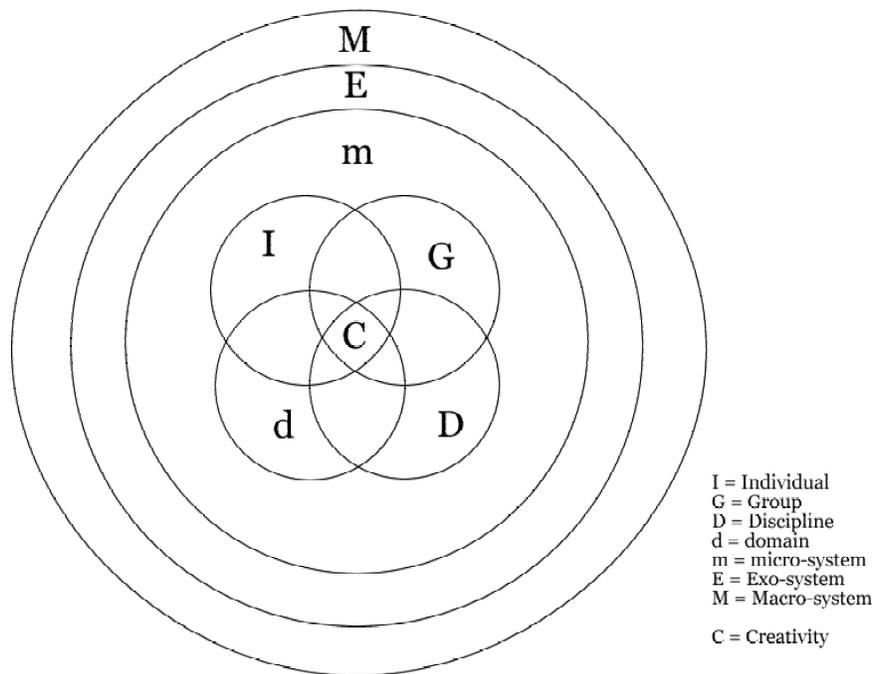
There are a number of applied implications for this theory. First, it is important to understand that an ecological systems theory of creativity provides a skeletal framework of systemic processes. Thus, these processes could be applied to multiple arenas of content (i.e., business, family therapy, education). Second, similar to therapeutic process, this model can be used to follow a strategic process of evaluation and assessment, intervention, and re-evaluation. Finally, the current model allows for continued growth of concepts and propositions. Thus, as systemic processes are applied to more specific content areas, adaptation of propositions, sub-propositions, and/or concepts will most likely take place to fit the symbols, meaning, and language of the given content area. In addition, some levels of influence may become more important than others in different content areas. The current theoretical model does not suggest an equal level of influence from each systemic level (micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-). Rather, the theory suggests that one should be aware of each of these levels and examine the level of influence of each of these levels. In the end, one may find that certain levels are more influential than others while other levels may change with time.

Assessment, Intervention, & Re-evaluation

In order to illustrate the applied nature of this model, an example is provided using an ecological systems theory of creativity to guide the process. First, questions and issues relating to assessment at each of the levels of influence are addressed. Second, intervention questions and strategies are introduced based on the initial assessment. Finally, re-evaluation questions and strategies are presented. The purpose behind presenting the following examples is to illustrate how the various levels found in the theory can influence different areas of creativity in very different ways. One example is an area that has an established discipline or field while the other example uses an area that is not influenced directly by a professional field.

In this example, research professionals in the field of marriage and family therapy will be used to illustrate the nature of the ecological model. First, it is important to note that within areas of creativity, professionals that are studying a particular domain contained within an established discipline will more likely follow a modified conceptual model of ecological systems (See Figure 6). Thus, within the micro-system, the individual has a relationship with the group with whom he/she works, different domains of study, and different disciplines. As one can see from the visual model, in order to increase cognitive and detectable diversity as a means of maximizing creativity potential, individuals should work with group members that are both in and outside of their discipline in order to experience multiple points of view. In addition, having members in the group that study the domain and members that are unfamiliar with the domain allow for insider and outsider perspectives. Thus, figure six illustrates levels of influence that one could examine in order to maximize potential for creativity. In general, the purpose of the model is to illustrate the importance of being aware of multiple influences at multiple levels within the individual and among the environment.

Figure 2.8 - Ecological System Theory Revised



For example, a professional researcher in MFT studying infidelity treatment will have more success developing novel research if that professional examines factors that influence

his/her creativity at multiple levels. At the individual level, it would be important to examine motivation, personal traits, goals, feedback, challenge and skills, awareness of action, and exclusion from distractions in regards to his/her topic of study (See Table 2.1). Table one illustrates the additional levels and areas of assessment with questions addressing each particular area. This is not an exhaustive list of questions; rather, it provides some initial areas of inquiry to stimulate thought in relation to each factor of influence.

Table 2.1 – Creativity Assessment

Individual	Traits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What individual traits help me succeed in my current task? 2. What traits hold me back? 3. How can I maximize these traits?
	Motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What motivates me to complete this task or participate in this challenge? 2. How can I re-structure my challenge to fit a more intrinsic motivation?
	Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What skills do I have that will help me complete this task? 2. What skills do I need to gain to complete this task?

Group	Individual Traits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the traits of each individual add or take away from our potential to meet the current challenge? 2. How does each individual's motivation influence the group? 3. How do each member's level of skills add or take away from our potential? 4. Are there other individuals we could add to the group to increase diversity?
	Motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the group's motivation for completing this task? 2. How can we adjust the characteristics of the challenge to increase motivation?
	Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the group skills that improve the potential for success? 2. What group skills do we need to gain?
	Diversity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How diverse in thought, experience, and characteristics is the group? 2. How can we add more diversity to our group?

Meso-system	Feedback	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the relationships among the important groups that influence our challenge interact?
Exo-system	Feedback	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What societal, regional, and community entities influence our task? 2. How can we maximize potential by understanding the influence of these groups?
Macro-system	Feedback	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the current zeitgeist of this particular challenge in society? 2. How do cultural/societal beliefs and values influence our ability to accomplish the given task?

During assessment, at the individual level one may find that a particular researcher is very introverted causing him to not have the ability to communicate his ideas to important gatekeepers such as local funders. In addition, he may have excellent writing skills, but he may lack statistical skills. His motivation may be to publish in order to get tenure rather than for a passion of wanting to improve infidelity treatment. At the group level, assessment may indicate that the colleagues he works with have no pressure for tenure. Thus, they may be more passionate about the work causing him to get burnt out and frustrated while other members of the group do not experience burnout. In addition, the group may all have writing skills but lack statistical skills while all coming from the same professional discipline. At the meso-system level, this researcher's spouse may be complaining about the amount of exhaustion he is experiencing due to the burnout causing him to regret working on the particular challenge. At the exo-system level, media groups and talk shows may be pressuring the researchers to produce a

certain kind of product in order to meet the demands of the public. Cultural beliefs at the macro-system may be causing society to place more importance on fidelity because of recent infidelity occurrences by a former president.

After assessment has occurred, based on established research and theoretical concepts, changes could be made at different levels of influence in order maximize the potential for creativity. Using the above example, one might recommend that the individual choose a research topic that impassionates his interests. In addition, seeking additional statistical skills may allow him to examine this phenomenon differently in order to establish new findings. Equally, helping this individual learn to be more extroverted in certain occasions may help him gain more funding. Once this individual has established a research topic that excites him, finding group members to collaborate with that represent various skill levels, disciplines, and points of view may offer more dialogue for additional insights. Recognizing that finding research topics that do not cause burnout may improve his home life creating a positive reinforcement to continue to engage in this activity. Realizing that the public is also excited about certain areas and understanding the delivery method that would reach the public may help increase future funding as well as increase public demand. Thus, adjusting the various levels based on the assessment produced allows for one to maximize their potential to maximize their creativity.

Finally, after interventions have been made, re-evaluation will need to take place over time in order to measure the effectiveness of each intervention. Equally, effectiveness studies in general could provide more knowledge in regards to areas of the model that may need to be adjusted, changed, and/or removed.

Future Research & Implications

As one can see from the example, the purpose of an ecological systems model of creativity is to examine levels of influence in order to assess and adjust those levels as a means of maximizing the potential for creativity. The theory can be used to predict the likelihood of creativity over time as well as explain current outcomes related to creativity. In addition, the theory is also helpful in providing context to the phenomena as a means of establishing a more holistic theory of creativity, which can be added upon and adjusted over time as research continues to guide creativity theory.

Just as the example illustrates how the theory can be applied to a professional area of creativity, the model could equally be applied to business, government, university, and other

organizational entities seeking to maximize the potential for creativity. In addition, the model can be used to examine the process of forming theory in itself. Thus, a researcher can examine multiple conceptual levels to form propositions on a holistic level. Further research and application is needed to examine the differences of this model that may be found among the different contexts. Just as the model was adjusted to meet the characteristics of an established discipline (MFT), the model may need to be adjusted to incorporate additional concepts, variables, and propositions within different contexts (i.e., business, government, school). The most exciting implication of this model is that it can be expanded and adjusted over time as the model is applied to different contexts.

In summary, an ecological systems theory of creativity combines ideas related to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity with research stemming from self-determination theory and group process theory under an ecological framework. Development used both inductive and deductive strategies to create propositions, combine propositions, and establish new, more complex propositions. These established propositions provide a framework for examining factors that influence creativity at the individual and environmental level. The assumption made by this theory is that awareness of these multiple levels of influence on creativity can help individuals, groups, and organizations assess and adjust different factors in order to maximize the potential for creativity. Further work is needed to form additional propositions based on current research. More research is needed to apply this model to multiple contexts and examine the effectiveness of changing different factors in relation to creativity potential. As stated, the majority of creativity research has focused on individual factors. More research examining group creativity processes as well as factors and processes at the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-levels are encouraged.

MFTs in Non-traditional Areas

One method of examining the creative process in MFTs is through the examination of highly creative MFT professionals. Some of the most creative individuals in MFT are those who apply their clinical skills and systemic lens to non-traditional areas of application. Understanding the processes they experience as they apply their skills to non-traditional areas may shed light on how MFTs in general can become more creative.

Wynne, McDaniel, and Weber (1986) address a number of environments where MFTs can provide systems consultation including military (e.g., Kaslow, 1986), church (e.g., Friedman,

1985; Weber & Wynn, 1986), school (e.g., Fisher, 1986), medical (e.g., Brucker et al., 2005), courtroom (Wynne & Wynne, 1986), and business settings (e.g., Flemons & Cole, 1992). In addition, over the past 20 years, MFTs have begun to apply theoretical concepts and clinical skills to non-traditional areas of application including chronic illness (Sauber, 2006), obesity (Doherty & Harkaway, 1990), alternative medicine (Caldwell, Winek, & Becvar, 2006), veterinary/medical school training (Hafen, White, Rush, Reisbig, & McDaniel, in review), social justice (McDowell & Shelton, 2002), anthropology (Krause, 1993), mediation (Southworth, 2005), life coaching (Williams & Davis, 2002), executive coaching (Borwick, 1986), etc.

As stated in the introduction, non-traditional settings are defined as settings outside of the therapy room in a private practice, managed care, and/or university setting. Non-traditional areas of application include areas outside of the traditional models, theories, and/or presenting problems generally taught in MFT graduate programs. It is important to note that some programs have begun to add non-traditional areas of application to their core curriculum suggesting that the field truly is expanding its scope of practice and theory. For the purpose of this dissertation, non-traditional areas will focus on areas outside of what professionals receive from a typical MFT graduate program's core curriculum and program of study. For example, traditional therapy models would include those models covered in common texts found in MFT graduate programs: Psychodynamic, Intergenerational, Structural, Strategic, Communication, Experiential, Solution-Focused, Emotional Focused Therapy, Narrative, and Social Constructionist models (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Nichols & Schwartz, 2005). In addition, some general family science theories may include developmental theories, systems theory, ecological systems theory, and attachment theory. Finally, non-traditional settings would include those settings outside of the typical therapy room located in a university clinic, private clinic, or community mental health center or providing services outside of individual, couple, and/or family counseling.

In order to understand the zeitgeist of the field in regards to non-traditional areas of application, a content analysis was run using the International Science Index (ISI) database to examine articles addressing MFTs in non-traditional settings and areas of application within the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy (JMFT)*. Articles were examined between 1996 and 2006 (n=655) in which settings and non-traditional topics were identified in the titles and abstracts of journal articles (See Table 2.2). In addition, models and theories identified in abstracts and titles of journal articles in JMFT were also examined as a means of understanding how MFTs may

have applied non-traditional theories to systems theory (See Table 2.3). It is important to note that I read each abstract examining whether or not the author mentioned a model or theory in his/her description of the article.

Table 2.2 - Publication Trends of Non-traditional Areas

Non-traditional Settings/Clientele	JMFT: Total Count (1989 – 2006)	Overall: Total Count (1989 – 2006)
Business	1	10
Clergy/Church	1	8
Life Coaching	1	1
Community Liaisons	3	10
Courtroom	2	15
EAP	1	1
Farm Families	1	1
Foster Care	5	7
Gifted Children	1	2
Global Therapy	2	2
Head Start	2	5
In-home	17	72
Inner City	2	8
Internet	4	16
Mediation	4	18
Medical Settings	7	25
Organizational Consulting	1	3
Prison	0	2
Rural Settings	6	16
School	15	69
Veteran/Military	6	12
Non-traditional Topics	Total Count (1989 – 2006)	Total Count (1989 – 2006)
Alternative medicine	2	5
Chronic Illness	16	28
Disabilities	5	21
Family Law	3	37
Financial Issues	3	16
Forensics	1	3
Genetics	1	15
Gerontology	2	15
HMO's	3	4
International Adoption	1	2
Managed Care	8	14
Medicare	1	1
Neuroscience	1	1

Physical Disorders	3	4
Political violence	1	3
Poverty	2	12
Psychotropic Medications	5	14
Spirituality	7	30
Sports	0	1
Terrorism	2	5
Family/Work Balance	2	2

Table 2.3 – Non-traditional Theory Publication Trends

Theories/Models	JMFT: Total Count (1996 – 2006)
Art therapy	1
Attachment Theory	21
Behavioral	2
Bowen	9
Brief therapy	5
Cognitive	1
Cognitive Behavioral	4
Contextual	4
Critical Race Theory	2
Developmental	7
Dialogue	6
Ecological Systems Theory	11
Emotionally Focused	1
EMDR	2
Existential	7
Experiential	16
Feminist Theory	1
Group Theory	1
Humanist Theory	10
Integrative	2
Internal Family Systems	17
Narrative	2
Object Relations	8
Postmodernism	3
Psychoanalytic	4
Psychoeducational	10
Social Constructionist	9
Solution-focused	4

Strategic	1
Strengths based	12
Structural	1
Symbolic-experiential	41
Systems theory	

A second content analysis was run using the International Science Index (ISI) database to examine MFT journal articles published between 1989 and 2006 that apply systemic principles to non-traditional settings and topic areas. In addition, the theories analyzed in the first content analysis also were examined. The following journals were used in the content analysis: 1) Journal of Marital and Family Therapy; 2) Family Process; 3) American Journal of Family Therapy; 4) Contemporary Journal of Family Therapy; 5) Journal of Family Therapy; and 6) Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy. These results are also noted in Table 2.2.

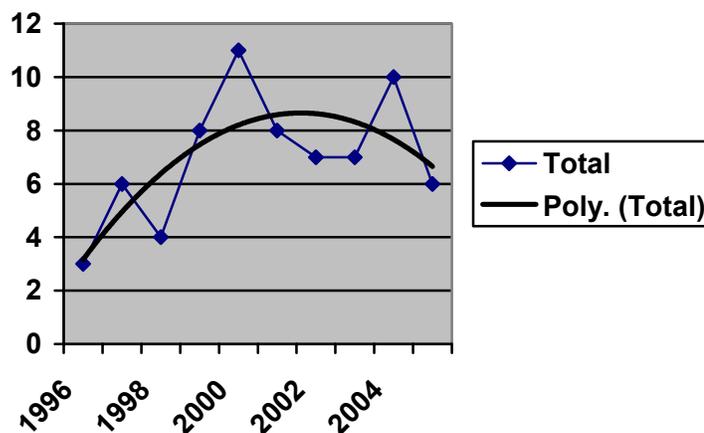
In regards to the content analysis, it is interesting to note that 18% (115) of the articles in JMFT between 1996 and 2006 mentioned the use of a formal theory or framework (See Table 3). The most common theories used were systems theory (41), attachment theory (21), and feminist theory. In regards to clinical models, 19% (124) of the articles examined or utilized a clinical model with narrative (17), Bowenian (9), and solution-focused (9) theories being the most common. In terms of non-traditional theories or models, very few articles examined systemic phenomenon through a non-traditional theoretical lens. Although the use of traditional theories is important as a means of providing foundational frameworks to research, utilization of other theories outside of MFT may expand the field by providing additional insight to different areas of application. Similar to the ecological systems theory of creativity's concept of cognitive diversity, examining MFT areas using different modes of thinking would likely increase insight and understanding. On the other hand, using the same theories and models without innovation will most likely narrow the field's insight and stunt its growth. Thus, part of the purpose of this dissertation is to examine the processes certain MFT researchers experience as they apply non-traditional theories to MFT concepts.

In addition, the content analysis regarding non-traditional settings and topic areas offer some important insights. The most common non-traditional settings discussed in JMFT were in-home (17) and school (15) settings while overall totals of the six journals indicate that in-home (72) and school (69) settings were also the most common across journals. The most common non-traditional topics in the literature in JMFT include chronic illness (16) and managed care

issues (8) while overall totals indicate that family law issues (37), spirituality (30), and chronic illness (28) were the most common topics covered across journals. Thus, a second purpose of this dissertation is to examine how MFTs enter non-traditional settings and areas of application. The content analysis provides a backdrop for assisting in sampling methods as I seek to interview MFT professionals in non-traditional areas. Additional information regarding sampling methods and processes will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

A final content analysis was run on the amount of diversity research that has been conducted over the last 10 years in JMFT. Diversity research is defined as research examining a phenomenon that occurs in minority ethnic, racial, religious, and/or sexual orientation groups. Although diversity issues and research appear to be a more common area of application, diversity research has only peeked in the field over the last 10 to 15 years. Thus, applying MFT concepts and skills to diverse groups is one example of the profession expanding its practice of scope and understanding. A couple of decades ago, applying MFT concepts to diversity would have been considered a novel idea or non-traditional area of application. The results of the content analysis are presented in Figure 2.9.

Figure 2.9- Regression Model of Non-traditional Publication Trends



Hafen, White, Rush, Reisbig, and McDaniel (in review) note that a systemic lens has become a professional asset to MFTs as evidenced by the successful application of systemic interventions to novel settings. Equally, one could argue that a systemic lens would lend MFT researchers to apply systemic concepts to novel research areas. Using an ecological systems

theory of creativity leads one to examine the influences of multiple systemic levels on the potential for creativity within an MFT (i.e., individual, group, exo-, macro-, etc.). One would assume that a systemic field over time would become more systemic through a number of methods. For example, a systemic field would collaborate with multiple disciplines applying concepts from multiple domains in order to holistically understand phenomena. Clinically, a systemic field should learn how to collaborate with multiple professionals including medical, social work, counseling, psychology, criminal justice, government, and community professionals. From a student recruitment perspective, a systemic field would learn how to draw from multiple backgrounds including educational, ethnic, cultural, religious, and philosophical viewpoints. On an international level, a systemic field would begin to address global issues related to culture, politics, anthropology, etc. Hopefully, a systemic field would tap into the expertise of other disciplines studying cybernetics and systemic concepts as well. Since most MFTs identify the cornerstone of their professional expertise through the application of systems theory with their clients and/or research, one would assume that MFTs would have an advantage as a field because a systemic lens allows for collaboration, networking, and extending research concepts to include multiple levels of examination. In other words, just as an MFT would examine a family through a systemic lens, he/she would view his/her own place in society through a systemic lens as well at the individual, professional, community, research, and field levels.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the importance of creativity in family therapy was established by emphasizing literature that addresses creativity as a means of improving therapy skills and the therapy process. However, research examining how MFT professionals can become more creative is lacking. Some studies have provided some methods for developing creativity in MFT, yet the scope of the research is narrow and fails to address other factors that influence creativity outside of discriminate thinking and some individual traits.

Literature examining creativity research in general suggests that creativity is an important area of study for many disciplines. Unfortunately, the majority of the research focuses on individual factors while failing to form holistic frameworks or models that incorporate different factors of influence. A few theories have been presented by Csikszentmihalyi and Sternberg as confluential models in which they attempt to form more holistic, systemic models of creativity.

However, these models do not include some of the important components found in the literature. Thus, part of this chapter introduced an ecological systems framework of creativity designed to examine creativity holistically by examining many levels and factors of influence. Propositions from Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow and creativity were formed deductively and combined with Bronfenbrenner's propositions he formed based on his ecological systems theory of human development. Inductive propositions were added to the model to include group creativity and motivation research in order to improve and expand some of Csikszentmihalyi's concepts in accordance with more current research.

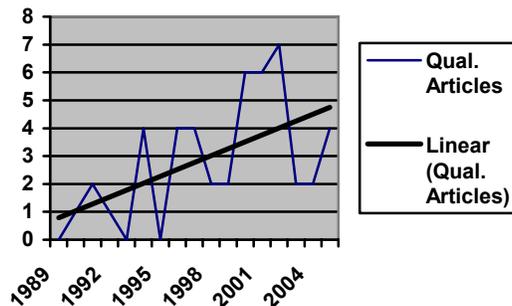
This ecological systems theory of creativity framework is used to examine creativity in MFT professionals. This framework allows one to examine factors of influence at the individual, group, community, national, and socio-cultural levels while exploring feedback loops that occur between these levels. One method of examining creativity is through careful analysis of creative individuals. Since creativity is defined as one that produces novelty that progresses society, examining MFT professionals that produce new ways of doing and thinking as means of progressing the field will be the focus of study in this dissertation. Specifically, MFT professionals that have applied MFT skills and concepts to non-traditional areas of application are examined. This will include non-traditional settings such as business, military, and church settings as well as non-traditional areas of application such as organizational consulting, chronic illness applications, and forensics. In addition, MFT professionals that apply new theory and frameworks to MFT theory and models are also to be examined which may include theories such as chaos theory, neuroscience theories, and genetic models. Hopefully, through an examination of MFT professionals in non-traditional settings, creative processes will be understood which could enhance how MFT professionals, organizations, and the field as a whole attempt to improve research productivity, theory development, student training and recruitment, and clinical application.

CHAPTER 3 - Research Methods

Overview of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is one of the two major approaches in social science methodology. Stemming from methods used in anthropology and sociology such as ethnography, fieldwork, and participant observations, qualitative research emerged as a legitimate method to study how individuals and groups understand different aspects of the world. The number of qualitative studies in the field of marriage and family therapy have increased over the last two decades. A recent content analysis of the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy indicates that since 1989, abstracts mentioning the use of qualitative methods have increased substantially (See Figure 3.1). Hawley and Gonzalez (2005) note that 29% of the journals published by faculty members in COAMFTE-accredited programs used qualitative methods between 1998 and 2002. Overall, it appears that qualitative studies have become increasingly important to the field of MFT.

Figure 3.10 - Regression Model of Qualitative Research Trends



Increases of the use of qualitative methods in the field of MFT can be attributed to some of the paradigm shifts that have taken place in the field. Some of these paradigm shifts mirror societal shifts that occurred in the 1980's and 1990's in various disciplines typically referred to as postmodernism. A number of studies in the mid-1990's in various disciplines including medicine, business, education, psychology, and MFT began to address the role of research using a postmodern lens (i.e., Allen & Baber, 1992; Caldwell, Becvar, Bertolino, & Diamond, 1997; Colliver, 1996). In general, post-modern theorists believed that quantitative methods that relied heavily on validation through statistics based on quantified observations became too rigid and are too deductive to understand complex phenomena (Creswell, 1998). Creswell believed that qualitative research is an investigative process that allows researchers to understand a more

naturalistic, complex, and holistic conceptual understanding of human processes. Thus, qualitative research becomes an alternative method to explore complex issues in humans that may not be so easily understood through quantifiable data.

Sprenkle (1994) pointed out that qualitative methods are especially useful in the field of MFT for tasks like describing complex phenomena, defining new constructs, discovering new relationships among variables, trying to answer “why questions,” and grappling with theoretical questions about meanings, understanding, perceptions, and other subjectivities in and about families. In addition, qualitative methodologies lend themselves to areas of study that are in the beginning stages of the research process. Agras and Berkowitz (1980) presented a model of research that outlined the process for developing and evaluating promising treatments. They emphasize the importance of qualitative research in the beginning stages of the research process in order to capture the depth of the issues that need to be treated.

Patton (2002) described qualitative findings growing out of three kinds of data collection: 1) In-depth, open-ended interviews; 2) Direct observation; and 3) Written documents (p. 4). Thus, qualitative analysis requires one to spend time in the setting they are studying. These three forms of data collection stem from five traditions of inquiry reviewed by Creswell (1998): Biography from humanities; phenomenology from philosophy; grounded theory from sociology; ethnography from anthropology; and case study from psychology. Each of these five traditions represent different forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretations that could be use during qualitative research.

Phenomenology

Patton (2002) noted that phenomenology can refer to a philosophy, an interpretive theory, an inquiry paradigm, a social science perspective, a major qualitative tradition, or a research methods framework. Although phenomenology has been defined and applied in many contexts, the basic principles underlying phenomenology are utilized to “gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Thus, the focus of inquiry revolves around how people describe their lived experiences. Interpretation of events becomes the mode in which persons describe such experiences while assuming that there are shared meanings mutually understood across experiences leading to the *essence* of a given phenomenon (Patton, 2002). As experiences are understood among different interpretations, such experiences can be analyzed, compared, and organized in order to reach the defining

characteristic of pure phenomenological study: “the study of essences (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10).”

Regarding methodology, phenomenology provides some structure in order to understand the essence of a certain phenomena of experience. Qualitative analysis in general uses methodology to control for internal and external threats of validity similar to quantitative controls. Patton (2002) described a five step process in gathering data and analyzing that data based on Moustakas’ (1994) qualitative research design: 1) Epoche – the researcher looks inside to become aware of personal bias and avoid prejudgment or imposing meaning to soon; 2) Bracketing – locate key phrases and statements, interpret meaning of phrases, obtain subject’s interpretations of these phrases, inspect meanings for what they reveal about the phenomena of study, and offer tentative statements or definitions of the phenomena; 3) Horizontilization – statements are organized into meaningful clusters creating themes while treating all aspects of the data as equal; 4) Textual portrayal – the researcher finds examples in the text of the themes; 5) Structural description – attempt is made to understand how the group as a whole experience the phenomena; 6) Integration of textual and structural descriptions – establish a synthesis of meanings and essences of the experience.

Because phenomenology places emphasis on the lived experiences of humans, it is important to empower the perspectives of the participants while controlling for biases and assumptions. Standpoint theory has emerged as a perspective that can be taken that attempts to control for such biases and assumptions.

Standpoint Theory

Originating from feminist research approaches, standpoint theory offers a unique method to explore the experiences of marginalized groups. A *standpoint* refers to “a place in which to view the world that determines what we focus on as well as what is obscured” (Harding & Wood, 2006). According to Harding (1993), the perspective from the lives of the less powerful can provide a more objective view than the perspective from the lives of the more powerful. In accordance with Harding, Wylie (2003) stated that the central thesis of standpoint theory is that “those who are subject to structures of domination that systematically marginalize and oppress them may, in fact, be epistemically privileged in some crucial respects” (p. 26). Thus, a standpoint theory approach attempts to tap into knowledge that can only come from the perspective of the marginalized.

Originally, standpoint theory was developed by Nancy Hartsock (1981) as a mode of analysis to examine the perspectives of women in relation to social structures. She believed that social structures often arise out of one perspective (e.g., male perspective) that is generalized as a universal truth, covering up other perspectives that are equally valid and important. Standpoint theory leads one to respect experience and differences and give power to the voice of the marginalized. Thus, Hartsock places emphasis on social structures and epistemology summarized in these two assumptions:

- 1) Social structures set limits on understanding social relations. The dominant group in society will label its perspective as real and reject other definitions.
- 2) The dominant group's perspective is "partial and perverse" while the oppressed exposes more "real" relations (Hekman, 1997, p. 346).

A number of philosophers and researchers have explored the standpoint theory approach in the areas of communication, political science, ethics, rhetoric, etc. (e.g., Sandra Harding, Merrill Hintikka, Dorothy E. Smith, Patricia H. Collins, Susan Hekman, Nancy Hartsock). However, very few have addressed the utility of standpoint theory in relation to other cultural issues such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or positions of less power. Many disciplines have found it a challenge to apply traditional theory to marginalized groups for the very argument standpoint theory assumes: traditional theory typically is formed by the current social structures of society that do not have full access to the truths of marginalized groups and, therefore, do not give justice to the perspectives of marginalized groups (Foss & Ray, 1996).

A number of research implications arise by using a standpoint theory lens to perform research with a marginalized group. First, rather than gathering data from a marginalized group and interpreting the data through a researcher's eyes, the interpretation attempts to maintain a pure interpretation by only reporting the data the marginalized group gives. Hence, past stereotypes and biases that come from more powerful groups such as researchers are flushed out of the interpretation. In addition, concepts created are based on the words and language the participants voice rather than fitting their experiences into research concepts outside of the group's understanding.

By maintaining an approach that sets boundaries on how information is interpreted, the research findings attempt to give a stronger, purer "voice" to the marginalized group that is being studied. Hartstock (1981, 1983) used the term "strong objectivity" versus weak objectivity to

describe the unique perspective marginalized groups have of understanding social structures over less marginalized groups. In other words, subjects who are outside of a majority community have views to offer that will help communities be more aware of biases and prejudices and, thus, offer a strong objectivity. On the other hand, subjects who are part of the majority community may define a marginalized group attempting to fit them into their view of reality, values, and social structure (weak objectivity). Wood offered two reasons why the standpoint of marginalized groups are less partial, distorted, and false than those in dominant positions: 1) Marginalized people have more motivation to understand the perspective of the powerful; and, 2) Marginalized people have little reason to defend the status quo. Research that attempts to learn from the “strong objectivity” perspective of the marginalized group will offer more insight to practitioners than information that is viewed through a “weak objectivity” majority lens and merely addresses culture.

In regards to methodology, standpoint theory makes some important assumptions that help guide research: 1) What people “know” depends on what group they are in; 2) The marginalized groups of society can often be the “ideal knowers;” 3) Absolute relativism from post-modernism is rejected while objectivity is defined based on the perspective of the beholder; 4) All scholarly inquiry should start from the lives of those who are marginalized in order to avoid bias; 5) People at the top of the societal hierarchy have the power to define others; and 6) A person can only achieve a partial view of reality based on the perspective of his or her own position in society (Harding & Wood, 2006, p. 460).

In regards to this dissertation, a standpoint theory approach will be applied to the methods in order to reduce biases and give power to the voices of those in the “non-traditional.” Because the purpose of this study is to understand the process that MFTs experience as they apply their skills to non-traditional areas, phenomenology as a qualitative methodology was a natural choice in order to understand the lived experiences of the sampled MFTs. However, because I am applying an ecological systems theory of creativity to the study that I created in order to guide the questioning, I recognize that I have invested some personal interest into the validation of the theory. Thus, it became important for me to use methods that would control for biases that might arise due to my personal connection to the theory. Standpoint theory has been described as a theory and methodology that helps control for biases while giving power to the voice of the marginalized.

It is obvious that biases need to be controlled for since I created the theory that is under examination; however, standpoint theory also helps address issues of power. Although the participants in this study may not be seen as marginalized in a traditional sense due to SES or ethnicity; they could be considered marginalized in regards to the amount of support they receive as they pioneer new frontiers in different areas of application. Many of the ideas and applications that they pioneered most likely met some resistance from the majority. In other words, as an MFT professional attempts to introduce something new to the homeostasis of the field, systems theory would suggest that the field would most likely react with some resistance to the change. Thus, the ideas and applications of the professionals may very well be marginalized by the field of MFT or other facets of society including new areas of application. For example, if a theorist begins to write articles that push the boundaries of tradition and comfort, that theorist may be marginalized by the majority because his/her ideas are in the minority. Thus, using standpoint theory also allows for additional measures to be taken in order to empower the voices of the ideas and talents of the individuals studied since they often have been marginalized in the past. Some may continue to experience marginalization. Standpoint theory will be applied to a phenomenological approach in order to understand the experiences of MFTs applying their skills to non-traditional areas of application while attempting to control for biases and give power to their ideas.

Role of the Researcher

Part of the philosophy behind standpoint theory and phenomenology is to be transparent about the experiences and “standpoint” of the researcher examining the phenomenon. Thus, it becomes important for the researcher to share their personal background, interest, and biases regarding the phenomena of study.

First, I am a marriage and family therapist doctoral student. Thus, I believe in promoting the field of MFT. In addition, I believe that the systemic skills learned through MFT training can be applied to many areas of society outside of the traditional realm of marital and family therapy. Second, I have applied my MFT skills to non-traditional areas of application. In regards to practice, I have applied my clinical skills to weight management consultation, human systems consultation in higher education, and research consultation in hospital, higher education, and state government settings. In regards to theory development, I have used non-traditional theories such as standpoint theory while examining Latino marriages, borrowed theory techniques to

apply creativity research and ecological systems theory as discussed in this dissertation in Chapter 2, and an ecological systems theory of creativity regarding research productivity in MFT schools. In regards to research, I have recently collaborated with a statistics doctoral student to begin to use non-traditional statistical methods in MFT study through the use of non-parametric statistical analysis. Thus, I am interested in understanding how other MFT professionals apply their skills to non-traditional areas of application because of my own interest in this endeavor. In fact, I am attending an International MBA program during this study to continue to gain new skills and areas of application in which he can apply systemic concepts.

Finally, I am a 28 year old male who has been married for 6 years and was mainly raised in the Northwestern part of the United States. I have two daughters (6 years old and 2 year old) and come from a family of 7 children in which he is the oldest. I have French, German, English, and Irish heritage in my ancestry and am a 6th generation member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I have served a mission for this church for two years in Salta, Argentina having the opportunity to learn Spanish at a fluent level. I have earned a Master's degree in MFT in southern Mississippi and have worked as a community mental health therapist in rural Mississippi. In addition, I have taken MBA coursework and graduate classes in Clinical Psychology. I have also worked as a salesman and a sales manager for a top marketing company, as a Spanish translator, and as a researcher, clinician, and instructor in hospital and higher education settings. As stated, I am attending an International MBA in South Carolina during this study in which part of my coursework will involve 9 months of experience in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Experiences beginning in early childhood have inspired some of the ideas that led to this study. First, my paternal grandmother instilled a sense of curiosity and creativity in his life through telling stories about Shakespeare, the old west, the researcher's ancestors, and life in other parts of the world. This lead me to learn more about the world especially in terms of philosophy, literature, and psychology that addressed holistic ways of looking at truths and occurrences in society. Second, my father is a lawyer with a strong background in mathematics which influenced the my ability to analyze data, question answers, and organize information. Third, my experiences in high school lead to the formation of a tight group of friends that all valued learning, philosophy, and open discussion about world events. Currently, I am still in close contact with these 6 friends, which include a professional artist, an accountant, a medical

doctor, a dentist, an officer in the Marines, and a professional musician. Contact with friends from multiple disciplines has led to rich discussions of combining different principles from these multiple disciplines. Fourth, my experience in South America as a missionary led to the formation of a desire to take knowledge and help others. This led to the desire to gain an education in applied science. During my undergraduate studies, two professors influenced his writing abilities and philosophical thinking: Dr. Brian Merrill of BYU-Idaho and Dr. Samuelson of BYU-Idaho.

Fifth, key professors in graduate school have stimulated important formations about theory and research application including Dr. Jeff Hinton of Southern Mississippi introducing systems theory and postmodernism to the researcher, Dr. Mark White of Kansas State University introducing key research and technical writing strategies, Dr. Karen Bowman of Kansas State University introducing skills related to qualitative research and theory development, Dr. Charlotte Olsen instilling an importance of applied research and practice, and Dr. Candy Russell providing a sensitivity of being aware of culture, meaning making, and power. Finally, my spouse has consistently provided feedback and support about ideas and practices that were personally marginalized in my own life regarding the application of systemic skills to non-traditional areas of application. In many ways, I have followed a pattern in which I have had to provide evidence to a new party of interest of my skills and the importance of applying systems theory in a non-traditional setting. My own experiences of marginalization and successes of applying systems theory to new areas have given passion to the formation of this study. My desire is to open doors to upcoming MFT professionals and current MFTs as a means of maximizing the potential of individuals and the field itself.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used in order to study participants in depth that meet certain criterion for the study. Patton (2002) described purposeful sampling in qualitative study as a means to study participants that are “information rich.” In other words, they offer insight about the phenomena that is unique to them. Thus, the purpose behind the sampling is to gain insight about the phenomena rather than form empirical generalizations. Convenience sampling was also be used in this study. Convenience sampling focuses on how the sample is found. Because the participants in this study are spread across geographic regions, workplace settings, and areas of application, it would have been difficult to randomly select participants from the general

population. Furthermore, since this is an exploratory study, random sampling is not required in order to gather rich, in-depth data.

As I thought about setting the criterion for the participants, a number of issues were addressed. First, the purpose of the study is to explore how MFTs apply their skills to non-traditional areas. Thus, it is important to define a MFT. One of the purposes of this study is to provide a path for upcoming MFTs that want to apply their skills in non-traditional areas. I felt it would be important to only interview MFTs that received training from a COAMFTE-accredited program either at the Master's or PhD level in order to provide a pathway for students in COAMFTE-accredited programs. However, it quickly became clear that there are not a lot of MFTs from COAMFTE-accredited programs that are engaging in non-traditional areas of application regarding theory development and research. In addition, certain areas of practice do not contain many MFTs from COAMFTE-accredited programs either. Thus, MFTs from COAMFTE-accredited programs were sought out first; however, if such MFTs did not exist, MFTs that did not come from COAMFTE-accredited programs were sampled (i.e., Sue Johnson).

Second, it was important to define non-traditional areas of application. As previously discussed, non-traditional areas will include non-traditional applications in research, theory, and practice. The reasoning behind this definition stems from the research-theory-practice triangle. Since disciplines are continually seeking novelty and progression in these three areas, understanding innovation in these three areas would help MFTs understand how to improve the field in a holistic manner. In regards to research, non-traditional areas included non-traditional methods, non-traditional applications of technique and intervention, and/or non-traditional settings where research is performed. In regards to theory, non-traditional areas could include borrowed theory techniques in which a theory outside of MFT is applied to MFT concepts. In addition, it could include theory development in regards to the creation of a new MFT theory and/or model that moves beyond traditional models and theories. In regards to practice, non-traditional areas include unique settings where MFT concepts are utilized and unique problems that are addressed outside of traditional presenting problems. For example, these settings may include farms, medical schools, and military bases. Problems may include chronic illness, financial stress, and family inheritance issues.

Third, it became important to understand what MFTs were doing regarding non-traditional areas of application. The content analysis discussed in Chapter 2 was helpful in terms of understanding what areas of application are being studied and explained in the professional journals. In addition, Wynne, McDaniel, and Weber’s (1986) book, “*Systems consultation: A new perspective for family therapy,*” was also helpful in identifying some unique areas of MFT application. Based on the content analysis and the consultation book, a list of non-traditional areas in research, theory, and practice was generated. Using the list of non-traditional areas, a list of authors and practitioners regarding the areas was developed. Names were gathered through convenience sampling methods through various methods: 1) Asking MFT professors for researchers and practitioners in non-traditional areas; 2) Examining articles in JMFT and other journals regarding researchers performing non-traditional research and practitioners in non-traditional areas; 3) Calling other MFT professors from other schools about practitioners and researchers in non-traditional areas; 4) Examining websites of professors at different COAMFTE-accredited schools; and 5) Using search engines such as the ISI and Google to find MFTs in non-traditional areas. Based on these procedures, a list of possible participants was created (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 – Identified Creative MFTs

Theories/Models	Internal Family Systems	Richard Schwartz
	Functional Family Therapy	Thomas Sexton James Alexander
	Multi-systemic Therapy	Scott Henggeler John Little
	Multi-dimensional Family Therapy	Howard Liddle
	Solution-focused Therapy	Insoo Kim Berg Steve de Shazer
	Emotionally Focused Therapy	Sue Johnson Les Greenberg
	Narrative Therapy	David Epston Michael White
	Social Constructionism	Harlene Anderson
Research	Neurophysiology	Brent Atkinson
	Chronic Illness	Susan McDaniel Jennifer L. Hodgson
	Genetics	Susan McDaniel
	Managed Care	Russell Crane

	Diversity	Ken Hardy Theresa McDowell
	Political Violence	Kaethe Weingarten
	Spirituality	David C. Dollahite Loren Marks
	Poverty	Carolyn Tubbs
	Physical Health/Medical Family Therapy	Thomas Campbell
	Confidential Topic	Anonymous
	Gerontology	Jonathan Sandberg
Practice	Business Consulting	Harlene Anderson Irving Borwick
	Family Business	David Bork Joe Paul
	Farm Families	Charlie Griffen
	Medical/Veterinary Schools	Mac Hafen Michael Olson
	Higher Education Consulting	Rusty Andrews
	Internet	Karin Taverniers Ron Austin
	Coaching	Patrick Williams
	Mediation	Robert Terhune Stewart
	Systems consultation	Timothy Weber
	Military Consultation	Florence Kaslow
	Community Consulting	Bill Doherty
	Wilderness Therapy	Bill Meredith Colleague

As illustrated in Table 3.1, over 40 individuals were identified. Because this is an exploratory study, only 8 to 10 participants were needed. Thus, convenience sampling in terms of selecting participants was used while trying to maintain a balance of participants found in the three categories of research, theory, and practice. In other words, individuals were contacted, introduced to the purpose of the study, and invited to participate in the study. As an individual agreed to participate, some participants were not contacted in order to maintain balance between the sample size in the research, theory, and practice categories. In addition, as an individual from a specific non-traditional area of application agreed to participate, other individuals within that same specific area were not contacted in order to cover multiple non-traditional areas of application. Following the sampling process, a final list of 17 participants was identified.

Procedure

Creswell (1998) believed that in order to conduct a phenomenological study, one must understand the philosophy behind the approach. A major emphasis of the philosophy behind phenomenology is understanding how to suspend one's assumptions and judgments of the lived experience being studied. Bracketing is a method that is used to be transparent about one's own beliefs in order to avoid biases that may occur through data collection and analysis.

Phenomenology encourages the exploration of lived experiences as one attempts to understand the underlying meaning and essence of a phenomena. Standpoint theory also promotes understanding the lived experience while controlling for biases. Thus, bracketing is a useful method to give power to the voices being studied by clearly defining preconceived assumptions.

Bracketing

Because standpoint theory and phenomenology believe it is the researcher's responsibility to suspend preconceptions and prejudices while maintaining an attitude of openness, part of the bracketing process that will be highlighted in the procedure section of this chapter will address the importance of bracketing presuppositions. This provides an additional tool to attempt to control for biases while still being immersed in the data and experience of the study. I recognize that because I use my skills in non-traditional areas of application, I have a personal investment in portraying non-traditional applications in a positive light. However, through the use of different methodology tools such as bracketing, biases were controlled for to the extent possible. The following were some of the researcher's assumptions and preconceived judgments about MFTs in non-traditional areas of application:

1. MFTs are trained in systems theory and theories related to human relationships.
2. All entities of application are made up of systems.
3. Because MFTs are trained in systems theory, MFTs have the capability and potential to apply their skills in areas outside of therapy.
4. MFTs applying their skills to non-traditional areas of application improves the discipline and society in general.
5. It is important for MFTs to continually improve areas of application regarding practice, theory, and research.
6. MFTs offer a unique perspective to many types of contexts and

problems that improve the potential for problem-solving and progressing.

7. MFT students are seeking out non-traditional ways to apply their skills in the job market.
8. MFTs improve their ability to help others when they expand their theoretical, research, and practice lens to include non-traditional areas of application.
9. I personally have improved in applying my skills and learning to non-traditional areas of application.

Being aware of these assumptions is important for me as I attempt to collect data and analyze results while maintaining researcher neutrality. Thus, the voices are more likely to be heard rather than misconstrued through the interpretations of my analysis.

The second analyst (Timothy Rarick) also bracketed his own biases and assumptions as well as discussed his perspective on the research in the following paragraph:

I am a 29-year-old masters' student in marriage and family therapy at Kansas State University. This is important to note due to the fact that I need to be aware of any biases held from association with the current institution at which I study. Furthermore, there may be a bias toward those in my chosen field who are specializing in my preferred area of focus as well as theoretical orientation. I am a Caucasian male from middle class upbringings and thus it becomes imperative that I am aware of biases while reading the interviews of comments made about gender, ethnicity, or social class. I am also a devout Christian who was raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is a practicing member today. This should be kept in mind so that I avoid gravitating toward any information that is of a spiritual nature. Lastly, I have been married 7 years and has two children, age 3 with the youngest being 9 months.

Developing the Interview Guide

Because the hypotheses of this study are based on the theory presented in chapter 2, the questions of the interview were developed through a close examination of the propositions of the theory. However, I recognize that the purpose of phenomenology is to understand the participant's lived experiences while standpoint theory emphasizes being true to their experiences by controlling for researcher bias. Thus, while the questions were based on

propositions presented in chapter 2, the questions were carefully worded in order to allow participants to openly talk about their experiences without having to fit their answers into a formed theory. It was important for questions to be more general than narrow by using non-theoretical terms and “everyday” language in order to provide space for the participant to answer. For example, one of the theoretical propositions specifically uses the term cognitive diversity. Rather than asking whether the participant experiences cognitive diversity, one would ask how they might share ideas with other people and how their reactions to these ideas may have shaped their work. Thus, the focus of the question is on general cognitive processes rather than trying to ask a question specifically about cognitive diversity.

As stated in Chapter 1, the overarching research question of this dissertation is the following:

- 1) What is the process of creativity that MFT professionals experience as they apply clinical skills and a systemic lens to non-traditional areas of application?

In addition, the following research questions stemming from the overarching research question will be addressed:

- 1) What individual factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?
- 2) What relational factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?
- 3) What socio-cultural factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?
- 4) What professional factors related to the field of MFT and the domains of study in the field influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?

Based on the theory presented in Chapter 2 and the proposed research questions, an interview guide (see Appendix E) was created in which emphasis was placed on stating questions that allowed participants to share their lived experiences (phenomenology) while empowering their perspective (standpoint theory). Participants were given the interview guide at least one week in advance of the scheduled interview. This allowed participants to reflect upon the questions and ask questions about the interview once the researcher arrived to conduct the interview.

Informed Consent

Informed consent forms were administered to participants before the interview began (see Appendix C). The informed consent forms clearly described the purpose and procedures of the study, the procedures set to protect confidentiality, their consent to participate, and their freedom to withdraw from the study. The informed consent also authorized the rights to audiotape the interviews. A waiver at the end of the informed consent was also approved by the IRB allowing participants to withdraw their rights to confidentiality. Similar to Csikszentmihalyi's study, benefits to using the participant's name within the dissertation include honoring the participant for his/her work, helping others that would like to engage in similar work have contact information, and increased exposure of their work which may lead to more acceptance and support from others.

Demographics Sheet

In addition to the informed consent forms, demographic sheets were given to each participant before the interview (see Appendix E). The purpose of the demographics sheet was to gather additional data such as age, race, gender, marital status, and level of education. Questions addressing theoretical orientation, job experiences, and expertise were also included. The demographic sheet, informed consent form, and request form all required participants to identify themselves using their full name. In order to maintain confidentiality, only I had access to these documents while transcripts and other information seen by other analysts and researchers used numbers rather than names to identify participants.

Data Collection

All the interviews for this dissertation were conducted at the national AAMFT conference in Austin, TX during the fall of 2006. Funds provided by the Poresky research award of Kansas State University allowed me to travel to the national conference and engage in face-to-face interviews. All the interviews were audio taped. Recorded tapes were kept in a secure, private location in order to protect confidentiality. Before the interviews began, participants completed provided paperwork including the informed consent and the demographics sheet. Any additional questions about the interview, the procedures, or the study were answered at this time. The interview guide was used to guide the process of the interview while allowing for flexibility as described in the semi-structured interview section of this chapter.

Individual Interviews

Phenomenology recommends the use of long, in-depth interviews in order to gather rich data about the phenomena of study (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the time spent during each interview averaged between 1 and 1.5 hours. Because the focus of phenomenology is to evoke a comprehensive account of the interviewees experiences (Moustakas, 1994), flexibility in the interviewing style was used in order to capture the lived experience of each participant. Thus, questions could be “varied, altered, or not used at all” in order to provide a continuous flow of information as each interview takes on a unique, evolutionary process (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). This continuous evolution allows each interviewee to guide his/her thoughts based on the experiences they share rather than molding their answers into the preconceptions of rigid questions. Creswell (1998) described four ways that interviews could be utilized ranging from semi-structured to open-ended. Because the researcher both prepared the questions and permitted flexibility, the interviews conducted in this dissertation would be considered semi-structured. I allowed enough flexibility for the interviewees to share the richness of their experience; however, I guided the interview in order to cover major themes relating to the experience. Following the interviews, audiotapes were transcribed in order to begin the analysis process.

Data Analysis

Typically, data analysis during qualitative research is begun during the collection of the data in order to help the researcher immerse themselves in the data to gain an understanding of the lived experience. However, because standpoint theory is being used, I felt analyzing the data during the data collection might taint the interviews and take away from the voices of those being analyzed. In other words, standpoint theory emphasizes giving power to the voice of those being studied. Thus, if I analyze during the collection process, the voices of those being studied may be weakened. I recognized that it is impossible to prevent a complete paralysis of analysis during data collection since I will be conducting the interviews and thinking about their responses. Yet, part of standpoint theory states that if I am cognizant of biases that may occur, attempting to reduce analysis during data collection will strengthen the participant’s voices.

Epoche is a method that can be used in phenomenology that is similar to the philosophy set forth by standpoint theory. The process of *epoche* refers to the researcher removing, or at least being aware, of prejudices, viewpoints, and/or assumptions regarding the phenomena of study (Patton, 2002). In other words, *epoche* is an ongoing analytical process that causes an

“attitudinal shift” in which the researcher focuses on the evidence rather than feeding the evidence through the assumptions and prejudices of the researcher. Part of epoche has been described through the bracketing process of this chapter in which the researcher delineates his preconceived assumptions.

Following epoche and the bracketing of preconceived assumptions, bracketing of the data collected through the interview occurs. Patton (2002) described the process of bracketing through the following steps:

- 1) Locate within the interviews key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon in question.
- 2) Interpret the meaning of these phrases.
- 3) Obtain the subject’s interpretations.
- 4) Inspect the meanings for what they reveal about the essence of the phenomenon.
- 5) Offer a tentative statement, or definition, of the phenomenon.

Because standpoint theory is being used, the bracketing process was modified in regards to the interpretation phase. Since standpoint theory emphasizes interpreting through the eyes of the subjects as much as possible, interpreting the meaning of the phrases will not occur in the bracketing phase in this dissertation. Rather, interpretation occurred at a later stage that will be described further in this chapter.

Phenomenology states that four crucial elements when analyzing the data should be utilized in order to understand the lived experiences of the participants: 1) horizontilization, 2) clusters of meanings, 3) textual descriptions, and 4) structural descriptions (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). Horizontilization refers to spreading out the data for examination with all elements having equal weight (Patton, 2002). In other words, once bracketing has occurred, all the data are treated with equal value as the researcher examines all components of the data collected. The data is then organized into meaningful clusters based on common categories or themes. Moustakas (1994) recommended removing repetitive statements during this process; however, standpoint theory gives recognition to repetition suggesting that the more a statement is said by various participants, the stronger the theme. Taking away repetition takes away from the strength of the participant’s voices. Thus, quasi-statistics will also be utilized in this process in order to understand the strength of themes. Quasi-statistics is merely quantifying the number of

times a theme is mentioned. Once the themes are identified, a textual and structural description was written in which I attempt to describe *what* (textual) was experienced and *how* (structural) the phenomena was experienced. The *how* attempts to describe what phenomenology identifies as the “essence” of the phenomena. It is important to note that a number of safeguards were used in order to reduce bias during this process. These safeguards will be discussed in more detail in this chapter; however, it is important to note that although phenomenology attempts to capture the essence of a phenomena, standpoint theory attempts to capture how the participants describe that essence. Thus, the structural and textual descriptions uses what Pike (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 267) describes as *emic* analysis in which the language and categories used by the participants are used to describe the themes and patterns that emerge from analysis. This is in contrast to *etic* analysis in which the words that describe the themes and patterns are formed by the researcher and often resemble or utilize theoretical concepts and terms that the participants would not use in their own descriptions.

Steps for Modified Phenomenological Data Analysis

A modified phenomenological analysis was used to evaluate the qualitative findings. Phenomenological analysis traditionally is used to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience for a person or group of people (Patton, 2002). Modifications to traditional phenomenological methods were made regarding issues of power in light of standpoint theory.

In regards to power, the qualitative analysis portion of the study was guided by a number of assumptions based on standpoint theory: 1) Researchers have higher power over those being researched since researchers interpret the findings; 2) Researchers are part of a dominant social structure that attempts to fit findings into current paradigms; and 3) The dominant group’s perspective is ‘partial’ due to an imbalance of power while the minority group’s perspective taps into a ‘truer’ sense of the group’s lived experience (Hartstock, 1981, 1983; Harding, 1993; Wylie, 2003). Thus, the purpose of standpoint theory is to make attempts to give more power to the voice of the minority or marginalized by openly addressing issues of power.

Before the analysis, my major professor and I discussed ways to address power during the analysis. We came up with the following boundaries: 1) In order to not overly interpret or adapt the data to dominant paradigms, only direct quotes were used to report the findings using an *emic* analysis (language and categories used by the people researched are used rather than

categories created by the researchers); 2) Past assumptions about certain applications were questioned in order to avoid the tendency of fitting the findings into past assumptions through the use of bracketing; and 3) Four indicators of rigor were used to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998).

Based on the philosophies of standpoint theory and the steps described in phenomenological data analysis, the following steps were utilized in analyzing the data collected from the interviews:

Step one: Initial bracketing of researcher's biases. As stated, bracketing the researcher's biases and preconceived assumptions helps establish researcher neutrality. Bracketing was the first step in the analysis process. In addition, other members that performed peer debriefings also were asked to bracket their biases. This help control for researcher bias as well.

Step two: Bracketing through horizontalization. Using the complete transcription from each MFT interview, I bracketed all quotes relevant to the research questions. In other words, quotes were underlined, numbered, and assigned to different research questions. This helps organize the data that was relevant to phenomenon of study.

Step three: Reduction and elimination to determine the invariant constituents. Once the quotes were bracketed and assigned to different research questions, I highlighted and charted invariant constituents and overlapping expressions while eliminating irrelevant information. Invariant constituents are defined as a word or group of words that share meaning based on the syntax or structure of the words themselves. In other words, invariant constituents during qualitative analysis are similar groupings of words that are used by various participants. Coding and classifying data relied on convergence and divergence properties in which internal homogeneity (extent to which data fits together) and external heterogeneity (extent to which differences among categories are clear) were emphasized (Patton, 2002, p. 465). In accordance to standpoint theory, it is important to note that sensitizing concepts were not emphasized since they refer to categories that the analyst brings to the data based on previous theory or research (Patton, 2002). As discussed earlier, emic analysis was used during this process in which the language and categories of the people studied were used rather than categories created by the researchers (Pike, 1954 as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 267). Coding and classifying of invariant

constituents were charted in regards to their area of expertise related to either research, theory, and/or practice. This allowed for common themes to begin developing in each separate area.

Step four: Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents while using quasi-statistics. The invariant constituents were clustered and thematized by the researcher. It is important to note that quasi-statistics were used to understand the power of each theme. In other words, if a particular theme was described multiple times, this theme would be considered a stronger finding compared to a theme that was mentioned only a few times. Initial themes were identified separately within the research, theory, and practice categories.

Step five: Final identification and validation of invariant constituents. Invariant constituents and themes were then compared against the transcriptions in order to validate that the themes were analyzed clearly and coherently (Moustakas, 1994). It is important to note that emphasis was placed on the language used when identifying themes. Only words used by the participants were utilized to identify themes and patterns. Overall themes were identified in the research, theory, and practice areas. In addition, overarching themes addressing all themes were also identified.

Step six: Textual descriptions. Based on the validated themes and invariant constituents, I created a textual description for each MFT. Thus, I described *what was experienced* by each participant. These descriptions were based on the invariant constituents and themes that were validated in each transcript.

Step seven: Structural descriptions. In addition, a description of *how each MFT experienced* the phenomenon was created. I began to form some interpretations in this portion of the analysis. Once again, it was important for the researcher to use the language the participants used. In addition, assumptions and biases were examined again before analysis by reviewing the bracketing that had been performed. This kept me aware of maintaining a neutral stance during interpretation.

Step eight: Textual-structural synthesis. Combining the textual and structural descriptions, a description of what each MFT experienced and how they experienced it was created.

Step nine: Overarching analysis of themes and patterns. Once the combined textual and structural descriptions were created for each transcript, findings from each transcript were compared. Comparisons were made regarding the invariant constituents, common themes,

structural descriptions, textual descriptions, and textual-structural synthesis descriptions. Common themes and descriptions were identified in each of the major areas (research, theory, and practice) using overarching textual, structural, and textual-structural synthesis descriptions.

Verification

Although the purpose of this study is to understand the essence of the lived experiences of MFTs in non-traditional areas of application, verification methods similar to quantitative methods are useful in validating findings. Indicators of rigor in qualitative research are the approximate equivalents of the terms internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, which are used in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility (internal validity) was used by triangulating the data through the use of multiple investigators and peer debriefing. Multiple investigators included the primary researcher, a second analyzer, and a peer debriefer. My major professor was used as the peer debriefer in which assistance was given to ensure researcher neutrality and improve research design. A master's student in Family Life Education and Consultation (FLEC) was used as the second analyzer. The second analyzer examined the interviews and conducted his own analysis using steps one through five. In other words, he bracketed his own biases, bracketed through horizontalization, determined invariants constituents, thematized constituents, and identified final invariant constituents. Once my analysis was finished, my results were combined with the primary researcher's analysis including the textual, structural, and textual-structural synthesis components. The peer debriefer offered guidance and direction during the analysis through each of the steps for both analyzers.

In addition, following the analysis of the results, member checks were used in which the participants received the structural, textual, and synthesis descriptions of their analysis. Participants were asked to respond to the validity of the description by allowing for changes to be made or additional comments to be added. Finally, dependability (reliability) was used through the use of an audit trail. Investigators recorded the time spent analyzing, the steps used to analyze, and the results of each step. Confirmability (researcher neutrality) was established throughout the qualitative analysis as well as the final analysis by intensifying triangulation (e.g., multiple investigators inside and outside of research team and controlling biases through audit trials) and always being aware of biases (i.e., bracketing, discussing issues of power, emic analysis, and member checks).

Other methods used to validate the findings were through the use of rich and thick descriptions (Creswell, 1998). Providing as much detailed information as possible to the reader allows future studies to examine the findings closely and re-evaluate implications. Furthermore, because interviews were lengthy, trust could be built with the participants. This allowed for miscommunications to be clarified, detailed descriptions of experiences, and honest responses to the questions addressed. Thus, findings were likely to more closely mirror valid perceptions of their experiences from the standpoint of the participants.

CHAPTER 4 - Presentation of the Data

Using the methods described in Chapter 3, data will be presented from the interviews conducted with various MFT professionals. First, demographic information in a quantitative format is used to describe characteristics of the participants. Second, the bracketing through horizontalization process is highlighted. Third, the process of reduction and elimination to determine the invariant constituents is presented. Fourth, the clustering and thematizing of the invariant constituents is discussed while presenting quasi-statistics of various words and phrases. Fifth, the final process of identifying and validating invariant constituents is explored. Following the final identification, textual and structural descriptions are used to further analyze recurring themes. A textual-structural synthesis is performed in order to produce overarching themes and patterns.

As stated in Chapter 3, two investigators analyzed the data using the same structured analysis separately. In addition, I analyzed the data using textual, structural, and textual-structural descriptions of the interviews. I combined the results of the two analyses along with the recommendations of the peer debriefer (major professor). The combined results of the two investigators will be addressed in each section of this chapter rather than addressing them separately. Following the analysis, the major professor of this dissertation offered an additional peer debriefing. Finally, participants were given textual and structural descriptions of the interviews. Any responses based on the textual and structural description by participants that significantly changed the findings of the analysis are also addressed in appropriate sections.

Overview of Research Questions

As stated in Chapter 1, the overarching research question of this dissertation is the following:

- 1) What is the process of creativity that MFT professionals experience as they apply clinical skills and a systemic lens to non-traditional areas of application?

In addition, the following research questions stemming from the overarching research question will be addressed:

- 1) What individual factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?
- 2) What relational factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?

- 3) What socio-cultural factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?
- 4) What professional factors related to the field of MFT and the domains of study in the field influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?

Demographics

Over a dozen emails were sent to identified MFT professionals mentioned in Chapter 2 with an invitation to participate in a semi-structured interview regarding the process MFT's experience as they apply their skills to non-traditional areas of expertise. About 25% declined to participate due to "a lack of time" or "inability to coordinated travel times." In the end, eight interviews were conducted during the national COAAMFT conference held in Austin, TX in the fall of 2006. The following participants were chosen for the study: a) Dr. Susan McDaniel, a pioneer of medical family therapy; b) Dr. Jonathan Sandberg, an innovative researcher of gerontology and diabetes; c) Dr. Mac Hafen, a clinician for a veterinary medical school; d) Dr. Jennifer Hodgson, a creative researcher of medical family therapy; e) Dr. Michael Olson, a medical school professor and clinician practicing medical family therapy; and Mr Greg Rush, a business owner and family therapist for a residential treatment center called Telos, LLC. For a full list of biographies of the participants, see Appendix F.

Interviews were taped in various locations within Austin, TX including the conference center, hotel lobbies, and a number of restaurants. Interview length ranged from 24 minutes to 43 minutes with the average interview lasting 30.5 minutes. Table 4.1 describes quantitative results of general demographic questions asked at the beginning of each interview. In addition, a number of standard questions were asked during the interview which allowed for additional demographic results to be calculated (See Table 4.2). The results are divided into two sections: a) Summary of total results; b) Selected results divided into participants assigned to theory, research, and practice.

Table 4.1 – Demographics of Participants

<p><u>Sample Size:</u> N = 8</p> <p><u>Gender:</u> Male = 5; Female = 3</p> <p><u>Ages:</u> 34 to 65 (Mean = 43.4)</p> <p><u>Race:</u> Caucasian = 8</p> <p><u>Religion:</u> Catholic = 1 Episcopalian = 1 Methodist (Non-practicing) = 1 LDS = 4 Spiritual = 1</p> <p><u>Marital Status:</u> Married = 8</p>	<p><u>Country of Birth:</u> USA = 8</p> <p><u>Number of Children:</u> 1 child = 1 2 children = 3 3 children = 1 4 children = 2 5 children = 1 Mean = 2.9 children</p> <p><u>Income Level:</u> No response = 3 60,000 to 80,000 = 2 80,000 to 100,000 = 1 >100,000 = 2</p> <p><u>AAMFT Member:</u> Yes = 7 No = 1</p>
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Table 4.2 – Additional Demographic Information

<p><u>Terminal Degree:</u></p> <p>PhD w/ Post-Doctoral = 3</p> <p>PhD = 4</p> <p>MS = 1</p> <p><u>Graduate Degree Majors:</u></p> <p>Adult Development, PhD = 1</p> <p>Clinical Psychology, PhD = 1</p> <p>Family Studies, MS = 1</p> <p>Family Studies, PhD = 1</p> <p>Marriage & Family Therapy, MS = 5</p> <p>Marriage & Family Therapy, PhD = 4</p> <p>Social Work, MS = 1</p> <p><u>Current Position:</u></p> <p>Assistant Professor = 1</p> <p>Associate Professor = 2</p> <p>Business Owner, Therapist = 1</p> <p>Clinical Consultant = 1</p>	<p>Department Chair = 1</p> <p>Professor, Division Head = 1</p> <p>Program Director, University = 1</p> <p><u>Self-described Professional Identity:</u></p> <p>Teacher-Scholar = 1</p> <p>Marriage & Family Therapist = 6</p> <p>Family Psychologist = 1</p> <p><u>Preferred Theoretical Orientation:</u></p> <p>Critical Conversation = 1</p> <p>Post-modern Systems = 1</p> <p>Empirically Based, Systems = 1</p> <p>Systems-Cognitive = 1</p> <p>Experiential = 1</p> <p>Narrative = 1</p> <p>Biopsychosocial Systems = 1</p> <p>Solution-Focused = 1</p>
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Bracketing Through Horizontilization

As stated, bracketing through horizontilization is the process of identifying phrases and words that correspond with the research questions posed by the study. Each transcript was carefully bracketed by two researchers, one being the author of this dissertation. Bracketing of biases by both researchers took place before the analysis as a means to be aware of biases and assumptions. Rather than identifying phrases and quotes in this section, quotes will be used to support identified themes and patterns in a latter section of the analysis in order to establish more clarity between a theme and the given data. However, it is important to note that during the bracketing process, it became clear to the analysts that certain themes were already emerging. Because the interviews used a semi-structured approach, many of the responses followed a pattern that could be easily placed into one of the four sub-research questions. It is also important to note that phrases were placed only in the four sub-research questions and not placed in the

over-arching question. Because the overarching question is rather broad, only sub-questions were used to bracket participants' responses. Overall, the bracketing process lasted about 2.5 hours producing over 41 pages of phrases and dialogue corresponding to each research question. In other words, the researchers used an electronic version of the transcripts in which they electronically copied phrases from each transcript and electronically pasted the copied phrases in a separate document. It was interesting to find that the majority of phrases and responses were placed under research question one (29%) and two (29%) which addresses individual factors and group factors that influence creativity. Question three included twenty percent of the identified phrases which addresses socio-cultural factors while question four included twenty one percent of the responses which addresses professional factors that influence creativity.

Reduction of Invariant Constituents

As previously discussed, the reduction of invariant constituents consists of identifying words and phrases that share meaning based on syntax or the words themselves. Thus, similar groupings of words that were used by the participants were placed together. As stated, emic analysis was used in which groupings of words that were brought together continued to use the words the participants used during the interview.

Regarding research question one, words and phrases were combined forming initial themes and categories using the participants' words. Table 4.3 gives a listing of phrases and words that were combined during the reduction of invariant constituents process.

Table 4.3 – Individual Invariant Constituents

<p>Individual Invariant Constituents:</p> <p><i>Events</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Struggle Luck (Serendipity) Spiritual Direction <p><i>Motivation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relieve pain Improve others Improve Society Enjoyment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work Variety Process itself Intellectual Stimulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative process Purpose/Meaning/Value/Directed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of responsibility Challenge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal (to progress) External Interpersonal Connection <p><i>Traits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abstract Emotional Interpersonal Make connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical Thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think outside of the box Try new things Personal Conviction/Honesty Risk Taker Independent Flexible Ability to self-nurture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move past discouragement Ability to communicate Ideas Dedicated Vision Keep doors open Self-confidence Teachable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humble Willingness to Look at Self Ability to set boundaries (say no) Work well within groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good listener Active <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pro-active High Energy Intensity doer Balance Time See things systemically Ability to deal with stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of humor
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A number of the combinations created were easy to name due to the fact that each participant used the same word. For example, every participant used the word enjoyment while a lot of the participants would use the word purpose, mission, value, or directed to attempt to describe what seemed to be the same phenomenon. Rather than combining all the words into one, each word under each combination was left as a sub-category or phrase as a means to not lose the participant's pure description. This will help in keeping the final results more valid and reliable. Table 4.4 indicates the invariant constituents developed under research question two which addresses group themes.

Table 4.4 – Group/Relational Invariant Constituents

Group/Relational Combinations:	
<i>Family/Relationships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crisis Opression Environment (entrepreneurial spirit) Family dynamics Examples
<i>Motivation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help others Passion/enjoyment
<i>Traits</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive Nurturing Multi-disciplinary/multi-perspectives Open to Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas Honest with others Direct Respectful of Boundaries/People Level of Expertise Intense Systems (honest, direct) Collaborative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergy Intrinsic Motivation Like the people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good people Character strong Shared Vision Honest with Selves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk the walk Mutual learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humble Do not see themselves as experts
<i>Feedback</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance Importance Value
<i>Isolation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas Lack of people in discipline Lack of excitement by others for ideas

Table 4.5 lists the invariant constituents developed under research question three which addresses socio-cultural factors that influence creativity.

Table 4.5 – Socio-cultural Invariant Constituents

<p>Socio-Cultural Combinations:</p> <p><i>Not impacted</i></p> <p><i>Government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Policy (reimbursement)Lack of support, acceptance <p><i>Acceptance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Not always ready for quick changeBad examples in society, news misrepresentPublic perception <p><i>Organizational Systems Inhibit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">UniversitiesMedicalMental HealthFragmentation of health care system <p><i>Need to be Open to new systems</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">MedicalDrug companiesBiology <p><i>Cultural paradigms inhibit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mind-body splitRaceGender rolesValuesCorporate America <p><i>Spirituality Influence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">BeliefsReligion

Table 4.6 lists the invariant constituents developed under research question four which addresses professional field factors that influence creativity.

Table 4.6 – Professional Field Invariant Constituents

<p>Professional Combinations:</p> <p><i>Need to maintain Professional Integrity of the Field</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Be truly systemicDon't lose soulBe grounded in theoryBe grounded in researchMaintain Identity<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stick to roots, systems theory <p><i>Need to Maintain Openness to non-traditional areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Create partnershipsCollaborateLearn new theory, research, fieldsBiology, not afraid of the bodyNeed to coordinate effortsTraining students for real world<ul style="list-style-type: none">Diversify training (medical, residential)Forward thinking <p><i>Field inhibits change sometimes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cannot accept radical thinkingNot open and honest in communication <p><i>Field helps</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Supports new endeavors (medical family therapy)teaches systems thinking
--

Clustering & Thematizing of Invariant Constituents

Quasi-statistics were applied to each invariant constituent by counting each time that constituent was mentioned throughout the transcripts. These processes helped the researchers identify themes and patterns as well as organize the constituents in a more fluid manner. For example, during this section of the analysis, the grouping “interpersonal” was identified as its own separate category rather than a sub-category to intelligence since it was mentioned twenty-nine times compared to other intelligences that were barely mentioned. In addition, total responses for each category were summed with other categories under a research question as a means of examining larger patterns of influence. For example, all the responses under research question one were summed equaling a total of 178 responses. For a complete listing of quasi-statistic results for each sub-question, see tables 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10. One will notice that themes were developed using the words from the previous step as well as through more

organization of previous categories. For example, it is clear from Table 4.7 that interpersonal skills as well as helping others and enjoyment as motivators are strong themes.

Table 4.7 – Quasi-statistics of Individual Themes

Individual Themes (Total =178):	
<i>Events</i> (total = 14)	
	Struggle – 5 (cancer, death, stigma,
	Luck (Serendipity) - 5
	Spiritual Direction - 4
<i>Motivation</i> (Total = 68)	
	Help others -5 (total = 21)
	Relieve pain -4
	Improve others - 4
	Improve Society - 8
	Enjoyment – 16 (total = 20)
	Work - 2
	Variety
	Process itself - 2
	Purpose/Meaning/Value/Directed – 5 (total = 11)
	Sense of responsibility – 2
	Mission - 2
	Purpose - 2
	Challenge – 1 (total = 9)
	Internal (to progress) - 2
	External (solving problems; change perception) - 1
	Intellectual Stimulation – 2 (total = 5)
	Creative process - 1
	Learning - 2
	Interpersonal Connection – 4 (total = 7)
	Teaching - 3
<i>Traits</i> (total = 96)	
	Intelligence (Total = 11)
	Cognitive – 1 (Total = 10)
	Abstract - 2
	Critical Thinking
	Think outside of box - 2
	Try new things - 5
	Emotional - 1
	Interpersonal (Total = 29)
	Make connections
	Ability to communicate Ideas - 3
	Work well within groups - 11
	Good listener - 5
	See things systemically - 3

Bring people together - 2
Teachable - 2
Humble - 3
Personal Conviction/Honesty (Integrity) – 13 (Total = 15)
Willingness to Look at Self - 2
Risk Taker - 5
Independent - 6
Flexible – 1 (total = 8)
Keep doors open - 4
Ambiguity - 3
Dedicated/Committed - 8
Vision - 2
Self-confidence - 3
Ability to set boundaries (say no) – 1 (total = 8)
Balance Time - 1
Ability to deal with stress
Sense of humor - 2
Ability to self-nurture - 3
Move past discouragement – 1
Active (Total = 9)
Pro-active - 4
High Energy - 1
Intensity - 1
Doer - 3

Table 4.8 – Quasi-statistics of Group Themes

Group/Relational Themes (Total = 113):
<i>Family/Relationships</i> Influence Individual Traits (total = 17)
Crisis – 2 (family, death)
Opression - 2
Family dynamics – 12 (husband, husband, father
Examples – 1 (interviewing a client)
<i>Motivation</i> (total = 7)
To help others - 3
Passion/enjoyment - 4
<i>Traits</i> (total = 76)
Supportive – 6 (total = 13)
Nurturing – 2
Shared Vision – 5
Collaborative/Integrative – 11 (total = 16)
Synergy - 1
Mutual learning - 1
Humble - 1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not see themselves as experts - 2 Multi-disciplinary/multi-perspectives – 9 (total = 9) Open to Communication – 6 (total = 16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas - 1 Honest with others - 6 Direct -1 Engagement - 1 Intense Systems (honest, direct) - 1 Respectful of Boundaries/People – 5 (total = 5) Level of Expertise - 2 Flexible - 1 Trust (total = 15) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honest with Selves – 9 (11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk the walk – 2 Like the people - 1 Good people Safe - 2 Character strong - 1 Need for Feedback (total = 6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas - 1 Acceptance - 3 Importance - 2 Value Sometimes Feel Isolation – 2 (total = 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't feel isolated - 2 Ideas Lack of people in discipline- 1 Lack of excitement by others for ideas - 4
--

As Table 4.8 indicates, groups that are collaborative, supportive, and multi-disciplinary seem to be important to for participants to be creative.

Table 4.9 – Quasi-statistics of Socio-cultural Themes

<p>Socio-Cultural Themes (Total = 55):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not impacted - 2 Societal Acceptance (total = 16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to be Open to new systems, applications – 2 (total = 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical - 1 Drug companies - 1 Biology Other Disciplines Can Help - 3
--

Helps move it forward – (medical family therapy) 2
Not Always There- 2
Not always ready for quick change
Bad examples in society, news misrepresent - 3
Public perception – 2
Cultural paradigms inhibit – 4 (total = 18)
Mind-body split - 3
Race - 1
Gender roles - 1
Values - 1
Corporate America - 7
Can enhance – 1 (paradigm shifts, using alternative med.)
Organizational Systems Inhibit (total = 14)
Universities - 6
Medical - 2
Mental Health - 1
Fragmentation of health care system – 1
Government Inhibits - 2
Policy (reimbursement) - 2
Lack of support, acceptance
Spirituality helps Creativity – 6 (total = 6)
Beliefs
Religion
Organizations can help - 1

Based on the results in Table 4.9, it appears that cultural paradigms, social acceptance, and organizational systems are the most important factors that influence creativity at this level.

Table 4.10 – Quasi-statistics of Professional Themes

Professional Themes (Total = 48):
Need to maintain Professional Integrity of the Field (total = 15)
Be truly systemic
Don't lose soul - 5
Be grounded in theory - 1
Be grounded in research - 3
Maintain Identity - 4
Stick to roots, systems theory - 2
Need to Openness to non-traditional areas – 7 (total = 24)
Create partnerships - 4
Collaborate - 2
Learn new theory, research, fields - 3
Biology, not afraid of the body - 3
Need to coordinate efforts

Training students for real world - 2
Diversify training (medical, residential) - 1
Forward thinking - 2
Field inhibits change sometimes (total = 3)
Cannot accept radical thinking- 2
Not open and honest in communication - 1
Field helps (total = 7)
Supports new endeavors (medical family therapy) - 1
teaches systems thinking - 2
teaches new skills – 3
helps develop new relationships - 1

Using the data in Table 4.10, it appears that the need to be open to non-traditional areas as well as the need to maintain professional integrity are important themes under the professional field research question.

Based on the quasi-statistics calculated, visual graphs were formed to provide further assistance in analyzing the themes as well as understanding overall patterns. Figure 4.1 represents total responses of all the participants under each ecological level.

Figure 4.1 – Quasi-statistics of Invariant Themes by Ecological Level

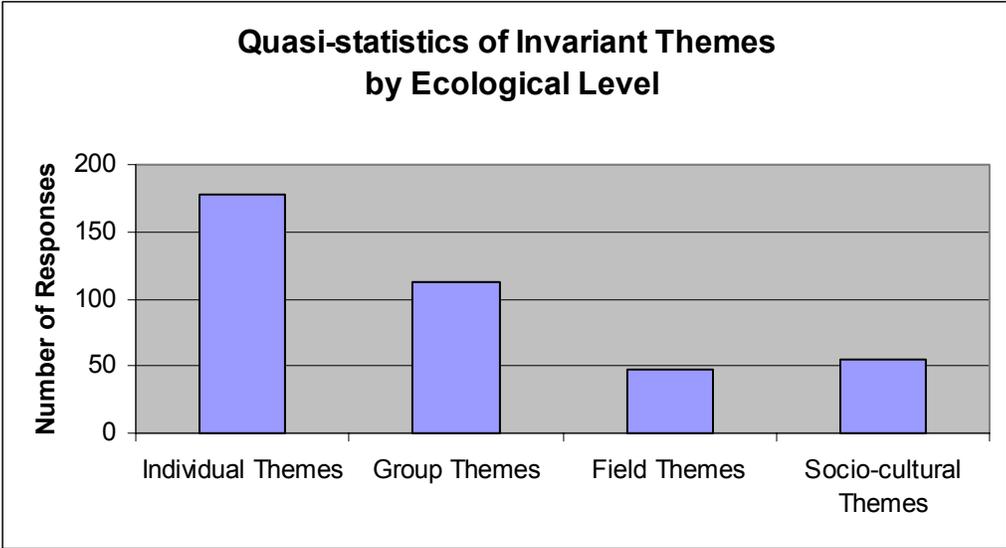


Figure 4.2 represents the top individual traits mentioned under research question one, addressing individual factors.

Figure 4.2 – Quasi-statistics of Individual Traits

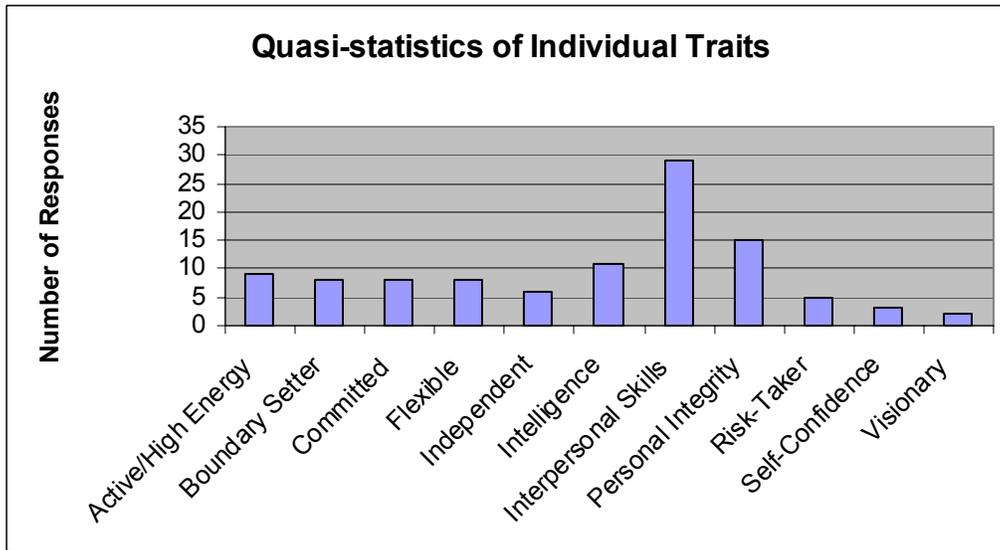
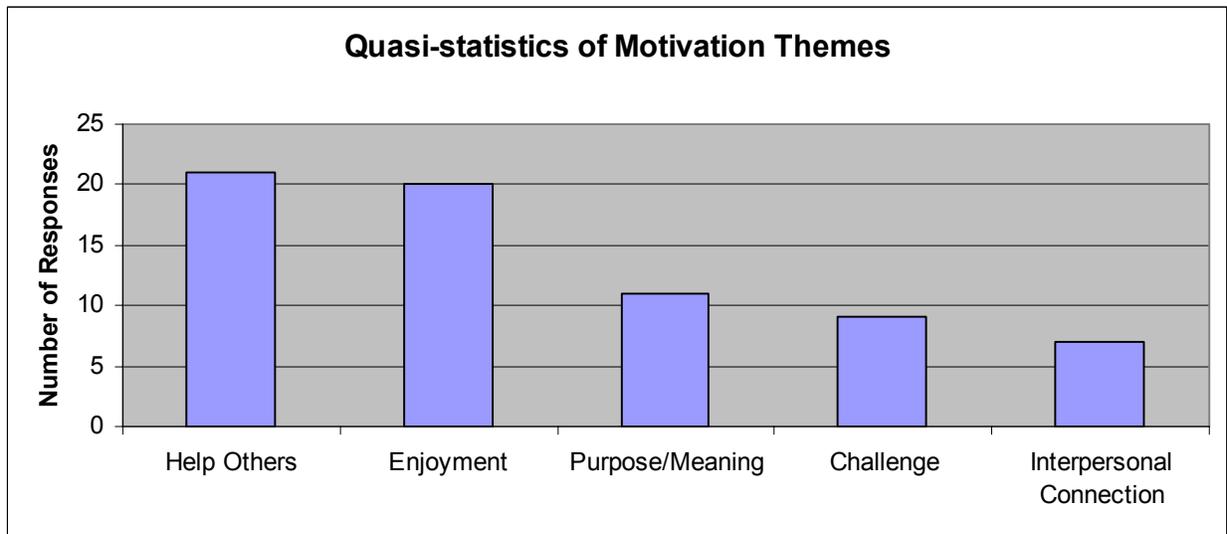


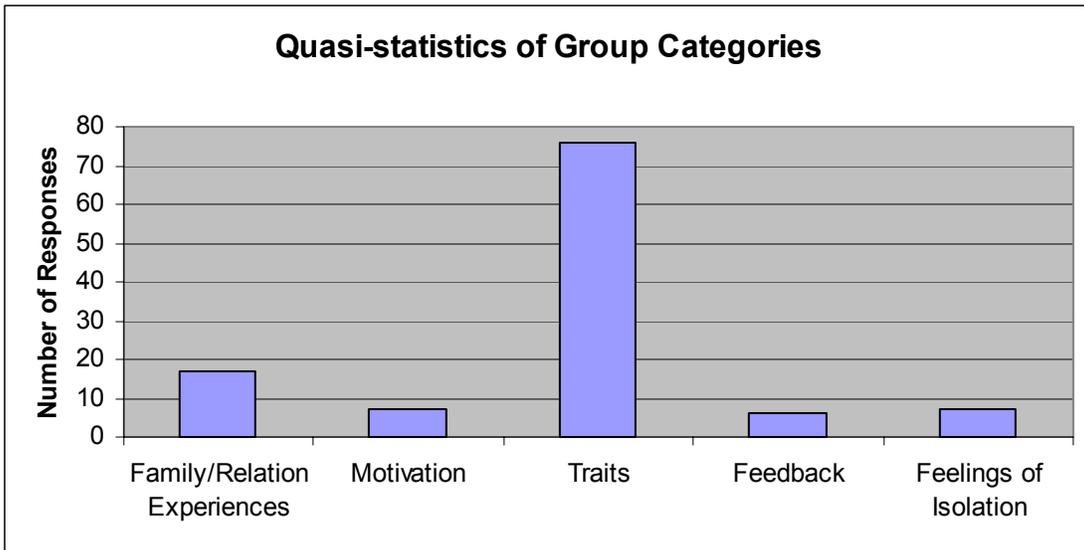
Figure 4.3 represents the top motivation categories listed under research question number one, addressing individual factors.

Figure 4.3 – Quasi-statistics of Motivation Themes



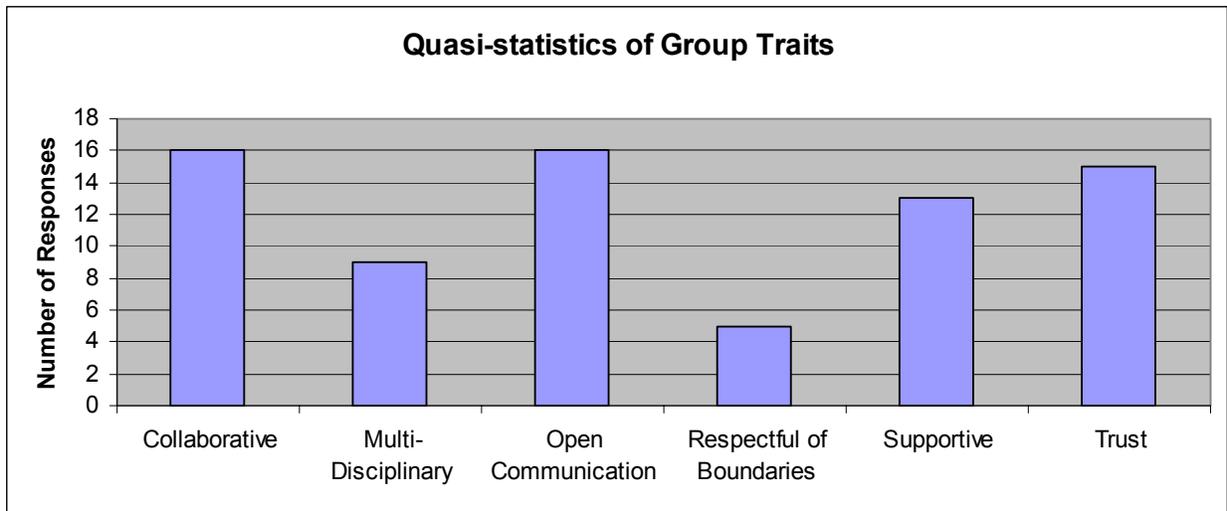
Under research question two addressing group factors, figure 4.4 was produced to analyze the top mentioned factors influencing creativity at the group level.

Figure 4.4 – Quasi-statistics of Group Categories



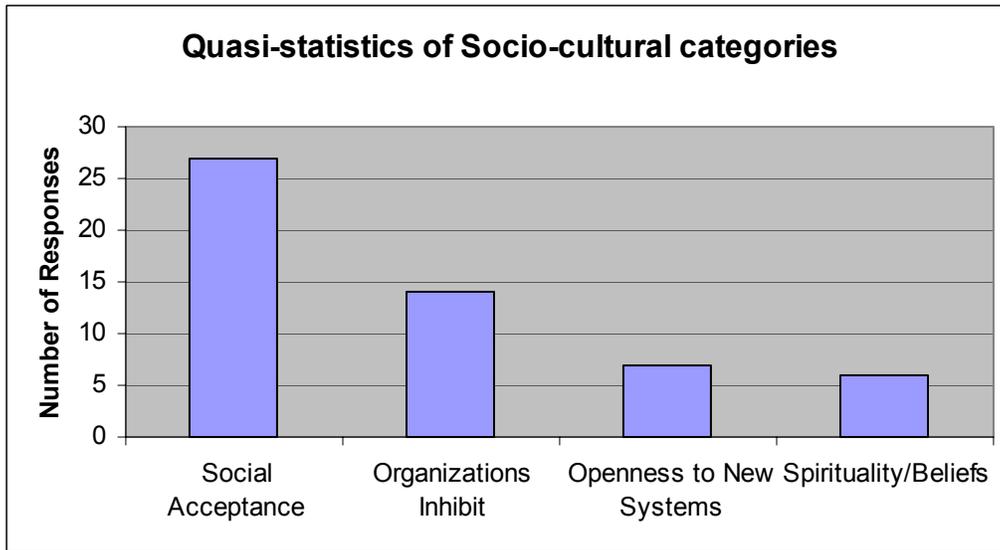
Because the number of responses for group traits was so high, an additional graph was created to analyze the various traits mentioned at the group level (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5 – Quasi-statistics of Group Traits



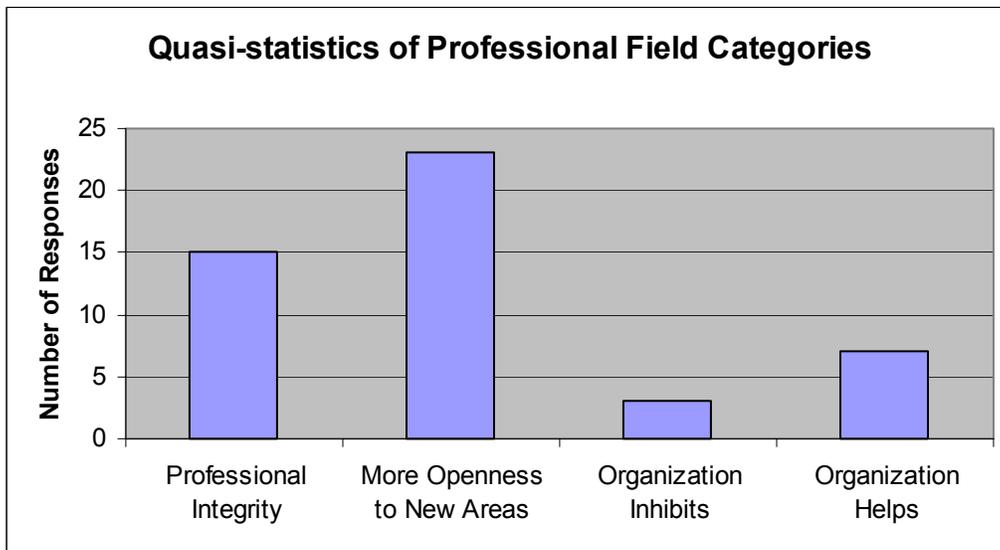
At the socio-cultural level, a graph was generated to represent the top factors influencing creativity (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 – Quasi-statistics of Socio-cultural Categories



Equally, a graph was produced to represent the top factors at the professional field level (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7 – Quasi-statistics of Field Categories



Final Identification of Invariant Constituents

Using the data gathered from the quasi-statistics as well as going back to the transcripts to validate themes, the following themes were developed under each research question category (Table 4.11):

Table 4.11 – Categorization of Themes and Patterns

Category:	Themes:
<i>Individual</i>	<p>Past events impact creativity</p> <p>The following individual traits help creativity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpersonal skills - Personal Integrity - Pro-active/Pioneer - Risk taker - Committed - Visionary - Self-confident - Sets personal boundaries <p>The following motivators help creativity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desire to help others - Enjoyment - Purpose/Mission - Challenge - Interpersonal Connection
<i>Group/Relational</i>	<p>The following group traits help creativity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supportive - Collaborative - Multi-disciplinary - Multiple Perspectives - Open Communication - Respectful of Boundaries - Level of Expertise <p>Family relationships impact creativity</p> <p>Professional relationships impact</p> <p>Shared motivation helps creativity (Personal Integrity)</p>

	Group feedback is desired Feelings of isolation may occur
<i>Professional</i>	Need to maintain professional identity Need to be open to new areas, multiple perspectives The MFT organization inhibits creativity The MFT organization helps creativity
<i>Socio-cultural</i>	Society acceptance impacts creativity Social organizations/public policy inhibit creativity Openness to new systems helps creativity Spirituality/beliefs helps creativity

It is important to note that these themes do not constitute the final analysis. Rather, these themes will be compared to the textual, structural, and textual-structural synthesis in order to form overarching themes and patterns.

Textual, Structural, and Textual-Structural Synthesis Descriptions

The purpose of the textual description is to summarize what was said in an objective manner while the structural description is used to form hypotheses and attempt to describe the patterns and processes behind the verbal description. Finally, the textual-structural synthesis is meant to connect data with hypotheses as the one supports the other. A peer debriefer reviewed each textual and structural description following the analysis. The textual-structural synthesis allowed for a deeper, richer analysis leading to more accurate findings of the essence of the phenomenon. The average length of each textual, structural, and textual-structural description was about one page in length. Descriptions were sent out to participants as a member check allowing for the participants to change or modify the descriptions.

Overarching Themes & Patterns

Once the combined textual and structural descriptions were created for each transcript, findings from each transcript were compared. Comparisons were made regarding the invariant constituents, common themes, structural descriptions, textual descriptions, and textual-structural synthesis descriptions. Overarching themes and patterns were developed using the four research

questions and the overarching research question. In this section, quotes are used to support developed themes and provide a voice to the themes. It is important to note that the goal of phenomenological analysis is to discover the essence of a phenomenon. Thus, this section not only highlights categories and themes, but it attempts to describe the essence of what influences a marriage and family therapist in a non-traditional area of application to be creative.

In addition, the methods section describes a process of separating out findings based on whether they were identified as a researcher, theorist, or practitioner in this section. However, it became clear during the interviews and the analysis that each participant spoke of research, theory, and practice areas. In addition, there appeared to be no significant differences between the participants when controlling for their identified role as a researcher, theorist, or practitioner. Thus, overall themes and patterns are presented in a more general manner suggesting that the participants work from a research-practice-theory triangle perspective in which they incorporate all three areas in their endeavors.

Research Question 1: What individual factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?

Based on the initial stages of analysis, individual factors that seemed to be important to the creative process relate to one's motivation and some key individual traits. At the motivation level, it appears that enjoyment, the desire to help others, and the desire to improve society were the top mentioned reasons for engaging in one's work. In regards to individual traits, a number of characteristics were mentioned with personal integrity and interpersonal skills being at the top of the list followed by intelligence and the ability to be pro-active. When comparing these findings with the textual-structural synthesis descriptions, it became clear that personal integrity and a sense of mission or purpose were the two strongest themes at the individual level. It is very likely that these two themes feed each other as one discovers a mission or purpose to their work and uses personal integrity to stay committed and honest to that purpose. In addition, some other traits seem to be important that help one maintain integrity as well as fulfill one's sense of purpose or mission: a) independence; b) interpersonal skills; and c) ability to be pro-active.

Personal Integrity

A strong sense of maintaining personal integrity was felt by the majority of the participants. For example, one participant recommends:

“Have courage of your convictions, um, be willing to be able to provide a rationale for what it is that you are doing and why you are doing it and if you can support what you are doing why not go for it...even if it doesn't, even if it isn't the mainstream.”

The same participant in response to what makes her creative stated:

“Maybe it's just, uh, maybe its believing in myself, maintaining integrity.”

Greg Rush, a business owner of a residential treatment facility, also explains the importance of being true to whom you are and making decisions based on one's personal beliefs:

“It's really not a set of skills as it is who you are, what your philosophy is, your belief system is that governs you, the reasons that you do what you do. I don't know how to a (pause) I don't know how to tell people how to do that it's just you are who you are.”

He goes on to describe the type of person that can be successful in his area of work:

“Somebody who is more interested in, in, and in not just something that they turn on and turn off when they are at work, they don't do it because its profitable. They do it because it's who they are. And it's their basic philosophy of how they interact with anyone that they meet. And to me is more important than training, more important than, than anything else. Somebody can be trained to be a family therapist, but to be a business owner and a family therapist requires someone who can be the right person. Someone, it's the character what, character and philosophy and belief.”

An example of Greg Rush's dedication to personal integrity is illustrated towards the end of his interview. He explains:

“I like to think outside of the box, I like to think that, I don't see myself as a good businessman in the sense, I, I would fail in an MBA program because I don't necessarily adhere to a lot of the beliefs. I hate corporate mentality, I already told you that says the bottom line, the bottom line. What can we do to reduce costs? I hate that. I like thinking what is the best, what is in the best interest of how can we make treatment better, how can we offer something that is, let me give you an example. We are thinking about, we are going to be opening a program up for girls ages 10 to 12 and its hard for those families to send their kids to treatment because they are young, tender at that age. Um, one of the things we are going to do to incorporate the whole family therapy thing is once every 8 weeks those families will come, mom or dad, will come to the treatment center and live there for, I think we are going initially do it for 3 days. They come and be a part

of it. They'll receive treatment, training, they'll receive, um, they'll participate. All of our staff will be able to observe them parenting and will be able to, uh, offer some support. Now that is way outside the box because, number one, its expensive, it threatens staff, the staff don't want that. They don't want the parents around. If you view the parents as a liability, you will be threatened by that. If you view the parents as a asset. Then it totally changes the dynamics there and that becomes an incredibly powerful intervention. Um. That's unheard of in the industry, no one does that. (Interviewer states: It costs too much money). Absolutely. But it's, it's priceless. It's absolutely priceless to what that would offer."

Jonathan Sandberg, a creative researcher of gerontology and diabetes, explains that being dedicated to one's personal integrity helps him make deep connections with others:

"You know it's interesting, I've found that when you really believe in something and you, from a place of grounded centeredness, integrity try to push forward that cause and what you believe to be the right way to do it your not just ax grinding your not just out trying to wound other people, that you'll form really strong and deep relationships with those few other people who feel the way that you do, so (pause) I don't feel alone at all. I feel very connected to the few other people, who are trying to push the same cause and I have felt, by my colleagues, valued and respected, even by those who strongly disagree with me. So no, I haven't felt isolated."

He explains later how it is important for one to work from a center:

"When you find a center and you're really on the center because you believe in it and you work hard, it's not naive or blind center, you've really looked around and you've explored, then when you operate from that center you'll always be successful. Whatever anyone else does out here is, is uh shouldn't either be gravy or painful but it's not, its irrelevant."

Equally, Teresa McDowell, an innovative researcher in areas of multi-culturalism, believes that one must look at one's self closely in order to be creative at a more sincere level:

"You have to be willing to look closely at yourself as a researcher. I'm really interested in self of the researcher because especially in non-positivist research you are the instrument. And so, um, I end up talking to students a lot about that, like if they want to research poverty, they got to deal with their classist stuff going on or they really can't

(laughs) research that, you know. It's not right, it's not good, whatever. I think a lot of it is about working on ourselves a lot of the time. And not just about our families and our relationships and our psychodynamic stuff, but our social-political stuff."

Thus, it appears that the ability to find one's center and work from that center is an important motivator that helps enhance one's ability to be creative.

Mission/Purpose

One's personal integrity or center seems to tap into a sense of mission or purpose. In other words, the participants felt that they need to be engaged in an activity that is meaningful out of a sense of mission or purpose. Regarding one's sense of mission or purpose, one anonymous participant explains her sense of mission after describing her own personal experiences of pain and healing following the death of her son and a fight with breast cancer:

"I then pursued a course of healing and recovery which took me first into the spiritual realm in order to make, try to make some sense of what happened, come to terms with, figure out, make meaning out of it (pause) create meaning out of it, make a meaningful story which I really (long pause) found ultimately and, uh, and of course the physical recovery with cancer, um, moved me into an alternative direction in regards to wanting to explore both complimentary, alternative medicine as well as traditional allopathic approaches. And I think that, given that I'm a systemic thinker that's how I think about it, it's a both-and perspective, I don't want an either-or, I want to do both (pause) And the more I became involved in it personally, the more it became a part of who I was and, therefore, I was bringing it into therapy. I could not help but do that and also I felt a sense of mission in trying to share with others what I had learned so that perhaps there experiences would be a little less painful or a little less long lasting."

She explains later in the interview:

"I also feel a strong sense of mission and purpose in my life. And its, uh, it has to do with helping others with social justice, with teaching, and with writing and all of the things that I do, so I'm very much motivated by that, and its just who I am."

Jonathan Sandberg explains his sense of purpose regarding racism and white privilege:

"This other piece, I think, has really come out of my growing awareness of racial inequalities, racial disparities, injustices in the world and wanting to make a difference in that way, wanting to use white privilege that I have to, to make a difference."

Later in the interview, he expands on this idea of mission by explaining:

“I think I came into SU, Syracuse University, looking like most other white people would, that don’t think about it at all. I don’t think about race because I’m white, I’m the majority. It’s not an issue for me so I don’t worry or concern about at all but having had prolonged interaction with my colleagues and students of color, the students of color having done a lot of reading about civil rights movement and other things, I came to realize that there’s something that’s just not right in the world, there’s a way that I take advantage of privileges that I didn’t earn that are given to me just by birth while other people are having to work so hard all the time and that their pain and suffering is so unacknowledged. The playing field isn’t level. So once a person is convicted with that, at least in my mind, then they have a couple of things that they can do. They can get stuck in shame and making excuses...Uhh. They can avoid it, ignore it...Or they can, which is what I hope I’m doing, which is to say ‘well one of things I can do to make the world, that piece of the world right, is to use what I’ve been given to benefit those without a voice. To use the voice I have.’”

In similar fashion, Teresa McDowell also feels that one faces a moral dilemma when one looks at the world leading to the desire to help improve society and follow a deeper purpose in life:

“What motivates me? Maybe this is what you are after. Um, I think that when you, part of it is not very easy to verbalize, but, um, part of it is about like, as you become more aware of how things work and your own privilege, and your, you know, um, I think you are faced with a moral dilemma. It’s fairly significant. And, uh, when you are faced with that moral dilemma then you have to do something. And it, um, happens certainly with racial issues with me, and it’s happening now with this sort of global idea and, um, the more I really wake up and realize what is going on I feel like its not ok not to do anything any more. That’s part of it.”

She goes on to explain that it is important for her to engage in something that has meaning and stands for something:

“It expands my connection with, um, and the depth of my connection with the people around me, like, in an important way and, I don’t know, that is really meaningful to me. So, yeah, I think it’s meaningful, but I’m not out to change the world or anything, necessarily, but it does have a goal, there is an agenda, it’s kind of important to me that

there is an agenda. Not just, I don't think I could sustain doing research just for research's sake."

Jonathan Sandberg also believes that working from a center of personal integrity helps him fulfill a purpose in life. Using an example, he illustrates how integrity and purpose are connected:

"So like this morning we had a CMFOT workshop and I, I said something, you know, that I really felt and was maybe a little provocative and someone leaned over and said you're such a rebel, or something like that, and I said well (and they could of said the word courageous or whatever, I don't think it would have mattered) and I said 'well no I just have to be able to sleep tonight.' And so, I think for me, I have a clear understanding of what I'm supposed to be doing in this life (pause) and what the purpose of this life is and for me, what God expects from me. And when I'm operating in harmony with that, then life is enjoyable. And, uh, there are elements of peace even amongst chaos. When I get off my center, when I'm not right with God or how I see him or when I'm not right with Sharon, who I have the pleasure of being married to, then, then I can't seem to handle anything and everything seems difficult and painful. So I would say...that you've really got to find a center, not a reactive center, not a blind follower center and you've got to operate from that place. I have a colleague who's not religious at all but I think that he feels called to do the work he's doing in the world and he's making a difference. And he's following that calling so (pause) It's just a way of approaching life and work."

Susan McDaniel, a pioneer of medical family therapy, notes that she feels a sense of purpose to help individuals as well as improve the system of healthcare:

"Why is that work important to me? (coughs) Because I think part of what we can contribute is helping to either witness or lessen human suffering. And when people get sick or has to deal with illness some of the ways we care for them in the health care system makes things worse...and avoids the psychosocial issues that are a part of the illness, so I feel dedicated to try to change that."

Jennifer Hodgson, an innovative researcher in medical family therapy, describes the passion she has for her work feeling that there are personal benefits, but noting that helping others and society is what motivates her the most to continue the work:

"I thinks that's the word. I think that when I put myself into something I put myself into it completely and um, I'm very passionate about advancements in this area, it gives me a

lot back. I think benefits to it, I guess I see benefits to it personally and um on other levels for other families. That gives me a lot of reason to continue going. Um, it keeps me intellectually stimulated. I see students get charged about it which gives me energy back. Um, I know that you know by learning what I do it can help me process and handle things that may go on. So I know that there can be personal benefits too. But I'll be honest with you, that is not top of the list. Um, but I know that I can draw (pause)

Interviewer: So what is that the top of the list, what motivates you to work?

Jennifer: Um, I think the idea of making things a little easier for people. Of maybe making health care a little more personal for people. Um, I think that that, I hear so many stories, um, about people who do it well and people who don't do it well. I think that really motivates me the most."

At the end of the interview, Jennifer feels that through the interview she was able to recognize that her passion for the work was still there recommending that others stick to their path as well:

"I think, I just, the consistency when I speak about why I do what I do is still there.

Despite any of the (long pause) other dynamics that may happen. Um, you know, a bad day or a bad leader, you know something at work or, despite all those distractions, that passion is still clear, you know. Um, and there are, I mean, whatever job you have there are going to be opportunities for you to get off the tree. Sincerely. I mean there will be major distractions for that. There will be minor ones. But if you stick to the path, you know, you still have those students who are invested in it and you still have the families and the providers invested in it you can kind of see through that to see what's important. I think just by talking with you today its caused me to know that the path is still there and strong and that's a great thing for me."

Michael Olson, a creative medical family therapy clinician, feels his life has been directed to a path that allows him to fulfill a certain purpose as well:

"Call it serendipity or chance or a directed life and I would vote for the latter in my case, I feel like my path has been definitely a directed by God or a higher power, I think the initial choice that I made to work with families and couples flow from my own values and beliefs about marriage and family, um, and my own experience in my own family, um, I mean I had a very strong impression and feeling when I was an undergraduate student as I was thumbing through all the possible majors that I could look at that this

was a field that had a call for me and that fit for me, so, I think that's the first step for that and then really feeling directed to go to the places I have gone."

Greg Rush describes how his company incorporated their mission of putting quality first into the founding documents of the business:

"Our philosophy is that this can be a good, healthy income but its not going to make any of us rich. That's why there are 11 of us. The program is designed that way so that nobody is going to get rich and fat off this. People can have a comfortable income but its not going to a, we have it, its written into our founding documents that if our profit, if our profit margin goes above what we have established, we drop the price. We don't glut ourselves on, if we get more efficient, then we reduce the price."

Overall, it appears that a sense of purpose or mission is important for participants as they engage in their creative endeavors. It seems that their personal integrity to follow this purpose has a circular feedback cycle as the one fuels the other.

Supportive Skills

As mentioned, a number of other traits were mentioned that help support ones dedication and commitment to personal integrity and sense of mission. Regarding such skills, Greg Rush explains his need for independence and control:

"I have always had the desire and the drive to do my own thing, to have the creative process, something I can control and change."

He goes on to explain how the ability to have control helps support his personal integrity and set of beliefs:

"Working for the industry that I do, which I, there are lots of companies that are owned by publicly traded companies. I worked at a program that clearly had, clearly the decisions were made from a businessman's perspective. The program had 250 kids, caseloads of therapists were enormous with troubled kids, treatment was lower as a result, I wanted, I wanted to say what is the best thing, so,um, I wanted control over that and my program is not as profitable from that standpoint, we're very profitable, but our therapist caseloads are six, we do what should be done, we do what most companies don't do because it's not cost effective but it's the right thing to do."

Mac Hafen, a creative clinician in a veterinary medical school, also describes the importance of being able to work independently and create a personal vision on one's own:

“I’ve the past couple years as I have worked uh one of the things that’s become kinda of obvious to me is that uh you have to be pretty dedicated and willing to work with ambiguity. I came into a position that was created newly for me, uh or and or and it wasn’t really well defined, so, and my boss when I go to her and ask for some direction she really did not have a good idea on what they wanted either and, so, uh I had to have uh and I think I do have the ability to work well with ambiguity and just uh and to create it for myself. And, and uh I think there is also some it took me a bit so 4 to, umm, 3 or 4 months into it before I kind of a feel for a vision of where I wanted to take this position. But once I had that then its informed of the steps that I have taken uh from a research standpoint as well as a teaching standpoint (pause) and applying for grants and that sort of thing it’s uh because I have um this vision of where I want things to go. And that was something that I didn’t kinda on my own it wasn’t anything that, that, that my boss asked me to do or something like that. It was just seemed like it was something I needed to do and once I had that in place uh a direction then, then everything else uh has kinda of falling into place as far as my job duties. Because I have sort of just given myself the job duties and expectations it has not been anything that anyone else has given me...I think that is a good word to describe it...the ability to be to work independently.”

Jonathan Sandberg explains his level of energy and dedication, which seems to be tied to his sense of mission:

“I have a lot of energy. I’m fairly relentless. Really, um, committed to ideas and once I get engaged with them I’m a little tenacious.”

Equally, Susan McDaniel describes her level of energy, believing one must be pro-active within the setting she works in order to be creative. It appears that she feels she needs a high level of pro-activity to fulfill her goals:

“I think in medical situations you have to be ready to kind of claim your space and not be a retiring kind of person who waits for things to happen; you have to be active because that’s the medical system. Everyone is active and if you’re sitting around waiting for your role to be defined you’ll be waiting for a long time.”

Jennifer Hodgson also illustrates the ability to be pro-active, describing herself as a doer. Thus, it appears that her pro-activity helps her take her ideas beyond the drawing board and actually move her work forward, helping fulfill her sense of purpose:

“So, its funny that you say I’m a creative thinker and all. I think I’m a doer. I think I’m a good listener and I think I’m a doer. And if that makes me creative, um, you know, that fine. But um I really see myself in this role and I think that my other people that I listen to are the ones that I see are the visionaries. I have an ability I think to try to make that into some sort of tangible opportunity. Um, like a doctoral program is a vision of Mar Morkowski who is a former faculty member, and he hired on faculty to make that happen.”

The importance of interpersonal skills was highlighted by a number of participants. Jennifer Hodgson believes her ability to listen to others is one of the key skills she has that helps her be creative:

“What comes to mind is that I think, um, I think I’m a good listener. And I think that I listen to my students and with the families I work with and I listen to my collaborators and when they speak about something that they are passionate about or that the see a challenge with or opportunities with, I think that helps stimulate me in a way where I just start flowing with it and um, I think about how can we understand that better? How can we provide services for that? How can we? So, you know I think I just listen and I try to make that real and that helps.”

Michael Olson also believes his ability to negotiate relationships in complex systems has helped him in his creative endeavors:

“You can’t, you can’t let ego get in the way. I mean if you are territorial or kind of sensitive to boundaries, I mean, you really have to work within a pretty complex system with a lot of hierarchy and different language and being able to integrate well and I think as family therapists we have, uh, skills that lend themselves to us to do be able to do that successfully and it’s a big family and if you can negotiate those kind of, uh, complexities and systems and kind of understand how things work, um, its easy to integrate and collaborate within it.”

He goes on to explain that his level of emotional intelligence as he works with others adds to his interpersonal skills:

“I think I’m pretty aware of people around me, of relationships and people around me, and sensitive to them. Um, I don’t know why that is, I mean maybe, I grew up with a, my dad was a football coach, so that wouldn’t explain it necessarily. He was gone a lot so it

was really my mom and I had three sisters. I really don't know what happened. I just feel I became more socio-tropic to my view towards the world and I was very aware of and kind of in tune to other people and what was going on around me and how other people were feeling around me, so, whatever you want to call that, if that's emotional intelligence or whatever that is. I just feel that's one of those strengths that I have had over the years and I think it works well for me in this setting too because I don't, you know, I'm able to navigate relationships pretty well I think and, uh, in whatever setting. I think most marriage and family therapists are the same, I mean, they are pretty aware people and can plug into how people are feeling and cues and I think we have a unique perspective to offer through our training or if its innate, I don't know, I don't know where it comes from. We are able to see things from different angles that maybe others can't, so."

Research Question 2: What relational factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?

Through the bracketing and quasi-statistic process, a number of group traits appeared to have a significant impact on the creative process. Groups that were collaborative, multi-disciplinary, using open communication, supportive, and maintaining trust seemed to enhance an individual's level of creativity. When comparing these findings with the textual-structural synthesis descriptions, two main themes developed regarding group traits that enhance creativity: a) groups that create a supportive, validating environment relying on direct, honest, and open communication; and b) groups that use a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach providing feedback and stimulation for problem-solving and growth. In other words, groups that are built on trust and have the advantage of collaboratively combining multiple perspectives will enhance an individual's level of creativity.

Supportive, Open Groups

Group support seems to be one of the stronger findings in this study. For example, in regards to the need for supportive groups that provide validation and opportunity for honest feedback, one participant explains:

“(Groups that enable creativity are) Supportive, nurturing, my ridiculously checkered work history is a reflection of my unwillingness to stay where I don't feel nurtured and

supported. And my choice to go where I feel, where I experience contexts that support what I do.”

She goes on to explain:

“In other words when I was at, um, a very highly respected research university and was put on a non-tenure track because I didn’t do quantitative research and was told I would be treated like everyone else and I stayed for three years and I wasn’t treated like everyone else so I left.”

Jonathan Sandberg states that he enjoys groups that are direct and open in their communication. He seems to feel that such groups offer much more support than those that are not as sincere:

“I love open, honest, direct communication. I prefer a challenging environment were even it’s a little bit confrontive more that what I would call a fake polite, niceness. I just, I just don’t do those very well. I don’t stay in those systems very long because I’ll try to be honest and engage, and try to have what I call a real dialogue a difficult dialogue. If I try a couple of times and I get, get an impression that people want to shut that down and they’re not interested, I’ll stay marginally involved if I’m on a university wide committee or something, I’ll stay marginally involved but I really won’t put myself into it (pause) I’ll just (pause) I try to be honest and fair and do my part but I won’t do much more than that... What I call congruent (groups).”

He later explains he enjoys working with people that can be honest with him:

“I really like being in a system where I can trust people and I know that they’ll be honest with me, you know I often say ‘I want to have friendships and relationships where if I have a piece of lettuce in my teeth from lunch, that someone will tell me immediately, that I won’t walk around all day and be around all this people and then finally at the end of the day somebody says ‘you know (can’t understand) that piece of lettuce.’ I think about all those people around me that didn’t point that out, you know. That kind of, that kind of uhm, willingness to do the kind of uncomfortable thing because you care about people, I really value.”

Susan McDaniel describes the group she works in as very close in which they have a shared vision of the work. This shared vision seems to create a unified sense of support:

“We have maybe, I don’t know, 15 people, um, in our group of psychiatry and we are very close, we (pause) Most of us came and never left so we know each other inside and

out and I think the issues are respect that, I really need to respect the person's skills and that they have something unique to offer. That we have a shared vision, a shared goal around biopsychosocial systems work."

Later in the interview, she believes that her level of creative stimulation is enhanced through a group process:

"You know I'm around very creative people so I can always bounce my ideas off my colleagues and get stimulated by their work to the work I want to do."

Mac Hafen also describes the need for a supportive group that provides validating feedback and a sense of approval while maintaining respectful boundaries:

"There is some is some small groups that I have been a part of that have helped my work there is I have got to, from the college perspective there is two associate deans and the dean himself, um, who from time to time will asked me to consult with them but I it is an open door as well so as as situations come up I am able to consult with them um of course keeping track of confidentiality (pause) and paying attention to that but, uh, so they have been very supportive of my work and have not tried to cross the lines of confidentiality, uh, as going into as working with students and they are very interested in student well being as well and they know that I am meeting with certain students but if that student hasn't signed, uh, a release for me to talk with them they do not even bring it up...and so there is that professional respect of that boundary that that's there that I have never uh been asked to compromise at this point I have never been in that position and so in that understanding it really facilitates my that understanding really facilitates my experience in that school it is not kind of that, uh, challenge, uh, being challenged on those boundaries to compromise them, so there is that small group that that really has helped us I think as well from a kinda of, uh, administrative point of view they have given their stamp of approval so to speak on what I do (pause) so there can be the stigma of you know a student going in to see a therapist and yet they have been uh very good about in including me like in their student new student orientation for instance they have given me, uh, 3 hours of that to go over whatever it is I would like to go over at that point thought but and they introduce one of the associate deans introduces me and says good guy and you know that sort of thing its ok to go to him you know really gives the stamp

of approval so it reduces the stigma or the potential stigma to it uh certainly doesn't take it away for everyone but, but certainly it definitely facilitates what I do.”

Michael Olson sees a supportive group as a valued commodity:

“The fact that I work with, uh, good colleagues and people who respect me and respect what I do, um, who seek me out for consultation and advice both in the research area and, uh, just with patient consultation, it's a valued commodity.”

Towards the end of the interview, he remembers working with his major professor and feeling validated and supported working in that small group process:

“I think a lot of the creativity and imaginative part of I've learned to do has been because of people like Candy Russell because she is a person who allows ideas to rise and expand and sees in you your greatest potential and so when you are with her it feels like you could do anything, and I'll never forget that feeling that I always had with her that I always felt validated and important and like my ideas mattered and that gave birth to that feeling that, wow, I can really come up with something, I can really do something that will make a difference and, uh, I've never really met anyone else like that, so I think she was a critical part of being of feeling like I can go out there in the world with my doctorate and have creative ideas that matter that are new and innovative that will kind of sing in a way and you don't have to be, you know, she's a tremendously humble person who has done amazing cutting edge, field changing work. You don't have to be out there banging with people with an ego to be creative and innovative, you can do it in a very, kind of subtle way, you know, just methodically go about and do it.”

Teresa McDowell makes an interesting observation about the importance of maintaining a sense of integrity within the group through open communication and working with groups that offer support through their willingness to learn:

“Well I'll tell you what doesn't help me, um (pause) the times I've worked with other faculty who already know and already see themselves as experts...and as multi-cultural experts and so on, that does not help me at all. And its very frustrating. I mean that is really hard actually. Actually pretty much anyone that already knows is probably.”

Interviewer: “Do you believe they already know?”

Teresa: “No, but I think that's sort of like, to me, I don't find that very inspiring, very interesting, or helpful (pause) Well, I would say I work well with people that already

know, but it's a different kind of knowing. So if its someone that sets themselves up in a university as a multi-cultural expert and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, that is not interesting to me. Well I think it is interesting at first and then I get into it a little bit and then I'm like, "no, no, no, no, no, no." There actions have to match their words. I have to see they are going to take care of their power, and deal with their power responsibly and if they don't I get sort frustrated and unhappy and I don't want to deal with it. The people that really know, and are really useful and really exciting to me are, um, living the experience. And the people are often times in a mutual learning experience, so, dialogue groups have been extremely important and inquiry groups."

It appears that the participants' creativity blossomed when surrounded by supportive groups that validated their work as well as provided a backdrop for feedback and honest communication.

Multi-Disciplinary, Multiple Perspectives

In addition to supportive groups, a number of participants mentioned the need for multi-disciplinary or groups with multiple perspectives. It is important to note that not all participants' responses were included in this section; however, every participant in this study when asked if multi-disciplinary groups were important responded in the affirmative. Only a number of the participants expanded on the idea of multi-disciplinary groups.

Regarding the need for multi-disciplinary groups that work collaboratively, one participant explains:

"Well, I think in terms of multi-disciplinary approaches and I always have. My doctorate is a multi-disciplinary doctorate that I created myself so I don't like the pigeon-holes. I like to think broadly in cross-categories, and, uh, and combine wherever I can."

Michael Olson also recognizes the help multi-disciplinary groups offer to his creative process:

Interviewer: "You mentioned the importance of a multi-disciplinary view; do you feel this has influenced your work?"

Michael Olson: Definitely. Yeah we, you know, multi-disciplinary in we have physicians, we have family therapists, you know, in our camp we have a social worker, we have our intern who comes in from the Houston Clearlake program and we have (coughs), excuse me, we have had in the past and we've taught workshops on integration of spirituality and medicine and how to do that. We've involved, uh, chaplains and rabbis and different religious leaders to come and work with the residents. We don't have an

opportunity to have them on our collaborative teams as much but they're involved in some ways. And psychiatry is involved in some degree but they're not, we don't share appointments with psychiatry but in terms of collaboration we have very good relations with the psychiatrists at the hospital and they refer and consult often with us."

Mac Hafen believes that MFT has a lot to offer to other disciplines and that groups with multiple disciplines can be helpful to the creative process as he speaks of the development of multi-disciplinary groups in his work setting:

Interviewer: "Do you feel that combining multiple disciplines from mft is helpful? If so how so?"

Mac Hafen: Yeah, I think MFT has a lot to offer uh and likewise I think a lot of professions have to offer MFT...and, and I think there is that kind of mutual give and take that can certainly happen when there is that feeling of collaboration there... so its developing that uh, uh, wasn't just handed to me at the vet school and I don't know if that I have that complete feeling of collaboration there yet and yet it when I compare where I am at right now to where I was before ugh there is ,uh, more a feel of collaboration and part of that is the results, they look at results and, and if I am doing a good job then they are going to notice and, and, uh, and in that way I can certainly offer a lot um I can offer a different way of looking at things um likewise when I am on rounds with uh with vets uh they, they have a different perspective on how to solve problems and that's ,that helps me to keep it in check as well."

Teresa McDowell emphasizes the importance of working with groups with multiple perspectives and how doing so provides an expansive process of learning leading to more creativity:

"It's more amber centric, you know, it's like climbing a hill, it's more of expansion maybe, like um, the group, the people that I know, the people I connect are from lots of different people, lots of different groups, um, the experience of getting to know people and understanding there perspective kind of how there experience is relative to the dominant culture, people that have been on the margins, is very honoring to me, I don't know how to describe exactly except that worldview makes sense to me, I think its true, I think its pretty accurate and I think that people at the bottom or on the margins, I'm not the person to say this, there's a ability to critically examine systems."

Overall, it appears the multi-disciplinary groups or groups that bring multiple perspectives to the table enable creative people to learn and develop a dialogue that allows for creative problem solving and idea generation.

Research Question 3: What socio-cultural factors influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?

During the first stage of analysis, four main themes were identified: a) social acceptance impacts creativity; b) social organizations inhibit; c) need for openness to new systems; and d) spirituality/beliefs impact creativity. After comparing these results with the textual-structural synthesis descriptions, two of the categories were moved to other sections. First, spirituality and beliefs seemed to be tied more to the individual level in which a person's beliefs fuels one's sense of mission or purpose as well as one's desire to maintain personal integrity. In other words, it does not appear that an overarching societal belief system is influencing creativity; rather, a personal conviction that is varied among individuals contributes to one's motivation to engage in their work. Second, the need for openness to new systems seems to apply more to the professional level rather than the societal level. In other words, openness to new systems seems to be addressing the field or professional level as a whole rather than society itself. Thus, it appears that the overarching theme of the socio-cultural level is related to areas that influence creativity rather than enhance creativity. It seems that the participants feel that certain organizational systems such as the government or the healthcare system influence their work, but it does not detract from their ability to be creative. In addition, some participants feel it motivates them to be even more creative at times out of a desire to help society as mentioned under research question one. Furthermore, it appears that the participants recognize that cultural paradigms influence the acceptance of their work. They do not seem to be impacted too much by societal acceptance, although they recognize it is there and are pleased when society accepts their work. In addition, it appears that society at times is ahead of the field. In other words, a societal shift often occurs in which people are more receptive of new ways of doing and thinking.

Social Acceptance

Many participants spoke of how society often times is ahead of the profession while some spoke of societal resistance. For example, in regards to societal resistance, one participant explains:

“Well, I know what’s out there and I know what the larger view is but it hasn’t stopped from doing what it is that I do because I believe, you know, that we can have an impact. You know, one person at a time. And I don’t have to try and change the whole system. I know what’s going on but I don’t pay a whole lot of attention to it. I do what I do, in the world, in the way that I can. And, uh, don’t get bogged down by complaining or lamenting or letting it get in my way.”

Jennifer Hodgson believes that society is often ahead of the field which can help with the social acceptance of new ideas:

“And in society - I honestly believe that probably a lot of society is more advanced at this than the government. Cause there are a lot of people who are - I think its over 50% now maybe even 60 who will access some sort of complimentary care. Um, massage therapy, um, acupuncture or you know different things outside of just the standard western medicine model. But people are getting it. They getting that it’s not just about the pill. Not just about the surgery.”

Michael Olson also sees society as a force that often times moves a field into non-traditional areas of doing and thinking:

“I think there is a shift going on societally and culturally in the United States. I think the eastern countries are far ahead of us and haven’t really lost that perspective but I think in the Western culture we really had to come around from this kind of mind body split to thinking we are integrated wholes and that we are complex, inter-related beings and I think that’s evident in people’s acceptance of alternative medicine, if you want to call it that, and just homeopathic and herbal, non-traditional ways of healing, you know, spiritual movements with meditation, and, um, people are just integrating these practices more freely into their lives and accepting them and I think medicine isn’t leading that, I think medicine is following that; I don’t know where our family therapy field is in that? I don’t really have a good sense in where we are in the flow of where people are and where medicine is but I know medicine is following their patients and patients have a more integrated sense of who they are, they are not as tolerant of just the strict biomedical view and the kind of strict authoritarian view about what they need to do in their lives. So I think society, culture is more open to this kind of integrated view and valuing of who we are in connection to each other and to our bodies and to our spiritual lives.”

Mac Hafen explains that his area is so new that society is not even aware of what he is doing:

“Society in general, uh, cause it is as new as it is, I am not sure there is a lot of society that actually is aware of what I do. There has been some publicity on, on certain aspects of what I do uh particularly in meeting with grieving pet owners. Uh, and, so, in that way there is some knowledge out there and yet I am sure there is a lot of uh when you say society in general I am not sure there is a lot of society that actually is aware of that there is MFT presence in veterinary medicine.”

He later describes that he believes acceptance will come:

“In this point I don’t know that there is an acceptance that, that its valuable yet because we are at the beginning. I think once we start having some of those solutions out there I think that there would be some of that acceptance that comes with it. So I think if I had to describe it at this point I would have to say they are probably consciously optimistic with, with what I am doing.”

It appears that societal acceptance does not directly influence one’s ability to be creative.

Creative people seem to be aware of society’s level of acceptance and are sometimes motivated to increase society’s awareness of their work, but it does not seem to deter them from engaging in their endeavors. It is interesting to note that society at times helps guide people to provide creative solutions to a society that is looking for new answers.

Organizations that Inhibit

A number of participants mention various organizations that at times get in the way of their progress. Regarding social organizations that inhibit, Susan McDaniel describes the healthcare system as an organization that inhibits their ability to be creative at times citing an example from the University of Rochester Medical Center:

“Well the ones that inhibit the work really have to do with the mental health of the health system being so fragmented and, and uh, not involved with each other. So if you take electronic health records, this will be a perfect example. So the University of Rochester is one of the major academic health centers in the country. They’re going to take on electronic health records, do they bring all the leaders together and look together to see what kind of electronic health record would make the most sense for everybody? Nooo. They take, they come in and look and see what medicine wants and they pick All Scrubs. Everyone has to go on All Scrubs who can and suddenly OB is saying I don’t really like

All Scrubs so we're going to do our own thing. And then Psychiatry looks at All Scrubs and it really stinks in regard to mental health so now Psychiatry is doing a completely other one. So none of these health, electronic health records speak to each other. It's completely a replication of the fragmentation of our health care system. And the fact that um, you know people didn't, leadership didn't think to pull people together. Um, so those are the kinds of barriers we face."

Jennifer Hodgson also speaks of the role government plays in inhibiting the progress of her work and how it relates to society's level of acceptance:

"It's huge. Government. We still live in a country where they separate mind and body. Um. And I think that - that makes it real challenging for the area because you cannot bill for two people in the room at the same time. So the physician and medical family therapist wanted to work with a patient with the concept they are going to address the whole patient, only one person gets to bill for it and guess who that is? The physician. So the way our social is structured, we have values, we've ranked our disciplines with this value. Obviously that's evident in their salaries, um. But also evident in who gets the priority of patient care. Now we definitely believe that there are times as a marriage and family therapist we need to step back. Somebody is in some sort of physical distress, that needs to go to the medical professionals. But there are then times where there might be more psychosocial distress there and being able to share that process. And then there are times when they are reflecting each other evidently at the same time but its just part of the way of putting something together is sometimes critical. But we don't bill for that that way."

She goes on to explain that overcoming such barriers like the government is not new to MFT and support from other areas of society helps keep her going:

"I mean it's a frustrating barrier but it's not one that's foreign in our field. I mean I think family therapists have cause to fight for this. They are still fighting for it. Um. Not a foreign battle but because I see support for it from those other disciplines, I think that keeps me engaged. If it was just us saying this is important and nobody else was - nurses were not, physicians were not, social workers were not, clergy were not, then I would say do we really think that we've got a corner on this and we don't if don't have those collaborators. But that's not what's happening. I think it keeps me going."

Only a few participants expanded on this area of organizations that inhibit; however, it appears for some participants, organizations do get in the way of their creativity. However, once again, this does not deter them from engaging in their creative activities, it seems to only slow down the process at times.

Research Question 4: What professional factors related to the field of MFT and the domains of study in the field influence the creative process in MFT professionals in non-traditional areas of application?

The first stage of analysis produced four themes based on the bracketing and quasi-statistics performed relating to professional factors that influence creativity: a) the need to maintain professional identity; b) the need to be open to new areas; c) the MFT organization sometimes inhibits; and d) the MFT organization sometimes helps. After examining the textual-structural synthesis descriptions, an interesting correlation arose between the individual/group categories and the professional category. Similar to the individual and group factors, it appears that a professional organization also needs to have integrity through honest, direct communication and needs to maintain its professional identity by staying close to its original principles. Equally, it needs to be able to work in “groups” that are collaborative and bring multiple perspectives to the table in order to enhance the field’s creativity. Thus, similar to an individual, the field could be seen as a larger identity that needs to maintain its core values, maintain a sense of professional integrity through honesty and open communication, and connect with other fields in order to collaborate and progress through the application of systems theory to new areas of thought and practice.

Professional Integrity

A number of the participants voiced their opinions and fears about the field losing their professional integrity. It appears that the participants feel that the core theories of the field are unique and beneficial, and should be continued to be highlighted as core principles of the profession. In regards to the field’s personal integrity, one participant explains:

“What I’d like to see is that, uh, we remember our roots and don’t throw the baby out with the bath water. We can take in the new without throwing out the old. And I think we need both. I think it’s important for us to be well-grounded theoretically and operate in a manner that is consistent with that theoretical orientation and not sell our souls. I don’t think, I believe that if we do good work we can demonstrate that we are effective and we

will be reimbursed appropriately. I don't think we have to sell our souls in order to fit a model or mold created by another profession in order to be understood or seen as credible, I don't believe that. I believe we are going in that direction out of fear or whatever and I'm not fear-based person and so I think that's sad. We need to remember who we are and why we are what we are. And, uh, I made that, and, uh, do good work. But in other words, why we, the more we follow the footsteps of other professions the more we, the less reason there is for us to exist...it undermines our whole being. We have plenty of professions that do it the other way. We don't have too many that do it our way. I think that's part of our strength."

Jennifer Hodgson speaks of the importance of maintaining our professional identity while still connecting with other areas of application:

"Some people are worried that we'll lose our professional identity in the process of it and I'm familiar with that argument but at the same time I think we have got to find a way to continue to show our value and we just can't continue to do it saying we're a jack of all trades. I don't think it's possible and I think I doesn't really, um, doesn't really reflect the numbers of the people who are doing this. We are not all that diversified in our interest. All of us has some sort of passion if its not working with children who are abused, that are divorced or you know. I don't think we could ever lose that unless we stop teaching that. We stop teaching people where they come from and that's, that's a problem. That's our problem. But teaching people how then to tap that training in a special area I think could be very exiting and um, and needs to continue to be encouraged."

Jonathan Sandberg has noticed that the organization has not used integrity, causing him to withdraw from AAMFT at times:

"I feel like AAMFT as an organization is a pretty poor role model of how to have honest and open communications because behind the board, uh behind the closed door, uh (can't understand) behind the closed door communications. So I think I've been really disappointed in that, uh, and I've pulled back and withdrawn a little bit where I used to be very, very involved (pause) in the association and I've been disappointed by that. I've been hurt by that personally. So that's not a role model at all of how I'd like things to be."

Speaking of the future of MFT, Sandberg believes that MFT will continue to grow into a mainstream form of treatment, but he hopes MFT will not lose its soul in the process:

“I think it will be lead to be one of the core mental health professions. It will become less and less creative and less and less art based, more and more science based. And uhm, the issues of the profession will far outweigh the interests of the practitioner and the client (pause) That we’ll be mainstreamed and valued and licensed and reputable. And practice like the others do. Whereas we’re kind of an outlaw now and we kind of practice this systems based therapy, which is just really radical (pause) So, I just hope it doesn’t lose its soul in the process.”

Not all participants voiced their concern about the profession losing its identity, but it appears to be a valid statement. In addition, with such a strong theme of personal integrity at the individual level, similar processes at the professional level would likely occur due to a cybernetics of cybernetics process in which the field is made up of a group of individuals that value personal integrity as well. In addition, because all of the participants mentioned the strength of systems theory which is considered an unique characteristic of the field, it would be accurate to conclude that systems theory as the core of the profession would be important for individuals and the field as whole to maintain in order to be creative.

Need to Connect with Others

The need for the field to connect with others was also a strong finding. Susan McDaniel describes the process of MFT needing to engage in other areas of research and practice like health and biology:

“Family therapists are out wanting to look at how people interact with each other. And may be thinking less about biology. So although you know this uh, uh conference is an example of, you know, MFT really taking it and hitting it hard. It’s a bit more than any other mental health profession by a lot. So its very forward thinking, I think. But I’m not sure until recently that, that people wanted to think about illness or biology much, much more captivated by interpersonal difficulties.”

Michael Olson in similar fashion feels that MFTs need to be more open to biology and medicine as well:

“I think we get really narrow sometimes in the way we think, we get psychosocially fixated and we forget the bio part and I think medicine is guilty of the opposite, you

know, they fixated on the biomedicine and they forget the psychosocial, you know, but to take a true biopsychosocial approach I think you have to consider, you know, individual biology, background, characteristics, and health and their sociology and psychology and their spirituality. So that's exciting to me for the opportunity to work in a setting where I can do biopsychosocial research and teaching and practice."

He later explains that he feels the field is moving in a right direction, but needs to continue to be open to new ways of thinking and doing if it's going to survive:

"This conference is a great step looking at families and health and genetics. We don't have to be scared of the body no more. You know, the drug companies aren't the enemy and, there's a lot of bad and good in a lot of that stuff, but we have to be able to partner no only in the mental health field but across the fields if we are going to survive. If we stay territorial, we are going to be marginalized continuously. I don't think that is good for anyone's interests."

Susan McDaniel remembers the process of medical family therapy being introduced to the field as a sub-discipline expecting the area to continue to grow. She hopes that the field will continue to train students in what is considered a non-traditional area because it fills a niche that people need:

"Well it's very rewarding to see what this conference has done. When we labeled and published Medical Family Therapy in 1992 we had no idea what would happen whether it would be just a little cult book that people from a small group liked. Um, we were really, I think, surprised and pleased that the label seems to describe something people understood. It took us about 8 months to figure out what to call it. Um (coughs) so the field has grown so exponentially more than I think any of the three of us expected that it's hard for me to predict but (pause) I don't have any reason to expect that it won't continue because it fills a niche (pause) that nobody else is filling and, and patients and families really need. So I think it's a matter of training up enough people. You know doctors ask me for more people to work with them than I have trained people to give them. So, I'm hoping that conferences like this and other places inspire people to go out there and um, do this work. So I expect it to grow."

Jennifer Hodgson hopes that more sub-disciplines would be created like medical family therapy in which systems theory can be applied to non-traditional areas:

“I would love to see marriage and family therapy have several sub-disciplines. I think there are ways that we can market in this field where we can (pause) promote positive collaborative energy in the different areas. Um. We already have that. Because every faculty leader, everywhere has a specialty. Some are in small business; some are in school systems, legal systems. And I think we can help formalize these partnerships and right now we are at a cross roads I think where we are trying to figure out how to really advance ourselves as a field and get to the next level so that we can have people see us as being worth the reimbursement and worth the energy at the governmental level. That would be one way to really start building that data and really show the impact that systemic thinkers have on this entire (can’t understand) and I think medical family therapy is one pathway, um there are so many. And that would be exciting to see.”

Mac Hafen believes that MFT will be applied in ways we can’t imagine, which he sees as a strength of the field:

“I think its there is going to be a lot of different applications of MFT that, uh, uh, I haven’t even thought of, you haven’t even thought of, none of us have even thought of at this point. Uh, uh, cause it is, it does lend itself very well to that collaborative field and, and that systems perspective, uh, is, is a huge strength.”

Michael Olson feels that training students to work in non-traditional settings will open more doors at the research and practice levels as well as lead to more funding:

“We need to get our MFT trained students out into places where they can get external funding and do the research that will, you know, help move us forward. And its being done, I don’t mean to suggest that its not being done, it is being done, but, um, however, I think there are ways we can be more effective in doing it by preparing and training our students to work in some of these settings that may not be the traditional track but abound with opportunities to collaborative and get funding and do some pretty innovative research. You know, right now, because of where I am working, it’s allowed me to do some research with some basic scientists doing some kind of translational research that I would never be able to do, I mean, so a lot of the partnerships that are formed come about because of where we work and the setting we are in.”

He further explains at the end of the interview the importance of being open to non-traditional areas of application after being asked what stuck out for him during the interview:

“I think just the idea that there are multiple paths for us. I think when I originally started along this track, marriage and family therapy, I had a very rigid thought process of what I would do, where I would be, you know, and how I would be doing it in the future and I’m glad by accident that, or by luck, whatever, that I found myself in a non-traditional setting and it allowed me to do some different kind of things and make contributions that I’m glad I’m able to make, that I wouldn’t have been able to do otherwise, so I think just being open to the multiplicity that is available to us and our skills whether that’s in medicine or business or in a school setting or in government or in corporate America or, there are a lot places for us to be and to work and make contributions that can move and direct the field forward. We don’t have to be working only in a small number of accredited PhD programs in the country to make contributions in this field and to advance the research and to advance the knowledge. We can do that from a number of different angles and I think it makes sense for us to do it because the more of us that spread out it opens channels and doors for many others to follow and to grow.”

Teresa McDowell feels that it is very important to bring in other disciplines to MFT to help expand our understanding:

Interviewer: “Do you think bringing another discipline to MFT is beneficial?”

Teresa: “Absolutely. We have got to stop looking at our own navel. We’ve got to look out. There is so much going on and the idea of what we do is just crazy. You know, we keep producing this internal knowledge and ignoring the fact that fields all around us are doing all kinds of amazing things. So I absolutely believe it. And I don’t think we should be treating families without a sociological perspective, that is a socio-political perspective. I’m getting to the point where I don’t think its ethical. (pause) And that requires, you know, other fields, sociology and anthropology.”

The need for the field to connect with other disciplines and areas of thought was a strong finding. It is clear that systems theory is applicable in many settings and using such skills as MFTs to make a difference in people’s lives in various settings is important to the field if it wants to continue to adapt to the needs of society. In addition, connecting with other areas seems to stimulate creative discussion and development similar to the group processes that occur when they collaborate with people from multiple perspectives.

Overarching Research Question: What is the process of creativity that MFT professionals experience as they apply clinical skills and a systemic lens to non-traditional areas of application?

Based on the analysis of the four research questions, it appears the process an MFT professional experiences as they apply their skills to a non-traditional area of application involve individual and group processes within the context of a professional organization and societal belief systems. Overall, processes at the individual and group levels seem to be the strongest, with personal integrity coupled with a sense of mission or purpose being the most influential factor that contributes to creativity. Equally, group environments that establish a sense of trust as well as provide the opportunity for collaboration among people of varying perspectives enhance one’s ability to be creative as well. At the professional level, participants believe that if the field connects with more disciplines and areas of thought in a collaborative manner as well as maintains a sense of professional integrity, opportunities for creativity will increase and the field will progress as well a provide opportunities for individual MFTs to progress. At the societal level, it appears that an MFT’s level of creativity is not necessarily impacted by society; rather, society at times may either slow one down or speed up the creativity process due to the actions of societal organizations (governments, healthcare, etc.) and beliefs/trends of cultural paradigms. Table 4.12 organizes the findings while Figure 4.8 attempts to illustrate the flow of processes that occur as a creative MFT applies its skills to a non-traditional area of application.

Table 4.12 – Final Categorization of Themes & Patterns

Individual Processes	Personal Integrity (Motivation) Mission/Purpose (Motivation) Individual Traits: - Independence - Healthy Risk Taking - Interpersonal Skills - Pro-active - Boundary Setting
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Group Processes	<p>Collaborative</p> <p>Supportive</p> <p>Multi-Disciplinary/Multiple Perspectives</p> <p>Shared Vision</p> <p>Group Integrity (Open, Honest Communication)</p>
Socio-cultural Processes	<p>Socio-cultural beliefs impact speed of creativity</p> <p>Societal Organizations tend to slow creativity process</p>
Professional Processes	<p>Fields ability to connect with other disciplines/schools of thought speeds up process of creativity.</p> <p>Field's ability to maintain professional integrity will help ensure future creativity.</p>

Figure 4.8 – Model of MFT Processes of Creativity

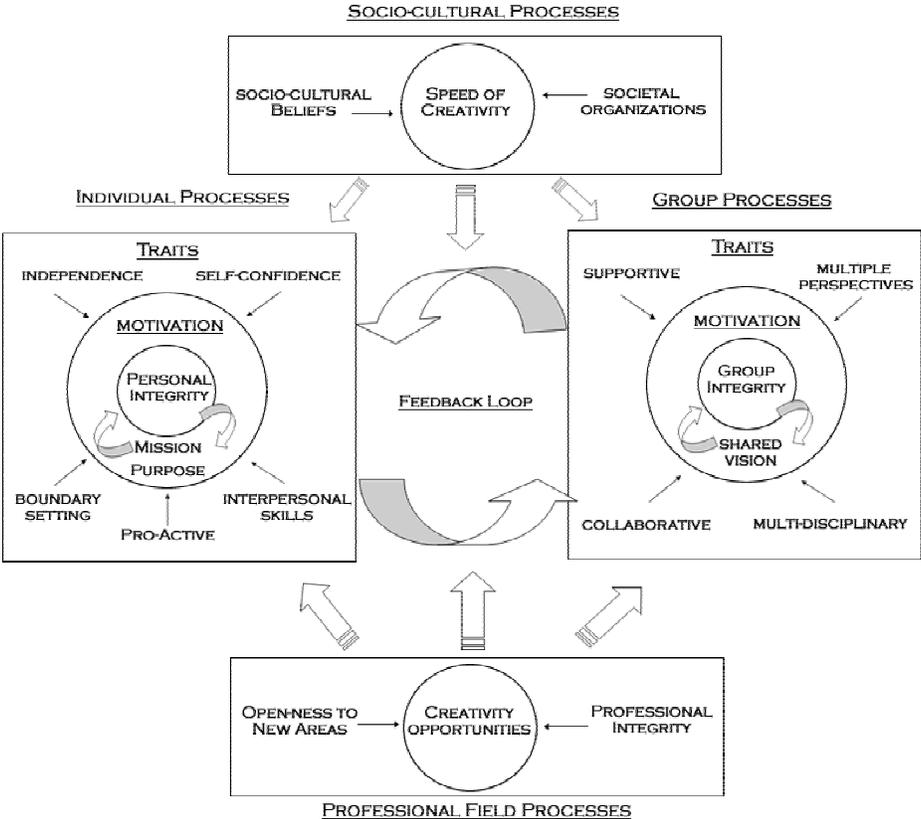


Figure 4.8 modifies the original model of ecological creativity discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation. It is important to note that the theory presented in chapter 2 could be viewed more as a theoretical framework used to examine the creative process in various contexts. In other words, the framework helps one ask appropriate questions and thoroughly examine the multiple levels of influence in order to create specific models of processes in various areas. Thus, the model presented in this chapter still follows the general processes of the ecological system theory of creativity framework; however, it enhances our understanding of this specific creative process by adding more detail to specific traits and processes in addition to the relationship between the multiple levels of the ecological framework.

At the individual level, one's personal integrity is at the core of the individual processes. Personal integrity seems to have a circular feedback loop with a sense of mission or purpose. In other words, as one discovers who they are and lives by that sense of personal integrity, they will engage in a purpose that matches one's personal integrity. It appears that personal integrity and a sense of mission or purpose are the driving forces or motivators of one's creativity. A number of personal traits seem to help one maintain personal activity and accomplish their identified purpose including independence, healthy risk taking, a level of pro-activity, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence. The interpersonal skills helps one also connect and work within groups that seem to enhance the potential for creativity.

At the group level, a sense of group integrity seems to be important as well in which the group is direct, open, and honest in their communication. This group integrity, similar to the individual processes, seems to influence a group's sense of a shared vision. The integrity and vision of the group are also supported by a number of important characteristics that seem to enhance a group's ability to reach its shared vision including collaboration, multi-disciplinary, multiple-perspectives, and supportive.

The individual and group processes seem to engage in a circular feedback loop as well in which a creative individual's processes will improve a group's processes and the characteristics of a creative group will provide an environment for the individual's creativity to blossom.

Two larger processes seem to impact the speed of creativity and the amount of opportunities that exist for more creativity. The professional field's openness to new areas of thought and practice will impact the amount of opportunities that exist for an individual to engage in creative partnerships. In other words, a field that promotes collaboration with other

areas will likely offer more opportunities to creative individuals to engage in creative activities. Equally, a field that is closed-minded to new areas, will reduce the amount of opportunities a creative individual has to engage in new areas of thought and practice. In addition, a field's ability to maintain its core competencies will also enhance the amount of creativity opportunities. In other words, if the field loses its strength and founding principles, it will likely become diluted and lose its ability to progress. Future opportunities will be reduced because outside systems will not see the value of its application since it has lost its core strength. However, if the MFT field maintains its strength in systems theory while applying itself to new areas, future opportunities will continue to open as other areas see the effectiveness of its core competency, systems theory.

At the socio-cultural level, the speed of creativity can be affected by socio-cultural beliefs and societal organizations. In other words, if society is open to a new area or pushing for advancement, organizations will begin to take note of the cultural paradigm shifts and begin to change, speeding up the process for new ways of doing and thinking to take place. If society is resistant, organizations will likely not change and slow down the progress of new areas. For example, if a societal organization like the government or the healthcare system imposes laws or regulations that inhibit change in a new area, the speed of the creativity can be slowed down as well.

Verification

As stated, a number of measures were used to ensure verification of the results. The two analyzers bracketed responses separately and formed categories and themes using quasi-statistics. It was surprising how similar the themes and categories were following the separate analysis. Both analyzers discussed minor differences and collaborated on identifying themes and categories. The primary investigator also used textual, structural, and textual-structural descriptions along with the categories and themes of the analysis to come up with overall themes and categories. In addition, the peer debriefing was valuable in terms of helping the primary researcher clarify thoughts within the textual-structural synthesis descriptions. No major changes were suggested that altered the overall meaning behind the proposed hypotheses. Finally, member checks were used in which participants were given the chance to respond with changes to the textual-structural synthesis descriptions as well. Only two participants suggested changes to the descriptions (Dr. Mac Hafen; Dr. Michael Olson). Both participants clarified some thoughts which were included in the presentation of the data found in this chapter; however, no

new information was added that changed the overall meaning or themes of the interviews. In addition, minor grammatical and syntax changes were suggested and included in the presentation of the data as well.

CHAPTER 5 - Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss some implications of the findings regarding the process of creativity an MFT experiences as they apply their skills to non-traditional areas of application. First, a brief a summary of the study is presented in order to provide a backdrop for the latter sections. Second, findings from the current study are compared with findings from previous studies that were discussed during the literature review of this dissertation. Third, implications of the findings are applied to the following areas: a) MFT student recruitment; b) MFT student training; c) Improving MFT productivity in Academia; d) Improving MFT productivity outside of academia; and e) Maximizing the field of MFT's potential. Fourth, additional thoughts about applying the findings and model of the current study to other disciplines and schools of thought are discussed. Fifth, strengths and limitations of the current study are delineated. Finally, areas of future research are explored.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the creative processes an MFT experiences as they apply their skills to non-traditional areas. A secondary purpose of the study was to begin to examine the processes of creativity and innovation in general from an ecological systems perspective. As stated in the literature review, very few studies have looked beyond a single component of the creative process. In other words, there are numerous studies that may look at personality traits, group processes, or motivation in regards to the creative process; however, very few have used a systemic lens to combine various factors of influence as a means of understanding the process of creativity.

Csikszentmihalyi is the most well-known researcher that has applied some concepts of systems theory to the creative process. Unfortunately, he did not examine some key components of creativity when he used a systemic lens, focusing primarily on individual traits, the relationship a creative individual has with society, and the relationship a creative individual has with a professional field when discussing his theoretical model. Csikszentmihalyi did address some other components of creativity, including the impact relationships have on creativity and the role certain components of motivation have on the creative process. Unfortunately, he never fully incorporated these factors into his theoretical model. Thus, in order to examine the creativity process while incorporating various factors of influence, an ecological theory of

creativity was used as a framework to guide the study. The ecological systems theory of creativity combined research findings from Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow and creativity with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. In addition, research based on group factors that impact creativity as well as the role motivation has in the creativity process were incorporated into the model as well.

Based on the literature review, it became clear that the next step in creativity research was to begin to explore more comprehensive, holistic theories behind the creative process. Equally, the field of Marriage and Family Therapy seems to be experiencing a paradigm shift as professionals apply their skills to non-traditional areas of application. Not to suggest that MFTs have not applied their skills to non-traditional areas in the past; rather, a surge in the research and recognition of MFTs in non-traditional areas seems to have occurred only recently. Thus, this study on the creative process of MFTs in non-traditional areas sought to fulfill two purposes: a) explore the processes of creativity using a more systemic, holistic framework of creativity; and b) examine the phenomena of MFTs in non-traditional areas of application. It is important to note that the researcher has some personal interest in this area due to his interests in applying systemic theory and skills to business, community development, and international relations.

Due to my noted biases, it was important for the study to use a method of research that controlled for such biases. Thus, rather than using a traditional phenomenological method of qualitative analysis, standpoint theory was also used with phenomenology in order to further control for biases. Phenomenology seeks to understand the phenomenon one experiences applying various measures to tap into the essence of one's experience while standpoint theory seeks to empower the voice of the participant while diminishing the amount of biased interpretation that may occur from an outside researcher. Thus, it was also important to use standpoint theory to ensure that the analysis would produce results that were not influenced by a desire to validate my own theory. Thus, only words used by the participants were incorporated in the final categorization of themes and patterns.

A sample of 8 participants was gathered in which semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face at a national AAMFT conference in Austin, TX during the fall of 2006. Participants were chosen out of a list of close to 30 creative individuals who had previously been as one who had applied MFT skills to a new area of theory, practice, or research that moved the field forward. A thorough examination of research and individuals that practice across the nation

was performed to generate the list. A total of 12 participants were invited by e-mail to participate, with four declining due to an inability to find a convenient time or place to participate in the interview. The list of participants include Dr. Susan McDaniel, a pioneer in the field of medical family therapy, Dr. Michael Olson, one of the first MFT medical school professors, Dr. Jennifer Hodgson, an innovative researcher in medical family therapy and co-founder of the first medical family therapy doctoral program, Dr. Teresa McDowell, an innovative theorist and researcher that has produced significant work on various race, ethnicity, and multi-cultural issues, Dr. Jonathan Sandberg, an innovative researcher that has produced innovative work on gerontology and various medical issues, Dr. Mac Hafen, one of the first MFTs hired by a school of veterinary medicine, Greg Rush, an MFT therapist and business owner of Telos, a residential treatment facility that uses a unique treatment model that is enhanced through an even more unique business model, and, finally, one participant that requested to remain anonymous whom has produced significant work at the theoretical and research levels of MFT.

Following the interviews, qualitative analysis were performed using the modified phenomenological method mentioned previously. Quasi-statistics were also incorporated into the analysis to further support a standpoint theory framework. Results were reported at the individual, group, socio-cultural and professional field levels. In addition, a proposed model of the creative process based on the given results was also provided. Based on the analysis of the interviews, it appears that an individual's level of personal integrity and sense of mission as well as certain traits like independence, pro-activity, interpersonal skills, healthy risk-taking, and boundary setting impact the creative process. In addition, individuals who work in groups that are collaborative, multi-disciplinary, supportive, and have built trust through direct communication and shared vision are likely to be creative as well. Socio-cultural beliefs and organizations seem to impact the speed of creativity at times by pushing creative endeavors forward or preventing creative endeavors from entering into mainstream society. Equally, the professional field seems to impact the number of creative opportunities available at times by either supporting collaboration across fields while maintaining core competencies, leading to still more opportunities to engage in creative endeavors or resisting such opportunities through lack of collaboration and dilution of professional integrity.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

Limitations

Due to a small sample, results of the study will be difficult to generalize. Because the study of the creative process of MFTs is relatively unknown, a qualitative study was utilized to understand some of the basic phenomenon of this creative process. Basic and qualitative research is typically used when a research area has not received a lot of attention in the literature. It is generally understood that qualitative research has several limitations: a) it cannot be generalized to larger populations; b) it does not typically used a representative sample; and c) it is difficult to replicate. Thus, the results of the current study are not generalizable due to a small, unrepresentative sample. In addition, the study would be difficult to replicate, although a semi-structured interview was used with detailed descriptions of the analysis steps taken. Dupree, White, Olson, and Lafleur (in press) note that the evolution of a research area should involve what is known as a “practice-based evidence” approach towards the beginning of the process. In other words, when an area has received little attention statistically, it is important to gather information from experts already practicing what is being studied through qualitative measures. Thus, this study utilized qualitative measures to tap into the essence of creativity by professionals already “practicing” creativity. It is understood that the current study is only one step in a long process of research that would need to occur before the current findings could be generalized to larger populations.

In addition, the sample size used makes it difficult to tease out differences that may exist in sub-groups of the studied sample. In other words, it was mentioned in the methods section of this study that differences between researchers, theorists, and practitioners would be examined in order to make suggestions for the training and development of different areas in MFT. However, because of the small sample size, it was difficult to find differences between sub-groups. Future studies with larger samples may be able to control for such differences.

A final limitation of the study is based on the lack of creativity research in general that utilizes a systemic framework. Because I wanted to use a systemic framework, a systems theory of creativity had to be developed in order to examine systemic processes. The framework used has not been tested although numerous studies have used an ecological systems framework in the past when examining other phenomenon. In addition, the framework used relied on research

from various areas that had not been utilized together when examining a creative process. In other words, factors that contribute to creativity when studied alone may differ when the process is examined more holistically as factors are combined with other factors. Although the current study's results have identified some systemic processes that relate to previous research findings, more research is needed to test and validate systemic processes of creativity. Thus, the results and the framework used in the current study are accepted as preliminary results in the beginning stages of the research process with the need of future studies with larger samples that test systemic processes.

Strengths

In spite of a number of limitations, the current study has a number of strengths primarily based on the methods and controls for biases that were utilized. Because qualitative research relies on some subjective interpretation, controlling for biases is extremely important in order to increase the reliability and validation of the findings. The current study relied on various techniques as means to triangulate the data in order to increase validity and reliability including member checks, analysis of the data by multiple members, peer debriefing, comparison of findings and methods with previous research, emic analysis, and the use of textual-structural descriptions combined with bracketing and quasi-statistics. In other words, the data was examined by multiple people with multiple perspective relying on multiple methods as a means to drill down to the core themes and patterns of the data. In addition, standpoint theory was utilized to modify aspects of the analysis as a means to control for the biases of the researcher as well as empower the voices of the participants. Thus, it is clear that results of the current study were required to go through strenuous review as a means of validating conclusions in order to establish a strong foundation for future research.

A second strength of the current study is the amount of questions and areas of further research that were opened based on the results. In other words, the current findings are difficult to generalize, but the amount of common themes and patterns that were identified through the analysis suggest some important principles and concepts that appear to be capturing some important processes of creativity. The current study has opened many doors to future research including areas of MFT training, recruitment, and productivity along with the improvement of MFT academia, research, therapy, collaboration, and theory development. In addition, the current findings present an exciting model of the systemic creative process. Previous research

cited in chapter 2 has called for studies that look at the creative process more systemically. Because the current study has identified some systemic processes of creativity using a systemic framework, it is likely that more research will follow adding to our understanding of the creative process.

Overall, the strength of the findings are based on strong methodological techniques. In addition, the current study opens doors for future research that will increase our understanding of the systemic creative process in MFTs as well as in other disciplines, organizations, individuals, and areas of application. It is important to note that the implications of this study discussed in this chapter are based on preliminary observations with the hope that future research and examination of such areas will promote the expansion and validation of the suggested implications.

Comparison of this Study to the Literature Review

It is important to note that the categories and themes in this study are based on emic analysis, which attempts to use the words the participants voice in their interviews. Thus, some of the categories and themes do not coincide with terms in the literature; however, the essence behind the themes seems to coincide with a number of concepts found in the literature. First, a major finding of the current study is the role personal integrity and a feeling of purpose or mission has with producing creative outcomes. A feeling of personal integrity and sense of mission correlate well with the concept of intrinsic motivation. Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990, 1996) uses the term autotelic experience in his theory of flow which seems to be similar to what other researchers call intrinsic motivation (e.g., Amabile, 1996; Golann, 1962; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) seem to have produced the most significant work relating to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation suggesting that the perceived locus of control is internal and the regulatory process deals with interest, enjoyment, and satisfaction. An internal locus of control that produces enjoyment coincides well with the outcome of the current study. In other words, participants described their level of personal integrity and sense of mission as internal. In addition, they felt that relying on that internal motivation helped them have satisfaction and enjoyment in their work. They used words such as peace, enjoyment, passion, and flow to describe such experiences. Thus, a clear finding of intrinsic motivation is present.

In regards to the individual traits, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) listed a number of characteristics that coincide with the findings of the current study. For example,

Csikszentmihalyi mentioned that creative individuals have high levels of energy, which seems to coincide with some of the participants' level of energy and ability to be pro-active. In addition, Csikszentmihalyi mentioned traits such as the ability to be independent as well as work in groups, the ability to take risks, and a sense of humble self-confidence within the participants he interviewed. His findings correlate well with the current findings suggesting that creative individuals have an ability to be independent, work interpersonally, take risks, be pro-active, and have a humble, self-confidence.

In regards to the group findings, collaborative work that uses multiple perspectives coincides with previous findings that suggest the importance of “detectable diversity” and “cognitive diversity” (Milliken et al., 2003). In other words, Milliken et al. (2003) has noted that groups that bring diversity based on racial, ethnic, gender characteristics as well as cognitive diversity based on educational or theoretical backgrounds are more likely to be high on creativity. It is important that some research has found that collaborative groups have not been helpful; however, as noted in the literature review, such studies did not control for group processes. Most researchers currently believe that groups that work collaboratively with multiple perspectives are more likely to produce creative results. Thus, the results of the current study coincide with current trends in the research. Other areas of research noted in the literature deal with the importance of trust and emotional safety in groups. These concepts seem to coincide with the current study's findings on having a shared vision coupled with open, honest communication. Overall, the group findings of this study coincide with current trends in the research.

In regards to the field findings, the results of this study seem to expand on the findings of Csikszentmihalyi in his original work (1996). He suggested that the field works as a gate keeping organization that provides feedback and acceptance to creative endeavors. Although it is apparent that a field engages in such a role, the results of this study speak more to the amount of opportunities for creativity that can exist based on the collaboration a field encourages and the maintenance of its core competencies. In other words, if a field encourages collaboration across disciplines and schools of thought, opportunities for creativity will open as new ideas and projects are formed. Equally, it is important for a field to maintain its core identity as it collaborates so its own strengths will not get diluted in the process. At this time,

Csikszentmihalyi is the only known researcher addressing factors of creativity relating to larger systems. Thus, this area of research is open for further validation and study.

Regarding the findings at the societal level, socio-cultural beliefs coincide with Csikszentmihalyi's findings on social acceptance. In other words, society provides a role of accepting or rejecting ideas which in turn supports further work and acceptance or inhibits further work. However, Csikszentmihalyi's findings did not go into detail about the role various social organizations have with creativity. Thus, one key finding that is new to the research is the role government, health care systems, etc. have in the acceptance process. In addition, the results of this study suggest that socio-cultural factors influence the speed of creativity as well as the acceptance of creativity. In other words, resistance from society and organizations will slow down creative processes while acceptance will speed up the process. This concept may be embedded within the concept of acceptance, but it has not been delineated before this study. As stated, lack of research in this area makes it difficult to compare current findings with other research beyond Csikszentmihalyi's work.

Probably the most innovative finding of this study that was lacking in the research is the relationship various levels of influence have with each other. In other words, the feedback loops that exist between the individual factors, group factors, field factors, and socio-cultural factors suggest a synchronized system of processes. Csikszentmihalyi did note feedback loops between society, the field, and the individual. However, a number of feedback loops seem to exist that have not been noted in previous research. It appears that an individual's motivation engages in a feedback loop with an individual's traits and skills. Equally, an individual's motivation and skills engages in a feedback loop with the group motivation and skills. It also appears that the field and socio-cultural factors may be moderating variables while individual and group factors may be mediating variables; however, more research is needed to validate these hypotheses.

Improving MFT Student Recruitment and Acceptance Trends

The results of this study may have an impact on the processes of MFT student recruitment and acceptance. MFT programs rely on various characteristics and requirements at the program level and university level to help decide which students to accept. Based on such requirements, MFT programs often attempt to recruit students based on the given requirements. Such requirements often include GPA, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, a personal essay, and a resume. The question arises, "How do student requirements for entrance correlate with a

student's ability to perform as an MFT theorist, researcher, and/or practitioner?" Unfortunately, very little research on MFT recruitment and acceptance trends exists (e.g., Wilson & Stith, 1993). This is partially due to the difficulty in measuring MFT success. Does one use a test score or GPA to measure an MFT's ability to be a good therapist or researcher? Does one's practicum grade have a better correlation with therapy performance than overall GPA? It is difficult to answer such questions because there is so little research on the area of MFT recruitment. There have been a number of articles written on gate-keeping from a supervisor's point of view as they deal with ethical situations or students that are incapable for various reasons of becoming a therapist (e.g., Russell, DuPree, Beggs, & Peterson, 2007). However, it would seem important to also examine the gate-keeping process at the recruitment and student acceptance stages. Not only would MFT programs be able to sift out students that may not be appropriate for MFT, they would also be able to recruit students that would more likely succeed as an MFT practitioner, researcher, or theorist. If we as a field are truly trying to prepare the next generation of MFTs in a world where even more expertise is needed in research, theory, and practice, wouldn't it be important to examine the factors that help one achieve such ability as well as how to find such students? Equally, do current student requirements match the factors that contribute to the development of innovative MFT practitioners, researchers, and theorists?

Although this study provides only preliminary findings of the creative process found in successful MFTs that are expanding the field, the results of this study can be used to begin a discourse on what factors could be examined during the recruitment and acceptance stages of MFT programs. For example, it may be important to focus more on a student's ability to work collaboratively in groups with multiple perspectives since it appears that creative MFTs have such ability. Furthermore, finding students that have established a belief system that allows them to make decisions off of personal integrity or finding students that are willing to look at their belief system and form a strong personal identity will likely attract students that have a passion to move the field forward. Equally, those students that feel a sense of mission or purpose will likely be more dedicated and committed to their education. Finally, students that come from multiple backgrounds will help provide programs with multiple perspectives allowing for an environment that encourages the examination of theory, practice, and research from multiple perspectives. Such an examination will likely encourage the development of collaborative research and the development of theory and research that is more inclusive of varying schools of

thought. In other words, it would encourage development in a truly systemic manner as it connects with systems outside of the traditional scope of MFT.

Table 5.1 provides a list of possible traits MFT programs could look for if they are seeking creative individuals that will likely move areas of MFT practice, theory, and research forward. It is important to note that the table provides a list of preliminary ideas surrounding the topic of MFT recruitment. More research is needed to further validate factors that contribute to MFT student success.

Table 5.1 – MFT Recruitment & Acceptance Assessment

Individual Traits/Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work independently as well as in groups. • Ability to take healthy risks. • Interpersonal skills. • Ability to set boundaries with self and others. • A level of self-confidence coupled with the humility to maintain a learning posture.
Individual Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The desire to maintain personal integrity. • The desire to explore and establish a core center of beliefs. • A feeling of mission or purpose regarding their motivation to engage in their work.
Group Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A history of working in collaborative groups. • The desire and openness to collaborate with people with multiple perspectives. • The ability to communicate within groups with honesty and sincerity. • The ability to establish trust within groups.
Multiple Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students that bring varying perspectives based on cultural, religious, geographical, and family backgrounds. • Students that bring varying perspectives due to educational background (i.e., law, sociology, anthropology, statistics, education, biology, computer science, etc.)

It is interesting to note that in a study that is under preparation by the author of this dissertation, characteristics of current MFT students were examined with a sample size of 298 students (234 Master's students; 64 PhD students) from across the nation in which only 39 (10%) came from non-traditional backgrounds, which was defined as students with bachelor's degrees outside of psychology, family science, or similar fields. It was also noted that about 25% of the students identified themselves as coming from a racial minority. Although the percentage of minority students was higher than expected possibly due to the amount of cultural dialogue that has occurred in the research in the past 10 years, it may be important to begin to look at a program's ability to recruit students from varying educational backgrounds. Some of the most creative individuals in the field have come from a background outside of family science or human development. Equally, some research has begun to address the impact of international students on MFT programs (Mittal & Wieling, 2006). It may be prudent for MFT programs to examine their ability to recruit international students as a means of adding more perspectives to MFT programs as well.

Although MFT recruitment strategies are in their infancy, hopefully the findings of this study applied to MFT recruitment and acceptance can stimulate dialogue that will generate more effective strategies to expand the field through future generations of MFTs.

Maximizing Student Potential Through Effective Training

Similar to MFT student recruitment, the findings of the current study could be applied to MFT student training as well. A number of the participants in this study expressed their desires for the field to train students to work in non-traditional areas by helping students apply their skills to multiple areas of society. Furthermore, the participants also noted the importance of teaching students how to "work in the real world." In other words, MFT training should begin to address how students can apply their skills in a field where there is not always enough space or demand to engage in traditional areas of application. However, the participants were adamant about helping students not lose the soul of MFT in the process; rather, they hoped that students would become deeply grounded in systems theory and research as they apply their skills in different areas.

Thus, it may be important for MFT programs to help students develop and fine-tune additional skills that are not always emphasized in a MFT program. For example, based on the results of this study, it may be important to help students experience the process of solidifying

their personal belief systems and helping them feel empowered as they seek to maintain personal integrity. In addition, it may be helpful for faculty to also help students establish a sense of mission and purpose or help students clarify and voice their sense of mission and purpose. Such endeavors may seem frivolous to some; however, the results of this study suggest that those that have a strong sense of personal integrity, feel empowered to maintain their personal integrity through their actions, and have a strong sense of mission or purpose seem to find the people they need, the skills they need, and the resources they need to accomplish their goals. In other words, they move into unknown territories of thought, practice, and research as they take healthy risks and have the courage to push forward despite resistance from society. They become “paradigm pioneers” as one participant suggested.

Other areas of training to consider included the ability to work collaboratively in groups from multiple disciplines and perspectives. As one participant identified, some universities and programs experience turf battles in which different disciplines within the university system to fight for the right and resources to engage in different areas of research and practice. It is likely that some of these turf battles are reinforced by some MFT faculty’s own biases towards other disciplines. Part of this bias may come partially from the barriers that other fields and systems placed in front of the field as MFT sought to solidify its position and value in society, especially as MFTs seek licensure in each state of the United States. Although the field continues to fight for recognition by insurance companies and government agencies such as Medicare, it may be prudent for MFTs to model to their students a process of successfully collaborating with other fields and disciplines. Medical family therapy is a good example of the benefits collaboration with other disciplines can provide as the amount of research funding, medical internship sites, and job placements of MFTs has increased exponentially due to collaboration. I personally have witnessed faculty, students, and professionals, including myself, criticize another discipline like social work or psychology for one reason or another. I have been a part of conversations in which one advises another not to connect with the education department, psychology department, statistics department, or biology department as a student seeks out additional information or resources for their endeavors. However, when faculty or students have made attempts to pro-actively connect with other departments using effective communication skills and openness to new ideas, it appears that the benefits outweigh the limitations when they begin to work together.

Strong partnerships are formed as members from different disciplines bring skills and perspectives that enhance the project.

One of the strongest implications of this study appears to be the importance of forming multi-disciplinary groups. If the field desires that future generations continue to form such collaborations, modeling by faculty will need to occur as they form their own multi-disciplinary groups. The core logic behind the need for more opportunities for MFT students to work in multi-disciplinary groups resides in the fact that the majority of MFTs will be working in multi-disciplinary teams at either the research or practice level after graduation. Thus, training that helps students maximize their potential within multi-disciplinary teams should be encouraged at the research and practice levels.

Finally, faculty members take on the role of a coach, guide, or facilitator for students as they seek to improve their skills or define a career path that will maximize their strengths. Using the findings of this study, faculty could use questions that tap into the characteristics of the creative process to help guide students to maximize their potential. Table 5.2 provides a summary of possible questions faculty members could use to help students maximize their potential. The table lists the questions in a logical order that seems to follow the process an MFT experiences as they maximize their creative potential starting with individual motivation including the following additional areas: a) examining individual traits that support their motivation; b) discussing the people they work with to reach their goals; c) and ending with factors at the socio-cultural and professional level that could help them with their endeavors.

Table 5.2 – MFT Student Maximization Interview Guide

Individual Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What areas of interest have you had within the field of MFT and outside of the field? • What areas of life do you really enjoy? • How do these areas relate to your areas of interest in MFT and outside MFT? • Are there ways to connect the areas you are interested in? • What components of your belief system are the strongest? • How does your belief system relate to areas of interest in MFT?
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some defining personal experiences that have helped you form your belief system? • How do these experiences impact areas of interest in MFT? • Are their areas in people lives, families, and/or society you would like to help or improve? • How do these areas relate to your belief system and personal experiences? • Do you feel that you have the ability to maintain your personal integrity through your chosen areas of interest in MFT? How? • Do you feel a strong sense of purpose or mission in your chosen areas of interest? How? • Which areas of MFT or areas that could utilize MFT skills excite you the most that allow you to maintain personal integrity and fulfill a sense of mission or purpose?
Supportive Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you improve your ability to work independently? • How can you improve your ability to work with others? • How does your level of self-confidence impact your work? • How does your ability to set boundaries impact your work especially regarding time management and your ability to say yes or no to others? • How does your level of pro-activity impact your work? • How does your ability to take healthy risks impact your work?
Groups/Collaborators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who can you collaborate with that will help you in your endeavors to pursue your chosen interests? • Who can you collaborate with that will bring multiple perspectives to the table? • Are their faculty or students outside of the MFT program that could help you in your work? • Are their faculty or students in other departments or colleges

	<p>that could help you in your work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your ability to collaborate with others impact your work? • How does your ability to openly communicate your honest thoughts within groups impact your work?
MFT Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who in the field could offer you expertise regarding your endeavors? • Are there other disciplines that could help your work? • Are there other theories outside of MFT that could help your work? • How does your understanding of MFT and systems theory impact your work? • How does your ability to maintain your professional identity in areas outside of MFT impact your work?
Socio-cultural Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there current movements or trends in society related to your work? How do they impact your work? • How does society's beliefs about your area of interest impact your work? • Are there organizations you could join that are related to your work? • Are their movements relating to government or other organizations that you could get involved in that would help your area of work?

Improving MFT Productivity in Academia

The findings of this study can also be applied to the area of MFT productivity in academia. As MFT faculty and students attempt to fulfill multiple roles as practitioners, researchers, supervisors, mentors, etc., it is important for MFTs to understand how to balance their multiple roles while maximizing their own productivity. The majority of MFT faculty have the pressure to publish as well as maintaining administrative, supervisory, teaching, and clinical loads. At times, it may be difficult for MFT faculty to know how to balance their load as well as

maximize their potential. Organizing departments and programs to maximize productivity can be a difficult challenge as university, college, school, field, student, and personal demands, wants and needs often overload and even contradict one's vision of their work. Using the findings of this study, organizations can structure themselves to maximize each faculty member's potential. Within academia, this will most likely succeed at the program and department or school level. For example, a department often faces the dilemma of funding. Pressures from university systems based on reductions in federal and state education funding have led departments to place more emphasis on research productivity. This has led some programs and departments to put added pressure on faculty to publish and receive grant funding although previous expectations to supervise, teach, and provide clinical work have not changed. The question arises, "How can MFT programs organize themselves in a manner that allows them to meet the research demands placed on them as well as meet the clinical, teaching, and supervisory responsibilities without reaching burnout?"

Using some of the group factors of the current study that increase creative productivity, it may be important for departments to start with a shared vision. In other words, some programs may need to establish priorities in which all faculty members can participate on some level. Priorities would likely be established based on the expertise and past publications of the faculty members. For example, a department may decide to focus on multi-cultural studies, health and families, and trauma. Each faculty member would have the opportunity to work collaboratively with other faculty members on research or community projects reducing the amount of time required for a project while increasing the quality of the project due to the collaboration. In addition, departments over time could establish centers of study that would allow for multi-disciplinary participation of departments across the university as well as encourage collaboration across universities. Such centers of study allow for increased productivity and quality of work due to the amount of collaboration that occurs as well as the increased amount of funding a center would likely get because of a history of work in a certain area. Utilizing the technology of the internet and knowledge management systems, centers or established groups could work on projects regardless of the geographic location of participants and collaborators.

In addition to establishing a shared vision and the opportunity to collaborate with others, departments may need to organize how faculty members devote their time. It may be important for faculty members more interested in research to teach only one class while others interested in

student development be required to publish less. Another option may be to offer semesters to faculty members in which they have more time to do research while maintaining a smaller teaching load. Semesters of research could be rotated based on the expertise and desires of the faculty member. In other words, it would be important to match the passion of the faculty member with the needs of the department. If a faculty member engages in work they do not enjoy, it is likely that the quality of their work will go down; however, if they engage in work that comes from a sense of mission and passion, their work will likely increase in quality.

At an individual level, it may be important to help faculty members learn how to say no to projects that do not fall within their goals or the shared vision of the department. In other words, a faculty member that has the ability to set boundaries and focus on their passions and the vision of the department will be able to maximize his/her potential. Equally, if a faculty member is engaging in a work based on their sense of mission and personal integrity, they will more likely be pro-active, independent, dedicated, risk-taking, and engaging with others as they seek to accomplish their goals.

In regards to encouraging the collaboration of different fields, it may be prudent for departments to hire researchers and practitioners that come from various backgrounds at the cultural and educational levels. Some departments have begun to hire statisticians to help with quantitative work or computer science professionals to help with technological collaboration through websites and internet portals.

Equally, many professionals maximize their potential for creativity through the teaching process. Examining how professors can tap into their strengths as they apply areas of interest in teaching will also maximize students' potential. Departments may need to examine teaching and research loads as well as how professional interests are in line with assigned courses.

Overall, it is important for an organization to help each individual follow its passion, collaborate with others both inside and outside of the organization, work towards a shared vision, and receive the resources that they need as well as the demands that allow them to maximize their potential. A supportive, nurturing environment that encourages collaboration and innovation among faculty will trickle down to the culture of its students. As faculty and students increase their level of innovation, funding opportunities will open up as federal and state recognition of the program increases due to improvements in research productivity, community involvement, and alumni success.

Maximizing the field of MFT's Potential

Some of the most interesting findings of this study relate to the characteristics and processes of the field itself. A cybernetics of cybernetics process appears to be occurring as an individual's processes with group processes translate to a larger systemic process within the field. In other words, just as an individual or group needs a vision, integrity, and the ability to collaborate across traditional boundaries, the field needs to have integrity, vision, and the ability to cross traditional boundaries. It is interesting that some participants felt that the field lacked vision as they "look at their own navel" or get fixated on protecting the field by closing doors on other fields or schools of thought. In order for the field to remain systemic, it must act in a systemic manner. In other words, it must connect and interact with multiple areas, disciplines, and schools of thought. The participants of this study also voiced a strong recommendation that the field remain true to its core competencies (maintaining integrity) as it crosses into untouched terrain. Thus, it will be important for MFT to continue to teach systems theory using the foundational research and theory of the field as well as learn how to apply such this unique perspective to many areas of society.

Specifically, the results of this study suggest that the field formalize movements to connect MFT with different disciplines and establish sub-disciplines within the field. Just as psychology and medicine have formalized sub-disciplines within the field, it is not unlikely that MFT could follow a similar path in which all students are formally trained in systems theory, MFT theory, and MFT intervention while programs across the nation begin to specialize in varying sub-disciplines such as medical family therapy, residential treatment, business consultation, mediation, etc. A number of schools have already begun to specialize in varying sub-disciplines including East Carolina University's doctoral program in Medical Family Therapy or Nova Southeastern's emphasis in mediation. Yet, some of the participants wished that the field of MFT would formally organize themselves to meet the demand of new sub-disciplines in a manner that still maintains the integrity of the field. The recent conference on family and genetics is a good example of the field supporting new areas of MFT. It is recommended that the field continue to explore ways to recognize, support, and organize the many applications MFTs and systems theory can have on varying areas of society.

Other areas of Application

The results of this study may have a number of implications outside of MFT. Because a systemic examination of the creative process can be applied to many areas within society, implications of the current study could easily be applied to areas within business, education, family science, politics, international relations, and technology. For example, businesses are continually looking for ways to increase productivity and innovation. Organizing businesses that allow for the maximization of productivity and innovation through improvements in the hiring process, the formulation of project teams and groups, tapping into the strengths of their employees, utilizing intrinsic motivation, and addressing socio-cultural response to business strategy and products are just a few of the areas to further examine using a systemic theory of innovation and creativity. Equally, applying the process of creativity to parenting in family science, building international networks, creating social programs in government that allow for human growth, or creating technological systems that form electronic teams are all examples of possible implications.

Finally, the area of coaching and consultation in various areas of society has increased dramatically. I personally have begun to use the framework and findings of the current study to aid in the coaching of executives, weight loss program consultation, university department organizational consultation, economic development through improvements in country innovation, and rural community development through the creation of innovation opportunities. I have also begun to explore applying some of the findings to the therapy process combined with solution-focused therapy and structural family therapy. In addition, I have begun to use these ideas within couples therapy for those interested in marital enrichment or retirement planning. At the individual level, some of the principles have been useful in helping individuals find renewed enjoyment and purpose in their life as they seek to walk down new paths of thinking and behaving. Overall, it appears that as one opens up the doors to human potential through a process of tapping into one's personal integrity and sense of purpose in life while breaking down barriers and connecting people with resources that support their vision, growth occurs exponentially. It appears that when a person, group, and/or organization that is in line with what they do best fueled by a deep sense of purpose, creativity occurs. People find ways to move forward, to break down barriers, to improve, to connect, and, ultimately, maximize their potential.

Future Research

As stated, the purpose of this study was to explore creative processes that occur in MFTs that apply their skills to non-traditional areas. Because this study taps into a research area that is relatively new, future research is wide open for further validation and implications of the current study. More research needs to occur within the MFT field as well as outside of the field to examine the systemic nature of the creative process. In addition, more research is needed to examine systemic processes on multiple levels as used in this study through an ecological systems framework. Within the field of MFT, more research is needed to examine the recruiting and acceptance process relating to success factors of MFT practice, theory development, and research. Examining success factors of MFTs in general is needed in order to understand student, faculty, and practitioner development. It would be interesting to examine the different characteristics that may exist with theorists, researchers, and practitioners. In addition, research examining how MFTs can improve productivity and balance multiple responsibilities is needed as well.

It is important to note that since creativity is often not always recognized immediately by society, creativity in some individuals may need time before it is accepted by society. Some individuals may not have been identified because they have not received enough time to experience social acceptance. Thus, longitudinal studies may be more beneficial to recognize creative potential allowing for society to react to their work. In addition, studies that allow for other colleagues and individuals that know creative persons to voice their thoughts may also help in triangulating findings as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the creative process.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that there are certain organizational, group, and individual processes that seem to occur when creativity and productivity are maximized. The field of MFT and MFT programs in general would likely benefit from further research on how such processes can be structured that will allow for growth and future paradigm shifts. The application of MFT to non-traditional areas has received little attention in the research as well. More research examining the implication and risks of expanding the field into non-traditional areas needs to be explored. Finally, an ecological systems theory of creativity in general needs to go through the rigors of the research evolution process utilizing larger sample sizes, control groups, experimental methods, and case studies. Equally, the theory needs to be examined in varying disciplines and areas of application to control for differences and nuances that may exist.

Conclusion

The process of creativity is an important area of research that needs to be further examined in many areas of society. With the definition established in this dissertation, creativity is the act of moving society forward at the organizational, group, and/or individual level through the creation of ideas, products, and/or acts that progress a field or domain. In other words, it is the study of progression. MFT has a unique advantage of being open to a systemic lens that allows for change, collaboration, and progression at an ecological level. Unfortunately, we as individuals, programs, and a field do not always utilize this advantage and sometimes get stuck in old ways of thinking and doing that slow down progression. Examining some of the most creative MFTs in the field was enjoyable and gave me hope that MFT has a bright future as it applies a unique perspective to many areas of society while solidifying its strength as a mental health provider for couples, families, and individuals. Hopefully, we will continue to take advantage of our core competencies, maintain our integrity, and collaborate in a changing world that is becoming more global, connected, and systemic. Equally, examining the systemic process of creativity beyond the realms of MFT will likely help other areas improve in their respective endeavors as well. The findings of this study represent a small portion of the potential of this important area of research. Hopefully, more research will follow that will help MFT and groups in general understand how to maximize creative potential.

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Appendix A - Original Propositions

Flow & Creativity

Proposition 1: *Creative individuals have the ability to operate through the entire spectrum of personality dimensions in what appears to be contradicting personality traits (e.g., extroversion and introversion) while maintaining the control to maneuver between continuum extremes in order to achieve their goals.*

Proposition 2: *In order to maintain flow in creativity, there must exist clear goals, immediate feedback, balance between challenge and skills, awareness of action, exclusion of distractions, a forgetting of self and time, and the opportunity for autotelic experience.*

Proposition 3: *In order for creativity to occur, society must validate the change that has occurred in a give domain either by a particular field or by the public in general depending on the nature of the creativity.*

Proposition 4: *Whether a field will accept or have the ability to create a new meme depends on economic resources, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, societal values, autonomy, organization, and the openedness or closedness of the system.*

Proposition 5: *In order for creativity to occur, change must occur in an existing domain and affect the culture that contains that domain.*

Proposition 6: *A cultural domain is influenced by the domain's stage of development, cultural meaning, accessibility, and level of autonomy in relation to other societal influences.*

Ecological Model

Proposition 7: *The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.*

Proposition 8: *A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics.*

Proposition 9: *A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer groups; for an adult, among family, work, and social life).*

Proposition 10: *An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the settings containing the developing person.*

Proposition 11: *The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies.*

Proposition 12: *Human development is the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content.*

Proposition 13: *Especially in its early phases, and to a great extent throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. Examples of enduring patterns of proximal process are found in parent-child and child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, studying, athletic activities, and performing complex tasks.*

Proposition 14: *The form, power, content, and direction of proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the biopsychological characteristics of the developing person; of the environment, both immediate and more remote, in which the processes are taking place; and the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration.*

Intrinsic Motivation

Proposition 15: *Individuals with high levels of intrinsic task motivation experience more enjoyment and exert more effort in performing a task than those with low levels of intrinsic motivation, which lead to higher levels of creativity.*

Proposition 16: *An individual will become more self-determined as they become intrinsically motivated, learn to intrinsically regulate, perceive an internal locus of causality, and experience their intrinsic regulatory processes.*

Group Creativity

Proposition 17: *If detectable and cognitive diversity are present within a group, then the potential for group creativity increases.*

Proposition 18: *Detectable and cognitive diversity within a group are more likely to occur if the group has developed trust and emotional safety.*

Appendix B - Newly Formed Propositions

Proposition 1a: *In order to understand, maximize, and/or predict creativity, one must examine the ecological components influencing creativity development including factors related to the following: 1) An active, growing human being; 2) The changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives; 3) The relational processes between these settings; and 4) The larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.*

Proposition 2a: *An active, growing human being's potential for creativity is influenced by his/her traits (biological, cognitive, emotional).*

2.1: *The potential for creativity increases as a person becomes intrinsically motivated leading to an enhancement in their level of enjoyment and exertion of effort.*

2.2: *Enhancement of enjoyment is more likely to occur when clear goals exist, immediate feedback is present, balance between challenge and skills are maintained, an awareness of action exists, and exclusion of distractions is monitored leading to a forgetting of self and time while moving towards autotelic experience.*

2.3: *An individual will become more self-determined to be creative if they become intrinsically motivated, learn to intrinsically regulated, perceive an internal locus of control, and experience an intrinsic regulatory process.*

2.4: *Individuals that are able to adapt to the influences of their environment through an ability to operate through the entire spectrum of personality dimensions while maintaining the control to maneuver between continuum extremes are more likely to achieve creative goals.*

Proposition 3a: *The changing properties of relational groupings (e.g., co-workers, family, peers, dyads, etc.) found in the immediate settings in which the developing person lives impacts the creative process.*

3.1: *Relationships are more likely to experience creative processes if trust is built and maintained within that relationship.*

3.2: *The potential for creativity in relationships increases as cognitive and detectable diversity increases.*

3.3: *Groups of relationships are more likely to be creative if clear goals exist, immediate feedback is present, balance between challenge and skills are maintained, an awareness of action exists, and exclusion of distractions is monitored while being aware of the traits and abilities of each individual (See proposition 2).*

3.4: *In order for creativity to occur in a formally organized group (e.g., professional fields), acceptance by the given group has to occur.*

3.5: *Acceptance by a given field is influenced by the field's economic resources, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, societal values, level of autonomy in relation to other societal influences, organization, and openedness/closedness of the field as a system.*

Proposition 4a: *The interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person/group participates (e.g., family interaction with co-workers) impacts the creative process.*

4.1: *Individuals/groups are more likely to be creative if the individual/ group can implement the following in regards to the interrelations among settings: 1) Existence of clear goals; 2) Presence of immediate feedback; 3) Balance between challenges and skills; 4) Awareness of actions; and 5) Exclusion of distractions while being aware of the traits and abilities of each individual and group.*

Proposition 5a: *The creative process is influenced by settings that do not involve the group and/or individual as an active participant; a circular relationship occurs between the individual/group and these settings as events in both realms influence each other.*

5.1: *Individuals/groups are more likely to be creative if the individual/group can implement the following in regards to the settings that do not involve the individual/group actively: 1) Existence of clear goals; 2) Presence of immediate feedback; 3) Balance between challenges and skills; 4) Awareness of actions; and 5) Exclusion of distractions while being aware of the traits and abilities of each individual, group, and relationship among settings.*

Proposition 6a: *The cultural and sub-cultural domains (ideologies, beliefs, symbols, and/or meanings) impact the creative process.*

6.1: *In order for creativity to occur, change must occur in an existing domain and affect the culture that contains that domain.*

6.2: *Change in a cultural domain depends on the domain's stage of development, cultural meaning, accessibility, and level of autonomy in relation to other societal influences.*

6.3: *Individuals/groups are more likely to be creative if the individual/group can implement the following in regards to the domains of a given culture: 1) Existence of clear goals; 2) Presence of immediate feedback; 3) Balance between challenges and skills; 4) Awareness of actions; and 5) Exclusion of distractions while being aware of the traits and abilities of each individual, group, and relationship among settings, and indirect settings.*

Proposition 7a: *Creativity is more likely to occur as an individual and/or group acquire a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and become*

motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content.

Proposition 8a: *Processes of engagement within the ecological environment will progress creativity as individuals/groups actively form more complex, reciprocal interactions between the bio-psychosocial organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in the immediate environment.*

8.1: *Interactions between the individual/group must occur on a regular basis over extended periods of time in order to form enduring proximal processes (e.g., parent-child interactions, peer-peer, employer-employee).*

8.2: *The form, power, content, and direction of proximal processes effecting creativity development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the bio-psychosocial person and the environment (both immediate and more remote) in regards to the creative outcome under consideration.*

Appendix C - Informed Consent

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: Examining Marriage and Family Therapists in Non-traditional areas of application.

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: July 2006 EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT: July 2007

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Candyce Russell; W. Jared DuPree, MS

CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: W. Jared DuPree/jdupree@ksu.edu/785-410-3475

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION: Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

SPONSOR OF PROJECT: N/A

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: Dissertation research designed to understand how Marriage and Family Therapists apply their skills in innovative ways regarding unique settings, areas of practice, and areas of research.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: Face-to-face interviews audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using qualitative methods.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

N/A

LENGTH OF STUDY: Interviews expected to last between 1 and 1.5 hours.

RISKS ANTICIPATED: No known risks

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: MFTs may gain more recognition for their work; the field of MFT may learn how to improve itself by expanding its areas of application.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Interview transcripts will be assigned a number with all identifying data being removed from the transcripts. Informed consents will be kept in a locked container.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS: N/A

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS: N/A

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Witness to Signature: (project staff) _____ **Date:** _____

I choose to waive my rights to confidentiality in this project understanding that my name and results of the study related to my interview may be used freely in this dissertation and future research related to this dissertation. I recognize that waiving my rights may benefit my endeavors by helping other professionals and interested parties become more aware of the work I have been engaged in.

Date

Participant Signature: _____

Witness to Signature: _____

Appendix D - Demographics Sheet

- a. Your full name: _____
- b. Your gender: _____
- c. Your age: _____
- d. Your race: _____
- e. Your religion: _____
- f. Your current marital status: _____
- g. Number of children: _____ Ages: _____
- h. List of degrees:
1. _____ (e.g., BS in Psychology)
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____
- i. Your current/last position held: _____
- j. Past positions that are relevant to your work:
- i. _____ (e.g., Family Therapist)
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____
 - iv. _____
 - v. _____
- k. Income level: _____ (personal annual gross)
- l. Preferred Theoretical Orientation: _____
(e.g., systems theory, social constructionism, cognitive-behavioral, etc.)
- m. Country of birth: _____
- n. Member of AAMFT? _____ Yes _____ No
- o. Major professional influences (i.e., professors, theorists, family members, etc.):

Appendix E - Interview Guide

- a. How would you describe your professional identity?
 - i. What areas of interest or projects are you working on right now?
 - ii. I am particularly interested in your work regarding _____.
Would you allow me to ask you some questions about this work?
- b. Can you describe the process of how you became interested in this work?
 - i. How did you enter into this area of work?
- c. What individual traits do you have that help you do well in regards to this work?
 - i. Cognitive
 - ii. Genetic
 - iii. Emotional
 - iv. Physical
 - v. Relational
- d. How does your level of enjoyment of this work influence your work?
- e. How do your frustrations and hardships influence your work?
 - i. self-doubt
 - ii. rejection
 - iii. isolation
- f. Is it important that your work have a level of challenge? Why?
- g. What skills are necessary to do well in this work?
 - i. How did you develop these skills?
 - ii. As your skills have increased, does this change the nature of your work?
 1. your enjoyment?
- h. How do you structure your time and priorities in regards to your work?
 - i. Do you set goals? How and why?
 - ii. What type of environment do you work in?
 - iii. When do you come up with your greatest ideas?
- i. What motivates you to engage in this work?
- j. How would you describe your personality?
 - i. How does this fit with the work you engage in?
- k. Do you seek the feedback of others in regards to your work?

- i. Who and why?
 - 1. Family
 - 2. Co-workers
- l. Whose feedback do you value the most? Why?
- m. How do you view negative feedback or feedback that is different from your point of view?
- n. With which fields do you identify yourself?
 - i. How have these fields helped you in your work?
 - ii. How have these field(s) decreased your ability to succeed in your work?
 - iii. What areas of the field of MFT would you keep to help your work?
 - iv. What areas of the field of MFT would you change to help your work?
- o. How does the community influence your work?
- p. How does the government influence your work?
- q. Are there other organizations or entities that influence your work? How?
- r. How do society's current standards and beliefs influence your work?
 - i. How supportive is society of this work?
 - ii. How autonomous does society allow you to be to engage in this work?
 - iii. How do you predict society will react to this work in the future?
- s. What do you believe is the future of this work you are engaging in?
 - i. What would you recommend to students pursuing this work?
- t. I have identified you as a creative person in the field of MFT. In other words, you have created new areas of practice, theory, and/or research. What do you believe has helped you be creative?
- u. What nurtures your creativity?
 - i. Books
 - ii. Different disciplines
- v. What would you recommend to others in regards to becoming more creative?
- w. What do you believe to be the future of MFT?
 - i. Where would you like to see it go?
 - ii. What do you feel needs to happen in order for that to occur?

Appendix F - Biographies of Participants

It's important to note that one participant did not sign the waiver of confidentiality. Thus, only seven of the eight participants' biographies will be included. In addition, each participant received a copy of their biography to edit and/or change. The biographies included are the final versions approved by each participant. In addition, each participant is identified as a researcher, theorist, or practitioner based on the type of work that was analyzed in this dissertation. This does not suggest that they do not produce work in all three areas.

Dr. Jonathan Sandberg
Syracuse, NY
Syracuse University

Research

Dr. Jonathan G. Sandberg is a 36-year old, Caucasian male with Scandinavian descent from Syracuse University who works as a faculty member and the department chair for the Marriage and Family Therapy program. He received a Bachelor's degree in family science and a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Brigham Young University as well a PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy from Kansas State University. Dr. Sandberg describes himself as a marriage and family therapist with current interests in research on how African American males come to therapy and the obstacles they perceive throughout the therapy process. He has produced numerous publications on topics relating to gerontology, medical family therapy, clinical outcome research, and student research training. He currently is married with four children and is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Dr. Sandberg has been identified as a creative researcher for his innovative methods and areas of systems application addressing important topics relating to gerontology, diabetes, race, and outcome research.

Dr. Susan McDaniel
Rochester, NY
University of Rochester Medical Center

Research

Dr. Susan McDaniel is a 54-year old Caucasian female who currently is a Professor of Psychiatry and Family Medicine as well as Head of a division called Family Programs at the University of Rochester Medical Center. She earned a PhD of clinical psychology at the University of North Carolina which included an internship at the University of Texas in Galveston. She also completed a post-doc fellowship in family therapy in Houston. Dr. McDaniel has produced numerous journal and book publications in medical family therapy and is considered a pioneer of the sub-discipline, medical family therapy. She is currently working on research addressing family dynamics and genetic conditions as well a study examining the role of self-disclosure when physicians interview patients. She is currently married with two children and explains she was raised Methodist but has raised her children to be Jewish. Dr. McDaniel as been identified as a creative marriage and family therapy researcher for her foundational research articles and books on medical family therapy as well as her dedication and commitment to apply her research to medical settings in an effective manner leading to significant changes in the overall healthcare system.

Dr. Jennifer Hodgson
Greenville, NC
East Carolina University

Research

Dr. Jennifer Hodgson is a 36 year old Caucasian female who currently is an Associate Professor in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Eastern Carolina University. Recently, Dr. Hodgson participated in the creation of a doctorate program in Medical Family Therapy at the university as well. She received a Bachelor's degree in psychology from The University of Akron, a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Northern Illinois University, and a PhD from Iowa State University in Marriage and Family Therapy. She also completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Medical Family Center at the University of Rochester School of

Medicine. Dr. Hodgson describes herself as a marriage and family therapist with a strong passion for the sub-discipline medical family therapy. She has produced various publications on medical family therapy, student training, spirituality, and death. Recently, she has been working on grants and gathering data regarding mental health and relationships within families where someone has Parkinson's disease. She is currently married with one child and is a member of the Catholic Church. She has been identified as a creative researcher for her innovative methods in applying systems theory to various medical topics, her ability to successfully collaborate with multiple disciplines, and her courage to take visionary ideas and turn them into reality despite the presence of any barriers that may exist in the process.

Dr. Teresa McDowell
Portland, OR
Lewis and Clark University

Theory

Dr. Teresa McDowell is a 53-year old Caucasian female who is currently an Associate Professor of Counseling Psychology as well as the Coordinator for the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Lewis and Clark College. She earned a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Pacific Lutheran University and a EdD in Adult Education from Northern Illinois University. She has produced numerous publications on social justice, international students, racial awareness, multi-cultural training, and family therapy from different cultural perspectives. Dr. McDowell is currently working on a project with Menoufia University in Egypt addressing women in development in addition to working on projects addressing globalization and global citizenship. She currently is married with two children and describes herself as spiritual, non-religious. She has been identified as a creative marriage and family theorist and researcher for her innovative methods of applying critical race theory and systems theory to MFT training, supervision, and therapy as well as her dedication and commitment to addressing social justice and multi-cultural issues through the development of multi-disciplinary, international partnerships.

Greg Rush, MS
Orem, UT
Telos Residential Treatment, LLC

Practice

Mr. Greg Rush is a 34 year old Caucasian male who currently acts as a Marketing Director, family therapist, and part owner for the company Telos, LLC, a residential treatment facility for boys located in Orem, UT. He earned his Bachelor's degree in family studies and human development and a Master's degree in marriage and family therapy from the University of Central Texas. Mr. Rush prides himself on being part of a team that places quality of treatment first rather than focusing on the bottom line. He has been involved in various residential treatment programs during his career and formed Telos, LLC with other family therapists who had a desire to offer a higher quality form of treatment to families in need. Mr. Rush currently is married with five kids and is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He has been identified as a creative marriage and family therapist practitioner for his innovative business methods in creating a quality driven residential program, ability to think outside of the box when developing more effective treatment methods in residential treatment, and his commitment to personal integrity and honesty in both clinical and business endeavors.

Dr. Michael Olson
Galveston, TX
University of Texas Medical Branch

Practice

Dr. Michael Olson is a 35-year old Caucasian male who currently is an Assistant Professor in the Family Medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, TX. He received a Bachelor's degree in family studies and a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at Brigham Young University as well as a PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy from Kansas State University. Following his PhD, he completed a post-doc at the University of Texas Medical Branch in behavioral medicine. He describes himself as a marriage and family therapist who current uses a systemic lens to teach residents and physicians to use general systems ideas in

their treatment of patients. Dr. Olson uses didactic methods, small groups, workshops, behind-the-mirror clinical supervision, and inter-disciplinary teams to train medical students, physicians, and family therapists in medical settings. He currently is married with four kids and is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He has been identified as a creative marriage and family therapist practitioner for his ability to apply systems theory and skills to the training of medical students in addition to his ability to collaborate and work with multi-disciplinary teams within complex systems.

Dr. McArthur Hafen
Manhattan, KS
Kansas State University, Veterinary Medical Science

Practice

Dr. Mac Hafen is a 34-year old Caucasian male who currently is a clinical consultant for the College of Veterinary Medicine at Kansas State University. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Brigham Young University and a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Utah State University as well as a PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy from Brigham Young University. He currently is doing research and training on student well being in veterinary graduate schools. Dr. Hafen is currently married with three children as is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He has been identified as a creative marriage and family therapy practitioner for his innovative methods of applying systems theory to veterinary medical training and his pioneering ability to create a vision and dedicate one's self to a new area of MFT application.