



“Understanding Professors’ Perceptions and Knowledge of Being Therapeutic at the College Level: A Qualitative Case Study.”

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Abstract

The problem with retention has led researchers to study the causes of attrition and ways to improve successful outcomes. Students define having positive faculty-student relationships that are therapeutic as a way to enhance successful academic outcomes. The problem that was addressed in this study is that there is a limited understanding of four-year, undergraduate college professors' knowledge and perceptions of incorporating therapeutic approaches in their relationships with students in college. The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a greater understanding of professors' knowledge of therapeutic strategies and their perceptions of incorporating these therapeutic approaches with students while in college to support students' academic achievement. This study evaluated how professors perceive and what they know about Carl Rogers' concepts that make up the therapeutic triangle; specifically focusing on empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. This qualitative, exploratory case study was used to gather information on college professors at a small southern university by collecting course syllabi, conducting semi-structured interviews, and observations. Four themes were found that answered the question about professors' perception. Professors perceive that counselors and professors share qualities, but not skills, empathy and unconditional positive regard are offered from professors when students fulfill their responsibilities, and the ways in which professors offer genuineness differs amongst professors. Three themes were found that answered research question two regarding the existing knowledge of the professors. Professors demonstrated accurate knowledge of both empathy and genuineness, but unfamiliarity with unconditional positive regard. Future researchers may want to explore professors from broader disciplines to capture more diversity in discipline.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Carl Rogers, a humanistic psychologist, believed that the relationship between client and counselor should be collaborative and is the most significant determinant of change for clients (Swan et al., 2020). Rogers emphasized the importance of therapists offering a supportive environment to clients during therapy to obtain a growth-promoting climate for clients. Today, Rogers' ideas are being extended beyond the therapeutic setting and blended into the college experience by students as they perceive having a healthy, supportive relationship with faculty as one of the most important contributors to successful student outcomes (Swan et al., 2020). Professor perception and knowledge regarding the incorporation of therapeutic strategies into their existing roles as teachers are unclear.

Retention is one of the various aspects of the college experience that is often used to measure success (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Although much emphasis is spent throughout the student's life trying to prepare the student for the college experience, some traditional factors alone are not enough to correlate with successful student outcomes (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Findings suggest that it may take more than just traditional factors like good grades and high test scores to keep students in college. More attention is given to nontraditional factors like the relationship between students and faculty, specifically focusing on the importance of faculty empathy, acceptance, and authenticity or genuineness (Aldrup et al., 2022; Swan et al., 2020). Researchers conclude that students need the same conditions clients need in psychotherapy to grow. Although being therapeutic is effective in and out of the classroom, the willingness of teachers to be comfortable with this type of treatment in academia is questionable (Hagenauer et al., 2022).

Academic success has often been viewed as having high quantitative scores on various measures and completing the various academic stages, including elementary school, high school, and post-secondary levels (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). This quantitative focus has been at the forefront for educators due to the belief that good grades and high test scores are the best predictors of post-secondary opportunities, including admission and college retention (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Teachers, parents, and school counselors emphasize the importance of good grades because grades traditionally reflect understanding and knowledge of the material. Many use scores as an indication of intelligence level and to gauge future opportunities. However, so much time and energy are placed on the importance of these traditional factors, which may shape initial enrollment; however, more than these traditional factors are needed to keep students enrolled at the college level (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018).

A shift towards nontraditional factors, offering more therapeutic methods, is rising in academia due to students' perception of what matters most in the college setting. The majority of the factors that students suggest are necessary for successful outcomes in college include their relationship with faculty and the ability of faculty to move beyond the content and course instruction and be more empathetic and engage personally (Hoffman, 2014). Students place grit, a personal characteristic, beneath the desire of being cared for by their professors in college (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019).

Although pre-college students are taught the skills to be college-ready, researchers believe that it is time for educators at the college level to be open to ideas of change and be student-ready (Robinson et al., 2019). This emphasis on faculty being more student-ready adds a more therapeutic role in the classroom for students to feel supported and manage the everyday challenges of juggling their personal and academic life. The faculty-student relationship

experience is essential as it fosters a sense of belonging for students, demonstrating that the contextual relationship between faculty and staff may be the missing link in the prevention of attrition and rise in retention (Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster., 2021; Guzzardo et al., 2021).

Students desire these meaningful relationships with faculty and define various ways these positive faculty-student relationships are created (Guzzardo et al., 2021). Students want to be part of a college experience where faculty are approachable, have high emotional intelligence, and offer empathic understanding (Altavilla et al., 2021; Lillis, 2011). Students report needing more than grit and good grades and communicate that having faculty support helps create the best student outcomes. The emphasis on using empathy, being part of a genuine relationship, and acceptance needs to be translated into the relationship between students and faculty in hopes that students can continue to grow inside and outside the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that was addressed in this study is that there is a limited understanding of four year, undergraduate college professors' knowledge and perceptions of incorporating therapeutic approaches in their relationships with students in college. The relationships between students and faculty at the four year, undergraduate college level are typically defined as hierarchical, where the professors are the critical determinants of the course structure and objectives and decide the approved strength and direction of relationships (Hagenauer et al., 2022). Traditionally, it was once believed that students needed to strictly adhere to the college course and classroom guidelines, with little to no understanding from the faculty regarding psychological needs (Robinson et al., 2019). Today, this is not the case. Students report experiencing increased stress levels and other mental health-related concerns while trying to manage the challenges and demands of college students (Bohannon et al., 2019). Without the

proper support from college faculty, students may be at risk for unsuccessful academic outcomes, despite scores on prior aptitude tests or their grade point averages (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). There is abundant research on students' perceptions, favoring the importance of positive relationships with college professors. Without gaining a better understanding of how professors feel about being more therapeutic with students and their knowledge of how to be therapeutic, the full needs of students cannot be met.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a greater understanding of professors' knowledge of therapeutic strategies and their perceptions of incorporating these therapeutic approaches with students while in college to support students' academic achievement. There is an abundance of evidence that suggests that students perceive these relationships with faculty as being one of the most important tools for a successful college experience (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019 & Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). The problem is that there is limited research as to professors' perceptions about their ability to incorporate therapeutic strategies for students and if they even know how to be therapeutic. The research questions to be answered in this proposed study include learning about college professors' perception of being therapeutic in their teaching and evaluating their existing knowledge of what it means to be therapeutic. To be clear therapeutic strategies are not expected by the university, nor are professors trained in it. Students appear to appreciate it (Hagenauer et al., 2022).

A case study was conducted to determine how professors feel about being in these types of relationships that resemble therapeutic principles rather than the traditional hierarchical relationships that usually exist at the college level (Hagenauer et al., 2022). The researcher first obtained permission from the deans of each of the five colleges at a small southern university to

secure professor participation. Once the deans in each college agreed to allow professor participation, the researcher requested to be informed of intent to participate from the deans and asked the deans to communicate the need for participation to all full-time professors. Once the target population, at least 10 full-time professors, was reached, the participants were emailed the informed consent and asked to submit one course syllabus for an in-person course taught at the university. The researcher then began setting up zoom interviews and observations to address any questions related to the constructs in question regarding professor perceptions and therapeutic concepts like empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness. Once all data was gathered, the researcher analyzed the data through thematic analysis using NVivo software.

Introduction to Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

Humanistic psychologist, Carl Rogers, was one of the first psychologists to focus on the capabilities of his clients in psychotherapy rather than the limitations. His client-centered approach set the stage for many psychologists to view clients as the primary source of change. Rogers believed that the key to a client's happiness and fulfillment was part of a relationship with a therapist that offered a growth-promoting environment filled with empathy/understanding, acceptance, and genuineness (Swan et al., 2020). Rogers stressed the importance of people being authentic and found that when people lived any other way, they experienced emotional discomfort. The goal of therapy was for clients to feel safe to grow so that they could attempt to reach their highest potential, self-actualization, but a lot of client success in therapy depended on the therapists' skills (Swan et al., 2020).

Figure 1

Rogers' Therapeutic Triangle



(Wickman & Campbell, 2003)

In Rogers' Therapeutic Triangle, *empathy* is defined as the therapist's emotional and cognitive ability (Swan et al., 2020). Displaying empathy toward clients demonstrates the ability of the therapist to feel and be interested in what the clients say during therapy (Swan et al., 2020). *Unconditional positive regard* means acceptance of others and being free of judgment no matter the disclosed experience (Swan et al., 2020). *Genuineness* is being real. This realness or authenticity initially comes from the therapist in session, where the therapist demonstrates what it means to be human, capable of making mistakes, and refraining from being the expert (Swan et al., 2020). These prosocial, unselfish behaviors and qualities of the therapist are key to being therapeutic and helping clients change in therapy.

These are the same qualities that Rogers believed could be beneficial for teachers to display toward students in the classroom when he developed Person-Centered Learning in the 1960s (Aldrup & Klusmann, 2022; Swan et al., 2020). Rogers believed that this person-centered education framework, filled with empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard, was what students needed to feel comfortable in and out of the classroom so that they could have the healthiest foundation to learn and increase the likelihood of positive student outcomes (Swan et al., 2020). Seeing faculty as a supportive component rather than an expert is parallel to the ideas of the relationship between the therapist and the client in therapy, but not knowing how the faculty feel about being therapeutic or knowledge of how to develop these skills needs to be explored.

Introduction to Research Methodology and Design (Nature of the Study)

A qualitative research methodology was used to determine professors' perceptions of being more therapeutic in their collegiate role. The desire to gain insight into how professors perceive incorporating therapeutic concepts to students in college and if they know how to proceed with these behaviors was best done through the subjective method, a qualitative design. Qualitative designs allow researchers to gather more subjective ideas through interviews related to the topic of interest, including an opportunity for participants to answer questions about why thoughts or feelings exist (Willig, 2019). The research design that was used is an exploratory case study. An exploratory case study was chosen for this design so that researchers could gather an initial understanding of how professors perceive therapeutic techniques in their engagement with students. Exploratory designs are used when researchers need to develop a more in-depth understanding before conducting other research (Privitera, 2020).

Professors from a small southern university were asked to participate in this qualitative design. An email was sent to all Deans at the university so that all college professors in each department were included in the probability of being sampled. Once the sample was determined, data was gathered. The researcher conducted in-person interviews via zoom and observations. The interviews were brief, lasting at least one hour per professor and at least five in-person observations in the classroom took place. Once the information was gathered, the data was coded to interpret the findings, and common themes through thematic analysis were conducted and reported.

Research Questions

RQ1

What are college professors' perceptions of being therapeutic in their teaching by offering students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard?

RQ2

What existing knowledge do college professors have related to empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study allowed researchers to have a better idea of how faculty perceive how they implement and what they know about being more therapeutic in their relationships with students and the therapeutic strategies they employ. At the college level, faculty receive a Ph.D. or Master's degree in their discipline to master the content of specific fields (Robinson & Hope, 2013). Many are not trained in pedagogy or given any formal education in teaching strategies; therefore, this qualitative case study's findings could help better

understand how those in this role feel about being more therapeutic in addition to their current role as a professor.

The significance of gathering this information is that it can evaluate how faculty feel and what they know about therapeutic relationships and therapeutic strategies. With this information, administrators interested in supporting faculty in being more therapeutic will be aware of faculty attitudes so that they can plan to assist those interested or separately plan on how to convince faculty that it is useful. This research provides information about how willing and able professors are.

The benefit of addressing this problem was to fill the gap in research and focus more on faculty than the needs and wants of students. The benefit of achieving the study purpose was to take into consideration how faculty even feel about being therapeutic with students. The benefit of answering the research questions were that without gaining a better understanding of how faculty feel and what they know, Rogers' therapeutic ideas will not be beneficial since the qualities of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness should come from the faculty (Wickman & Campbell, 2003).

Definitions of Key Terms

Collaborative Relationship

A collaborative relationship is not hierarchical. A collaborative relationship in therapy means that the therapist and client work together to meet the client's needs (Swan et al., 2020).

Community of Inquiry Framework (COI)

Community of Inquiry Framework (COI) is a model used to address the various components of presence by faculty in an online learning setting and the student community (Swan et al., 2020).

Empathy

Empathy is one of Rogers' three core conditions and is a prosocial behavior listed as one of the components of the therapeutic triangle (Wickman & Campbell, 2003). Empathy is defined as the ability of someone to understand what is communicated and the desire to assist the person with the communicated concern. Empathy is imperative to interpersonal relationships (Swan et al., 2020).

Genuineness

Genuineness is one of Rogers' three core conditions and another therapeutic triangle component (Wickman & Campbell, 2003). Genuineness is defined as being authentic and having the ability to communicate this reality with those served (Swan et al., 2020). Therapists are genuine when they can demonstrate what it means to be real to a client. For example, a therapist that does not put on a facade in session may tell a client that they do not fully understand the disclosure. Genuine professors are willing to bring their personalities into the classroom.

Grit

Grit is defined as an individual's ability to persevere towards life goals and face adversity in any given challenge (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019).

Nontraditional Factors

Nontraditional factors are defined as those factors that are not commonly used to predict academic success (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Examples of nontraditional factors include students' personal qualities and feeling cared for by their professors.

Person-Centered Learning

Person-centered learning is a model developed by theorist Carl Rogers. Person-centered learning consists of instruction where Rogers' believed that, like clients in person-centered

counseling, students should be a huge advocate in their own lives in the classroom. Rogers believed that students know what they need, and faculty should offer the three core conditions, empathy, unconditional positive regard, and being genuine to students so that they feel comfortable growing in the learning environment (Swan et al., 2020).

Retention

Retention is defined as the students' decision or ability to remain enrolled in college (Caruth, 2018).

Successful Student Outcomes

Successful student outcomes are defined by the student's ability to remain enrolled in college (Caruth, 2018).

Therapeutic

Therapeutic is defined as a process where individuals can learn and grow through experience with someone or something that promotes healing (Renger & Macaskill, 2021). Rogers defined therapeutic in his therapeutic triangle (Wickman & Campbell, 2003). Therapeutic consists of an atmosphere composed of counselor/teacher empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard (acceptance) when working with clients/students. For example, a therapeutic counselor may allow an incarcerated client to tell their story without judgment and assist the inmate to fully explore their thoughts/feelings even if what may be shared is against the law. An example of a therapeutic professor would be someone that may ask a student to stay after class to discuss their failing grade or lack of attention to the lecture. During this exchange, the professor would offer empathy for the student when they may disclose that they face difficulty focusing because they struggle in their personal life. The professor may encourage the student to utilize the resources on campus so that the student tends to their mental health needs.

Traditional Factors

Traditional factors are defined as those factors that are commonly used to predict academic success (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Examples of traditional factors include ACT scores, grades, and grade point averages.

Unconditional Positive Regard

Unconditional positive regard is one of Rogers' three core conditions and is part of the therapeutic triangle (Wickman & Campbell, 2003). Unconditional positive regard is accepting people as they are and what they are going through (Swan et al., 2020).

Summary

This study provided insight into how college professors perceive blending therapeutic strategies with their roles as professors. The therapeutic strategies initially created for clients by psychotherapist Carl Rogers were introduced into the educational system in the 1960s to make students more successful in their pursuits (Swan et al., 2020). This collaborative, therapeutic relationship filled with empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard are the three foundational components of the theoretical framework.

The purpose of the study was to develop a greater understanding of faculty perceptions and knowledge of incorporating therapeutic approaches with students while in college. The problem of the study was that there is a limited understanding of college faculty knowledge and perceptions of incorporating therapeutic approaches in their relationships with students in and out of the classroom. The population that this study interviewed included faculty from a small, southern university.

A case study was conducted so that in-depth interviews could occur in hopes to gather pertinent information related to faculty perceptions of being therapeutic at the college level. The

findings in this study can be used to determine what measures need to be taken with faculty at this level regarding the possibility of implementing interventions to teach these strategies to faculty or try to convince those unwilling to be therapeutic the benefits to student outcomes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that prompted this qualitative research study was that college students perceive positive student-faculty relationships that are therapeutic in nature as necessary components to improve college outcomes; however, little is known about how the professors feel about this new role and whether or not they have the knowledge to do so. Successful student outcomes for college students have been at the forefront for researchers as there has been a rise in college enrollment but a decline in retention (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019 & O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018). Although students have been part of a college-preparing culture for most of their academic lives, there is evidence that efforts have been unsuccessful (Robinson et al., 2019). Researchers have been trying to answer the question of who or what is responsible for successful student outcomes. Some researchers believe that school counselors' efforts with high school students to prepare them for the college curriculum and experience should be beneficial (Paolini, 2019). For years, the National Center for Education has believed that grade point averages and standardized test scores are the best factors for predicting college success (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Some believe that students are responsible and need to learn to better identify with their own concerns in order to succeed (Miller & Mills, 2019; O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018). Today, there is a shift from the traditional factors being the sole contributors to student success in college, and a growing trend is that university staff, especially college professors, play an imperative role in the successful outcomes of students (Guzzardo et al., 2021; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018; Weger, 2018). The purpose of this literature review was to explore the many contributing factors to student success in college. However, it specifically focused on the growing trend for faculty to be more therapeutic with students since there are significant findings that suggest that students

have a strong desire to be in this type of collaborative relationship with professors (Aldrup et al., 2022; Bardach et al., 2021; Guzzardo et al., 2021; Hagenauer et al., 2022; Weger, 2018).

Although there are many challenges that students may face in college, one of the significant problems is juggling their subjective experiences and the demands of college (Bohannon et al., 2019 & O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018). The ability to balance one's personal life and the college curriculum is challenging, and the traditional level of support and understanding that students receive from professors is limited, nothing like the support received in elementary and high school (Bohannon et al., 2019 & Robinson et al., 2019). Enrollment is on the rise in college, but retention is not, especially for students with various concerns, like being diagnosed with a mental illness (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018). Students with mental illness make up the largest subgroup on a college campus. Of these students, a large percentage of them have a mental health crisis but do not get the help that they need (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018). In addition to not getting the mental health treatment that is needed in college, these students do not complete their degrees. O'Shea and Kaplan (2018) conducted a study in hopes to resolve one of the main problems with the students and problems with retention. Despite the numerous resources that are offered on a college campus, students fail to utilize resources due to not being able to comfortably identify with their disorder, lack awareness of the resources, and/or doubt the abilities of the providers (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018). One of the major problems with the fear of stigmatization is the inability to register for necessary services without the student being open to disclose their disorder. To register, one must be willing and able to identify with the disorder. Disability identity is the term that was used in the study conducted by O'Shea and Kaplan (2018) to explain how one displays their level of acceptance and sense of belonging regarding their disability. O'Shea and Kaplan (2018) found that one's disability identity varies across situations

and can either be supported or negated. It is this level of support and identification that can impact one's ability to be successful in college. Since research usually focuses on the impact that having a physical disability may have on college students, these researchers turned their attention to the students with a disability, but particularly mental illness. O'Shea and Kaplan (2018) were interested in exploring what it meant to identify with their illness, how they could incorporate their disability into their identity, and how they could make who they were a part of the university setting. Data for this study was collected by narrowing down information from a larger voluntary survey bank to only five students. These five students were all able to admit that they had a mental health disability, were enrolled at the university and were interested in participating in an ongoing project about their disability identity and what this meant for their college experiences. O'Shea and Kaplan (2018) interviewed these five individuals by asking them a series of questions related to their disability. Once the data was collected, a series of steps occurred to ensure the validity of the data. Researchers listened to the recorded interviews on several occasions to explore reoccurring themes, personal experiences, and important information relative to each participant in particular. A thorough evaluation of the findings was then further explored through a peer reviewer that had a background in educational psychology with an emphasis on disabilities. In their findings, O'Shea and Kaplan (2018) presented several reoccurring themes amongst the students. One of these themes was difficulty in identifying with their disability. Most admitted that they felt like admitting to having a disability was a sign of weakness. They also found that the college experience was a context that activated their awareness of disability but whether or not they were able to exercise this activation depended upon the participant. One student discussed how the experience of college made her more aware; however, the lack of connection to others or a support network made it impossible for her to

identify. Other students felt like the ability to explore mental health concerns within the curriculum was beneficial to their mental health identity. Another area of central importance with mixed results was the students' interactions and expectations from others. The students discussed how the responses of their professors regarding disability services impacted how they felt about themselves. They also explained that when they had the opportunity to discuss their disability with other students, they felt supported and were able to easily identify. In trying to better understand what a disability identify means, researchers described it as dynamic. Students explained how they identified changed due to feelings and context. Whether or not students utilized disability services had a lot to do with their levels of identity with their disability. Also, students reported greater identity when they participated with professionals that they deemed as knowledgeable and helpful in developing their identity. The study done by O'Shea and Kaplan (2018) serves to reiterate the idea that students in college have subjective needs, but some believe that it is the students' responsibility to get the help that they need to succeed in college.

Although placing professors and students in this hierarchical relationship has been the norm for years, today, researchers suggest that students need to be a part of a more therapeutic relationship with their professors that includes more than just the hierarchical teacher-student relationship (Guzzardo et al., 2021). These professor-student relationships are at the forefront of retention research because studies show that these relationships may be critical in increasing successful student outcomes despite the students' grades, test scores, and experiences with mental health disorders, trauma, and everyday subjective challenges (Robinson et al., 2019). Although substantial research has been done on the students' perspectives regarding what they need to succeed, there is a limited amount of research on how professors feel about being in this active, therapeutic role with students and if they have any knowledge of the skillset to do so.

This literature review includes several subheadings highlighting the various components of the college experience, ranging from the students' years of preparation to their experiences while enrolled, to examine the factors that promote or inhibit successful student outcomes. The exact subheadings are the theoretical framework of Carl Rogers because it is essential to give an overview of the theory that once began as a psychological approach and has extended to be used in various other disciplines, like academia. Rogers' three core conditions, empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness, will be examined to determine how these variables influence relationships in various disciplines. The other various subheadings range from examining the traditional factors formerly known as cognitive factors, like grade point averages and test scores, to the more nontraditional factors, like perceived stress and grit, sense of belonging, and relationships with professors. The ultimate goal of this review was to focus on the need for further investigation of professors' perceptions and knowledge of being more therapeutic in their relationships with students since there is an abundant amount of research on the various contributors to student success, but lately, a shift in the professors' responsibility to develop this collaborative relationship with students.

The electronic databases were used from Northcentral (National) University system. These peer-reviewed, scholarly articles were obtained through the Roadrunner search on the Northcentral (National) University site. The databases used include ERIC, EBSCOhost Discovery Service, and ProQuest. The search terms used were Carl Rogers' three core conditions, empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness, college retention, college attrition, traditional factors, nontraditional factors, and faculty-student relationships.

Theoretical Framework

Various factors make up the desired student-faculty relationships students report longing for in college. These factors were generated due to the findings that traditional factors like college preparation efforts, grade point averages, and test scores may not be enough for successful student outcomes. Carl Rogers' theory, a person-centered approach, is used as the theoretical framework for this qualitative study due to the nature of the theory and its focus on the importance of the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and the client as a determinant of change. In addition to the focus on the three core conditions provided by the therapist for change, the fact that Rogers extended his theory into academia and came up with a Person-Centered Learning theory makes this theory appropriate to utilize as the framework for this study.

Carl Rogers' theory advanced and extended beyond the initial definitions due to the development of findings in his work. Rogers' initial theory was called nondirective counseling, where he theorized that counselors should be nondirect and should not be the experts on clients' lives during counseling. This nondirect approach means that counselors should refrain from giving advice and offering instruction on ways to manage and master clients' lives (Corey, 2017). Although Rogers found value in the nondirective approach of a therapist, he did not believe this should be the main focus of his theory. Around the 1950s, Rogers decided that this approach needed a name change and renamed his theory and therapeutic approach the client-centered approach. The purpose of this name change was to emphasize the value of the client in therapy rather than focusing solely on how nondirective the therapist should be towards the client (Corey, 2017). Due to the applicability of his theory across various domains, his theory today is called person-centered. The name, person-centered, reflects Rogers' original beliefs that the

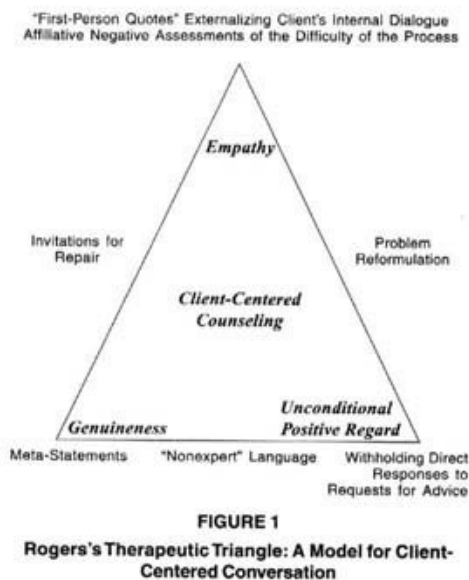
client is the expert and capable of change but also incorporates the value of the theory across various disciplines besides just counseling.

Rogers' theory emphasizes the collaborative relationship between therapist and client. This collaborative relationship means that the therapist is not in charge but sees the client as the expert in his/her own life with the potential for growth. Rogers was also interested in learning about the client's subjective experiences rather than focusing solely on feelings and symptoms (Kahn & Rachman, 2000). Subjective experiences were and still are today viewed as necessary because they allow clients to be understood from their own experiences rather than just identifying and treating one's feelings as they may appear to the therapist. The ability of the therapist to understand clients from their subjective viewpoint allows the therapist to care for the client unconditionally. It offers an opportunity for the therapist to empathize with the client. The growth potential exists but depends on the conditions set forth by the therapist in the session.

Another important concept of Rogers' theory is his idea of self-actualization. Self-actualization is a condition where one can work towards their greatest sense of self (Yazdani & Ross, 2019). This connection with the *authentic self* is what clients need in order to be successful in and out of therapy (Yazdani & Ross, 2019). The goal of therapy in the person-centered approach is for the client to trust that they can be who they want to be and to feel accepting of one's self as well as work through any unwanted feelings. Rogers believed that clients could work towards their fullest potential, self-actualization, if the right conditions for change are met within the therapeutic relationship. Rogers believed that when clients are exposed to a therapist that demonstrates the three core conditions, empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness, they can best grow.

Figure 2

Rogers' Therapeutic Triangle



(Wickman & Campbell, 2003)

Three Core Conditions of Rogers' Therapeutic Triangle

Empathy. Empathy is one of Rogers' three core conditions of the therapeutic triangle. An empathic understanding in a therapeutic relationship is one where therapists communicate their understanding of the content and emotion that the client has disclosed during the session (Silberman, 2021). Whether verbal or nonverbal, communication impacts empathy's benefits (Johanson et al., 2023). Empathy is a skill that some believe cannot be fabricated and is most beneficial when the person communicating empathy has experienced the event (Silberman, 2021; Swan et al., 2020; Vorauer & Petsnik, 2020).

Three studies sought to determine the importance of empathy in relationships. In a literature review, Silberman (2021) examined the effects of empathy and found that how the therapist communicates their understanding to the client significantly impacts the outcomes for the client in the session. The therapist must communicate their understanding of the disclosure

by reflecting statements that reflect a collaborative feeling rather than redirecting it onto the client only (Silberman, 2021). For example, rather than telling the client that “it must be hard for *you* to experience such a loss,” the therapist would better communicate empathy by stating that “losing someone is so hard (Silberman, 2021).” Silberman (2021) also found that another essential component of empathy includes the therapist's ability to mirror the client's emotions and feelings during the disclosures. For example, when a client talks about something sad, the therapist may express deep understanding by tearing up during the session (Silberman, 2021). Silberman (2021) also found that people who receive empathy report feeling understood and, therefore, feel safe to explore further problems and work toward their goals. Silberman (2021) also found that delivering empathy takes a particular communication skill (Silberman, 2021). Therapists need to be aware of not only the benefits and importance of empathy but should be aware of the importance of timing, word choice, and delivery. With knowledge of these concepts, the therapist may seem genuine and less robotic.

Other researchers, like Vorauer and Petsnik (2020), studied empathy. However, instead of only studying the effects of empathy, they sought to determine the impact of an actual shared experience with another person versus an attempt to relate to another person without the shared experience and the impact that these different situations had on the outcomes of the participant that was placed in an embarrassing situation. They experimented on 142 students at a university. During this study, they paired the students with participants of the same sex and divided them into groups. One group of participants was asked to perform something embarrassing, and the other was not expected to perform the embarrassing task. Once the first groups were done, the other participants were then asked to do something embarrassing. After the second group of participants performed the embarrassing task, they met with their partners. They found that the

participants paired with other participants who performed the embarrassing task related better and found the interaction beneficial. Those who were embarrassed and paired with someone from the group who did not experience embarrassment directly only displayed an empathy mindset by only imagining how their partner felt and did not find the interactions as beneficial as those with the direct experience in common.

Just recently, Johanson et al. (2023) sought to understand the effects of empathy. However, instead of using humans, this group of researchers studied the effects of communicating empathy verbally or nonverbally by conducting an online experiment with a robot. Johanson et al. (2023) had 100 participants participate in this mixed-between-within experiment video study. They hypothesized that both verbal and nonverbal empathy would cause an increase in the outcomes for the patient. The participants were divided into groups where they could experience various conditions. They were exposed to the robot that communicated empathy through verbal statements and nonverbal conditions, both verbal and nonverbal, and then the control group with no empathy communicated. They found that the participants that were exposed to a robot that offered verbal empathy through statements were more effective regarding participant trust, satisfaction, and comfort than the participant that was offered nonverbal empathy or no empathy. These findings give more insight into the importance of empathy but extend to the type of communication that may benefit those in treatment.

Overall, these studies show convergent results that empathy is found to be valuable in relationships by helping people who have been through unwanted experiences navigate their thoughts and feelings (Johanson et al., 2023; Silberman, 2021; Swan et al., 2020; Vorauer & Petsnik, 2020). The findings in these studies are divergent in that the altruistic experience of

empathy and the type of empathy communicated, whether verbal or nonverbal, may make a difference in the participant's overall progress toward their goals.

Unconditional Positive Regard. Unconditional positive regard is another of Rogers' three core conditions and part of the therapeutic triangle. Unconditional positive regard is accepting people as they are and what they are going through without imposing any values or judgment (Swan et al., 2020). The various problems clients may face may leave them feeling unaccepted and judged. The therapist's ability to offer unconditional positive regard is very beneficial to clients due to the nature of acceptance and lack of judgment that it communicates (Velasquez & Montiel, 2018). Velasquez and Montiel (2018) conducted a qualitative design where they analyzed the work of Carl Rogers by listening to and reading transcripts of various therapy sessions. The usage of words used by Rogers, like "yes," "that is right," and "ok," to name a few, were found to be used very often in sessions and were found to be very beneficial. These words of encouragement invited the clients to increase self-disclosure due to the extended acceptance that these words provided during such a vulnerable time.

Genuineness. Rogers believed that the journey to self-actualization is an attempt to become genuine (Yazdani & Ross, 2019). Rogers explains that the person's self-concept consists of who they are but involves the person they are trying to become. Rogers referred to this as the person's self-concept and the ideal self (Yazdani & Ross, 2019). Often, throughout this person's journey, they experience external pressure and opinions that can cause them to lose focus on their sense of self and the ideal self. Rogers believed that for clients to feel their best or reach self-actualization, they must be genuine (Yazdani & Ross, 2019). In the previously discussed study, Velasquez and Montiel (2018) found words that demonstrated congruence to clients to be

beneficial but did not find that these words were used as often as the words of acceptance used when demonstrating unconditional positive regard.

Carl Rogers' Person-Centered theory was used to develop the framework for this qualitative case study due to his contributions to psychotherapy and education. Rogers' therapeutic approach eventually extended to other disciplines outside of psychology, like the classroom, due to the various benefits of the emphasis on the collaborative therapeutic relationship and these three core conditions on successful outcomes (Aldrup & Klusmann, 2022; Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019; & Hagenauer et al., 2022). Students, like clients, were viewed as needing to be exposed to teachers who had subjective understanding and beliefs in students as Rogers' original ideas about the therapist towards the client (Swan et al., 2020). In the 1960s, student-centered teaching became a pedagogy due to the theory that students, like clients, who were both working on goals, would do so more likely if they had teachers that believed in their ability to be able to do so while taking into consideration their various experiences (Swan et al., 2020).

To study the application of these blended concepts, researchers used Rogers' theory by studying students in an online learning program to determine what they needed in this format to succeed (Swan et al., 2020). Researchers used the Barrett-Learning Relationship Inventory to measure the students' perceptions of the importance of the components of the relationship. To measure the students' experience in the online college learning format, a survey called the Community of Inquiry (COI) was used. This survey considered the various aspects of the student's experience, including cognitive, social, and teaching presence (Swan et al., 2020). Through this correlational design, researchers were able to conclude that there is a relationship between teacher presence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. These findings suggest

that students, like clients in therapy, need to feel connected, nonjudged, and comfortable with their faculty to experience optimal results.

This preliminary exploration done by Swan et al. (2020) guided the development of this qualitative research design due to the foundation of the study and the findings. In this study and others, researchers found that nontraditional variables may play an essential role in successful student outcomes in college. One of the significant nontraditional variables discussed throughout this review is the relationship between faculty and students. The fact that Swan et al. (2020) utilized Rogers' three core conditions of the therapeutic triangle to evaluate the relationship between empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness on the development of relationships and found that teacher presence is highly related to unconditional positive regard and empathy, calls for further attention to these specific constructs. Researchers found that these variables may be effective, but the skill level of those expected to deliver these constructs in academia has yet to be discovered. Further investigation is needed to determine how professors feel about being more therapeutic and if they have any existing knowledge on being therapeutic with students.

College Readiness vs. Student Readiness

Studies done by Caldwell et al. (2021), Green et al. (2023), Paolini (2019), Mahfouz et al. (2018), Mokher & Jacobson (2021), and Robinson et al. (2019) investigated the importance of readiness for college to ensure that students were prepared for success. Green et al. (2023) found that the ACT, the main assessment utilized to assess readiness for college, reveals that students are not ready. The importance of enrolling in college and obtaining a college degree has been part of conversations for most students across their entire academic lifetime, but who is responsible for readiness is questionable. Some researchers believe that it is the student's

responsibility to be ready (Paolini, 2019; Mokher & Jacobson, 2021; & O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018); whereas, others believe that the university needs to be student ready (Caldwell et al., 2021 & Robinson et al., 2019). Some believe that it may be a blend of both where students are given an opportunity to be a part of therapeutic interventions offered on campus to address the varying needs of students, especially those transitioning from high school to college (Mahfouz et al., 2018).

Despite all of the efforts in planning for college, some feel like the United States is failing in the education system due to the time and money spent preparing students for college and lack of retention in college (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019 & Green et al., 2023). In their literature review, Green et al. (2023) found that most students who take the ACT, which is the most widely used quantitative measure of college readiness in the United States are unready to accomplish this college experience, despite the numerous efforts of preparation. Green et al. (2023) conducted a literature review to investigate the many facets of college and career readiness. They found that only 50% of students feel prepared for college and only about 12 % of college instructors feel like students are prepared (Green et al., 2023).

Paolini (2019) also conducted a literature review on college readiness and noted that researchers came up with several ideas regarding college and career readiness for high school students. Paolini (2019) found in her literature review that there is an emphasis on test scores, grade point averages, and course placement when choosing a university in hopes that the student selects and attends the appropriate institution to meet one's needs to be successful. In addition to the quantitative factors, like grades and test scores, Paolini (2019) also found that school counselors try to assist students in networking with institutions so that students can enter the institution with social support and familiarity. The literature review done by Paolini (2019) noted

the importance of both academics and networking; however, the findings of the literature review place emphasis on the importance of the student to pursue these goals to ensure readiness.

Although Paolini (2019) reported that her literature review noted that guidance counselors spend so much time helping students develop connections, other researchers found that one of the biggest problems with college readiness and success has to do with the lack of connection between the high school system and the college experience (Mokher & Jacobson, 2021). To further investigate college readiness, Mokher & Jacobson (2021) interviewed 85 individuals who were all a part of the education system in Florida. These 85 individuals ranged from high school teachers, college department leaders, and instructors. Their main focus was centered around the perspective of whether or not they felt like college students were connected through the many collaboration efforts prior to enrollment in college. Their findings suggest that collaboration and connection do exist at times, but the outcomes depend on the type of high school student. For example, students who took dual enrollment courses in high school due to approved grade point averages were more connected to the future university than the student with lower grades and mid-performing. In addition to the numerous efforts that Paolini (2019) suggests that school personnel, like guidance counselors and students, make in order to be ready and successful in college, the fact that some students get left behind because of grades does pose a problem for other students (Mokher & Jacobson, 2021).

In an effort to further study readiness, Caldwell et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative research study by collecting data on university personnel at a Midwest college. After various interviews and observations with faculty, staff, and administrators, Caldwell et al. (2021) found three reoccurring themes that determine what *they* need to do to ensure that students are ready to succeed in college. Students need support, a sense of community, and these researchers found

that if students are disconnected then they will not be set up for success. Caldwell et al. (2021) also found that part-time faculty hinders the creation of this sense of belonging and community for students because they are not present as a full-time faculty would be. Due to the lack of stability, having part-time faculty on campus impedes the development of the necessary relationships that students need to succeed in college (Caldwell et al., 2021). These findings suggest that college staff and faculty need to be student ready vs. the usual perspective of requiring students to be college ready (Caldwell et al., 2021). This qualitative study allowed the researchers an opportunity to gather specific ideas about each of these themes. For example, these participants felt like it was their responsibility to offer support to students outside of the classroom setting. One way that this university meets this goal is they post flyers regarding services on campus that offer social and emotional support. For example, information regarding mental health services can be found on campus visible to students on flyers posted on campus boards, etc. There is a need for this level of support due to the fact that mental health issues are on the rise (Bohannon et al., 2019 & O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018). College students who are faced with these disorders find juggling the demands of college very challenging, often impeding their ability to function. Bohannon et al. (2019) found that students who report traumatic experiences while enrolled in college and received this sense of support reported that how their professor responded to the disclosure is significant. Support from faculty was defined as assignment extensions, excused absences for tending to mental health conditions and allowing students the time to discuss the incidents. Students also reported appreciating feedback from professors that offered referral sources when experiencing an increase in symptomology (Bohannon et al., 2019). Those that felt unsupported experienced work avoidance learned helplessness and low levels of self-efficacy; therefore, these students were not college ready. Students that avoided

work felt incapable and believed that what they tried to do would never work out, and they experienced prevention in goal attainment and successful outcomes (Bohannon et al., 2019). This study done by Caldwell et al. (2021) and the findings on the mental health needs of students in the study of Bohannon et al. (2019) both demonstrate the importance of the university being both ready and supportive of students' various needs that may extend beyond the classroom setting.

Mahfouz et al. (2018) tried to find a solution to the problems that a more specific population, incoming college freshman experience. It is believed that the transitional period from secondary education to college is stressful. Stressors include more than just a different level of academic information but have been identified as difficulty managing time, failure to commit to a healthy lifestyle and poor coping skills management, problematic interpersonal relationships, and poor intrapersonal well-being (Mahfouz et al., 2018). In a national survey, approximately half of the students assessed reported that the stress that they encounter obstructs their functioning (Mahfouz et al., 2018). According to Mahfouz et al. (2018) college students are expected to fully-function; therefore, it is important to not only identify stressors but find tactics to combat these stressors to improve the student's overall well-being. Mahfouz et al. (2018) strived to determine the effects of blending therapy and education in hopes to promote a reduction in student stress and an increase in their overall level of functioning. Using interview procedures, Mahfouz et al. (2018) interviewed 109 first-year freshman students at a university and questioned them on their level of stress and coping abilities. Participants were divided into the experimental group which is the group that received the tactic to combat stressors and improve functioning whereas the other group, the control group, did not receive any treatment. To better test their hypothesis, experienced facilitators implemented a mindfulness program, called *Just Breathe*, to the student participants. This program consisted of eight sessions where

students were exposed to the various components of mindfulness. This included education and practice of rechanneling their focus from stress to present circumstances including their body, thoughts, and feelings. Mahfouz et al. (2018) proposed that if students participated in this eight-week program, then they would not only adjust to the transitional period better but would have the necessary skills to utilize for stress management in general. These findings served to answer the qualitative question of not only how the students responded to the treatment, but they were able to better understand how the treatment specifically improved certain areas of their life. Students communicated a marked level of improvement after the treatment. Overall, students reported feeling like they were able to be better organized and less rushed, focus on improving health by making better choices, rechanneled their thoughts from negative to more positive ways of thinking, and lastly, they reported that they feel like since they have learned to take more time and live in the present that they have learned to show greater love to themselves. During this *Just Breathe* curriculum, the students placed a lot of emphasis on the actual climate of the services (Mahfouz et al., 2018). The students in the study reported finding that things like the room and the voice of the facilitators were very important to encounter the changes necessary to learn the techniques. The work done by Mahfouz et al. (2018) demonstrates the needs of students, but also demonstrates the importance of the therapeutic services being offered to students to enhance student outcomes.

Overall, Caldwell et al. (2021); Mahfouz et al. (2018), Mokher & Jacobson (2021), Paolini (2019), and Robinson et al. (2019) are convergent that readiness, preparation, and maintenance are important in order for student success in college; however, there are divergent results that suggests differentiating outcomes on who is responsible for these conditions. Mokher & Jacobson (2021) and Paolini (2019) noted the importance of student readiness for

college in their work; whereas, Caldwell et al. (2021) and Robinson et al. (2019) believe that it is time for college staff to be ready for students by providing students with an environment that is suitable for academic success. Some believe that it is a combination of both whereas students need to be aware of their needs, but universities should offer programs and services that are designed to address the major problems with unsuccessful student outcomes (Mahfouz et al., 2018).

Traditional Factors and the impact on Student Success

ACT/SAT vs. High School Grade Point Average as Predictors and Successful Outcomes

College readiness and success is often determined by traditional factors like standardized test scores and grade point averages (Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Millea et al., 2018; Paolini, 2019; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Although both of these factors receive so much attention from students, parents, teachers, and prospective universities, the findings of each of their importance are mixed. Consider three studies done by Allensworth & Clark (2020), Millea et al. (2018) and Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) and a literature review by Paolini (2019) that measured both of these variables.

Millea et al. (2018) studied first-time freshmen in a longitudinal design at a university in the Southeastern United States to better understand the numerous contributions and pitfalls to student success. They hypothesized that students would sustain in college if they lived on campus or closer to home, attended class regularly, were part of smaller classes, were recipients of grants and scholarships to aid in financial assistance, and had favorable GPA and ACT scores. The researchers measured if students completed their degree within six years and examined their high school GPA, sex, race, age, in-state or out-of-state residency, absenteeism rate, GPA requirement for freshman, class size, living arrangements, grant or loan status, and scholarship

obtainment. Although an abundance of traditional information was evaluated in this study, the findings suggest that students with an excellent high school GPA did well on aptitude tests like the ACT/SAT, utilized financial assistance through grants and scholarships, and are academically prepared to be retained in college. The student's GPA alone did not improve retention rates, but the student's ACT score did increase the probability that the student would complete college (Millea et al., 2018). Other factors, such as race, residential location, and using loans, did not improve retention rates. Millea et al. (2018) suggest that universities should make sure that class sizes are manageable and any financial constraints are taken into consideration. The findings of the study done by Millea et al. (2018) suggests the importance of the ACT assessment in predicting college success.

Allensworth & Clark (2020) also conducted a study that investigated the proposed ideas by many researchers that compared the effects of high school GPA and aptitude test scores like the ACT/SAT. One idea that led them to study further the comparison between the effects of grade point average and test scores is because, typically, ACT scores are the best predictors of success in college. So many discredit high school GPA as the best predictor due to the possibility of many different high school experiences, including, but not limited to, the various teaching styles and delivery methods, classroom size, and other subject experiences that differ amongst students (Allensworth & Clark, 2020). Allensworth & Clark (2020) found very different themes from their data collection. Depending on the particular school, they found value in high school grade point averages. Their findings suggest that the only real benefit to a high GPA is getting into universities that require a high GPA. The findings of Allensworth & Clark (2020) suggests that other than admission criteria, high test scores on standardized tests have no more significant benefits than one's gpa.

Like the studies listed above, Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) were also interested in studying the effects of these traditional variables, high school GPA and aptitude test scores. In their study, they surveyed and followed 165 undergraduate students from a small Midwestern university. As the researchers listed above, Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) studied the traditional variables but took their research a step further and looked at the impact that other factors had on college retention. For purposes related to the subtopic at hand, evaluation of the traditional variables only will be discussed in this section, and later, an elaboration on the nontraditional findings will be communicated. In their study, Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) recorded the participants' high school grade point average and the student's standardized test scores. They obtained archival data from graduation records or records after a year and a half of being in the study. The researchers measured retention and success based on completion of the degree or continuous enrollment in the program. They found that a student's high school grade point average better-predicted college success than standardized test scores. Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) explained that the values that may account for the outcomes have to do with the personal characteristics in the student's grade point average versus the objective measure of the standardized tests. According to the studies done by Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) and Allensworth & Clark (2020) the student's grade point average is a much better predictor of retention than the importance of one of the most popular aptitude tests, the ACT that Millea et al. (2018) found in their study.

Overall, these studies demonstrate divergent findings where Millea et al. (2018) found value in the students' ACT score; Allensworth & Clark (2020) and Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) found value in the students' grade point averages when compared to the students' ACT score only. Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) did note other findings of importance beyond the traditional variables listed here. These non-traditional variables will be discussed below.

Although there are efforts to ensure that students are getting what they need to succeed and benefits for preparing and utilizing traditional variables exist, students only sometimes persevere. There is a considerable problem with college retention and successful outcomes, and researchers are now turning their attention to the fact that the traditional predictors may not be enough (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019; Caruth, 2018; Millea et al., 2018; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Although ACT/SAT and GPA scores can be valid predictors of student success, other psychological ideas like sense of belonging and relationships with faculty are essential to consider.

Nontraditional Factors and the impact on Student Success

Student Characteristics

Several studies were done to evaluate the qualities that students need in order to succeed in college (Abraham et al., 2018; Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019, Gheith & Aljaberi, 2017; Miller and Mills, 2019; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018, & Weger, 2018). Student intrapersonal characteristics like grit, perceived level of stress, and a sense of belonging are somethings taken into consideration when trying to figure out what makes students successful in college. One of the most studied personal characteristics is grit. Grit is an individual's ability to persevere towards life goals and face adversity in any given challenge and is found to be beneficial in overall college success for students (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018; Shi & Lin, 2020). Like grit, another personal characteristic is perceived stress. Perceived stress is also an important factor because students that feel stressed and overwhelmed may not have the tools to be able to retain or succeed in college, no matter the students' score on the ACT/SAT or grade point averages. When students feel stressed, they are less likely to manage the tasks of college;

therefore, it is important for the students' subjective experiences to be taken into consideration in hopes to improve the students' overall college experience (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018).

In an attempt to evaluate these nontraditional factors in addition to the traditional factors, Saunders-Scott et al., (2018) found that students that reported feeling highly stressed, were less driven to obtain their goals. When comparing student levels of grit and perceived stress, differences were found, depending on the classification of the students. For example, grit was found to be the best predictor during the students' first year of college, but any time after the first year depended on the students' level of stress (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Previous research findings on conscientiousness assisted in developing their ideas to recognize the importance of nontraditional factors like grit in college retention. Although it may be hard to teach students how to be more conscientious and have more grit, these findings suggests that if students can learn better ways to cope with stress, then these other intrapersonal qualities may be improved and then this can improve their overall college outcome (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018).

Another intrapersonal quality of students is their need to feel as if they belong. Sense of belonging, a concept that was studied by Abraham Maslow since 1954 has been considered to better understand and explain what students need to be successful (Shi & Lin, 2020). Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs in his Theory of Motivation, where he placed human needs in a manner ranging from very basic necessities to more personal goals. A sense of belonging was third in the hierarchy which signifies the importance of this need being met before individuals could ever consider feeling their best or as he called it meet their esteem needs and continue to work towards self-actualization (Shi & Lin., 2020). Researchers have utilized Maslow's concept of belonging to predict student outcomes in college and stress the importance of students having a sense of belonging (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019).

Buskirk-Cohen and Plants (2019) conducted a quantitative study in which they surveyed 44 students at university in the United States. They measured demographics, academic commitment that surveyed how committed students were to their degree choice, college completion, and career choices, sense of belonging, and grit. Several groups were formed from the questionnaire. The researchers were able to evaluate the potential relationships between high-performing, high-commitment students, high-performing, low-commitment students, low-performing, high-commitment, and low-performing, low-commitment students. Group identification placement depended on the student's self-report of GPA and academic commitment score. Buskirk-Cohen & Plants (2019) found that sense of belonging was identified as an important component in college success, but were surprised with the lack of evidence on grit. They found that more importantly than grit, students cared if they were cared for by their professors more than anything.

Weger (2018) recognized that one of the growing problems across college classrooms is incivility. Incivility is described as anything that is done by students within the classroom that disrupts the harmony of the classroom environment (Weger, 2018). Incivility could be both direct and indirect, but both types of incivility are known to interfere with the students' ability to successfully experience outcomes. Some examples of incivility include behaviors like students arriving late for class, talking during lectures, looking at electronic equipment like cell phones or screens, being rude to professors, sighing, and purposefully challenging the professor repeatedly (Weger, 2018). Although these behaviors mentioned seem purposeful, there may be times that these behaviors have no reflection on the professor, but are done by students indirectly, and depending on the way in which the professor responds to the behaviors may or may not affect the outcomes.

Abraham et al. (2018) conducted a study to better understand how a more specific group of students with proposed similar qualities, medical students, within the same curriculum differ in their level of achievement and further explore what specific factors set them apart. Researchers found that due to the rigorous workload and programmatic expectations in the medical field, students may struggle to meet not only the demands of the curriculum but endure various other stressful circumstances that can impact their functioning. Data was collected by conducting focus groups where researchers questioned participants about their perception of the factors that influence or impede academic success. Researchers divided students into either high or low achiever groups based upon their grades in a physiology course. They asked each participant questions that involved the influential success factors. For example, the evaluation of students' attitudes towards medical school was evaluated. This allowed the researchers to form an understanding of the student's level of motivation. They also evaluated the importance of the student's attitudes towards their teacher. Other areas that were assessed were time management, study habits, and course interest. Overall, the findings between groups were very similar, but at varying degrees. For example, both groups feel that teacher support is necessary, but the high achieving student does not depend on the teacher as much as the low achiever. Lower achievers rely on the support of their teachers to aide in their interest and increase motivation in the field. The researchers found that high achievers value all factors for success except how they study and time management. The lower achievers believed that certain factors were very important; however, these factors did not impact their grades. Students do value teacher support, but the work done by Abraham et al. (2018) demonstrates that it may be important to take student characteristics into the amount that the student actually depends on the support from the teacher to succeed.

Gheith and Aljaberi (2017) focused on the idea that educators must move beyond focusing on only traditional factors in the classroom. These researchers believed that students need to learn skills that are non-cognitive to be better prepared for their lives now and in the future, both in and outside of employment. These factors include self-awareness, planning ability, empathy and understanding, one's level of self-confidence, growth mindset and grit. The researchers wanted to evaluate whether or not an interactive training program on all of these variables was enough to improve problems in both academia and lifestyle. Data was collected on participants using a non-cognitive skills scale. Participants were divided into one of three groups. The first group received the treatment and participated in the interactive training program. This program was structured to educate students on the various non-cognitive factors through non-traditional teaching methods. Students were exposed to academic climates that were filled with exploratory lessons and group discussions. The second group of students also learned about non-cognitive skills but did so through a traditional teaching method. Lastly, the third group, the control group, did not learn the non-cognitive skills lessons. To test their hypothesis, Gheith and Aljaberi (2017) sought to understand if there were differences in non-cognitive ability based upon different types of instruction. The information from the research questionnaires did support this first hypothesis. The students that participated in the interactive training program did possess higher non-cognitive skills than those with both traditional and no training methods. Although they found significance in the effects of an intervention on empathy, growth mindset and grit, they did not find any significant results regarding differences in sex, academic level, and major area of focus. Lastly, the interactive training program did not make an impact on one's overall GPA. One problem with this study is that the absence of findings in particular areas is inconsistent with previous research. Other researchers found that age and sex do make a

difference in success. These findings suggests the importance of training teachers on non-cognitive skills in hopes to improve the entire student's experience (Gheith & Aljaberi, 2017).

Miller and Mills (2019) took into consideration the qualities of certain generations regarding student successful outcomes while in college. They focused on the millennial and generation z groups because of their particular characteristics due to little research having been done on the focus of this particular generation as they move beyond secondary school years and into college. According to Miller and Mills (2019) the reason that this particular population needs attention is due to their expectations and characteristics. They are very technologically focused, less interpersonally and socially driven, have a sense of entitlement in what they do, and often feel like the world owes them the necessary protection from any harm (Miller & Mills, 2019). Researchers believe that with expectations as these, it will be extremely difficult for these two populations, millennials, and generation z groups, to successfully experience the high demands of college. Miller and Mills (2019) found that it was imperative for these students, with these qualities to perceive as if they were cared for by their faculty.

Overall, the findings are convergent that students possess important qualities that can increase college success. There are difference in findings suggests that there are differences in the degree of importance of some of the qualities. For example, Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) found that grit or perseverance is important but only during the student's first year of college when compared to the students' levels of stress and Buskirk-Cohen & Plants (2019) also found that grit was not enough to succeed and found that when students feel like they belong, there is an increase in their level of success in college. Miller and Mills (2019) found that specific generations require specific teaching pedagogies whereas, Abraham et al. (2018) also focused on a specific population, medical students, and also found that faculty support was identified as

important regarding success. Weger (2018) proposed that students behaviors can impact the outcomes, but believed that what may make an impact on the students' behaviors has more to do with the qualities of the professors. Next, we will review the professor qualities that may make an impact on the students' ability to succeed in college.

Professor Qualities

Researchers sought to determine the necessary qualities of teachers to enhance successful outcomes in college (Amerstorfer et al. 2021; Bardach et al., 2021; Raposa et al. 2021; & Weger, 2018). Amerstorfer et al. (2021) were interested in studying how to increase student engagement in college. Bardach et al. (2021) studied the impact that the teachers' various psychological characteristics have on performance, teacher retention, and interpersonal relationships with students, other faculty, and possibly parents. Raposa et al. (2021) studied the effects that SES, generational information, student engagement with teachers, and institution size would play a role in the outcome of the students' experiences. Weger (2018) studied the impact that behaviors of the professors have on student behaviors, focusing specifically on student incivility.

Amerstorfer et al. (2021) were interested in studying how to increase student engagement in college. The researchers found that engagement is dependent on various factors beyond the subject matter and that it takes a certain type of teacher to successfully engage students. These various factors are not delivered separately, but rather delivered and experienced in conjunction with one another. One of the most important factors that these researchers were interested in was the effects of positive faculty-student relationships and the impact that these relationships have on a student's enthusiasm for learning. The researchers hypothesized that how students perceive the teacher was related to the outcomes of problem-based learning. The researchers surveyed 34 students to determine this relationship. The researchers found that instructors that were more

affective and supportive had students that were more engaged in academic disciplines.

Qualitative methods were used where they were able to ask about subjective experiences of students. Those themes were evaluated by the researchers. Overall, Amerstorfer et al. (2021) found that students are more engaged when they feel like their teachers understand them and they care.

Bardach et al. (2021) collected data through a systematic literature review of peer-related sources to measure the impact that the psychological characteristics of motivation, personality characteristics, teacher expectations, emotion-related teacher factors, emotional intelligence of teachers, teacher enthusiasm, and teacher mindfulness had on teacher outcomes. The idea that selecting an appropriate teacher from the beginning is key is supported by the evidence in this study. One of the most reoccurring concepts thought the review of research was the focus on teacher well-being and its importance. Well-being is highly related to Bandura's concept of self-efficacy. The concept of teacher retention was not highly contingent upon the psychological outcomes studied. One area that did receive a lot of attention was the importance of teacher-student relations and the impact that this had on student achievement. These findings suggest the importance of the hiring process to ensure that the appropriate candidates are selected. Due to the importance of being mindful and having high self-efficacy as a teacher, future researchers may want to implement professional development courses so that teachers can learn the appropriate strategies of self-care and other psychologically-related concepts to be used in and outside of the classroom.

Raposa et al. (2021) hypothesized that SES, generational information, student engagement with teachers, and institution size would play a role in the outcome of the students' experiences. Raposa et al. (2021) hypothesized that those students that were from first

generational families, lower SES, and minority groups would not feel like they had a mentor while in college; therefore, would report feeling less cared for while attending. Raposa et al. (2021) also hypothesized that if students were engaged in extra-curricular activities and attended an institution with less students, then the students would communicate being part of an increased level of mentorship and feel supported. Information was collected from the Gallup-Purdue panel on 5,684 college graduates who were 18 years or older and needed to be residents of the US or District of Columbia. Researchers found that students that participated in direct extended activities with faculty were more likely to report that they perceived mentorship and felt supported compared to those students that participated in other non-direct faculty extra-curricular activities like sports or sororities.

Weger (2018) was also interested in further investigating the behaviors of professors in the college classroom because the majority of the research done on classroom behaviors has to do with student behaviors, like listening and attending. Weger (2018) proposed that students will demonstrate various behaviors in the college classroom, both directly and indirectly related to their professors and the material, but the way in which the professor responds to students plays a role in the outcome. Weger (2018) like Carl Rogers, placed a lot of emphasis on the importance of the classroom climate. The climate of the classroom sets the stage for the opportunity for students to grow and learn. The classroom climate consists of the professors qualities like being an active empathetic listener which includes sensing, processing, and responding to students during classroom discussions (Weger, 2018). Other important professor qualities include nonverbal characteristics like good eye contact, vocal tone, body language, and attending behaviors. Weger (2018) conducted his study for the purpose of further investigating the impact that these professor qualities had on outcomes, specifically focusing on student incivility. Weger

(2018) surveyed 434 undergraduate students and hypothesized that there will be a negative correlation between students perception of active empathetic listening and student incivility. Weger (2018) surveyed students' observation of classroom incivility and rated their perception of their professors active empathetic listening skills. The findings of this study suggests that there is a correlation between the skills of the professor and the level of incivility. These findings suggests that if the professor demonstrated active empathetic listening and other supportive qualities, then students were less likely to be uncivil. Also, Weger (2018) also found that when professors responded to some student behaviors in a very direct manner, there was an increase in the students level of civility. Weger (2018) suggested that it may be more beneficial to outline course expectations regarding cell phone usage during class and other disruptive-related behaviors in the syllabus than matching the behaviors of the students by publicly correcting the behavior.

Overall, these studies have similar findings. Students value teachers that care, offer support, and are genuinely interested in their outcomes (Amerstorfer et al. 2021; Bardach et al., 2021; Miller & Mills, 2019; Raposa et al., 2021; & Weger, 2018).

Faculty-Student Relationships

There is evidence that the relationship between teachers and students impact student outcomes (Dickinson et al., 2021; Miller & Mills, 2019; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018). Dickenson et al. (2021) sought to figure out what was entailed in the relationships that makes up components of the interpersonal relationships. Robinson et al. (2019) was interested in investigating how to improve student success and focused specifically on ISR (Instructor-Student Relationships) and outcomes. Weger (2018) sought to gather insight into the idea that the main reason that students struggle at the college level could be due to the fact that the relationships

between professor and students are not healthy. Miller & Mills (2019) sought to gain more insight into how certain generations are impacted by faculty-student relationships.

In the study done by Dickinson et al. (2021), data was collected to determine if students outcomes, effort and learning, are impacted by how much the professor cares about the student and if the professors cares about if the student is successful or not. The researchers surveyed 1517 undergraduate students by conducting surveys where they measured student perception of the importance of being liked by the professor and the perception of whether or not the professor notices that students care about the material. The findings suggests that when students feel like they are liked by their professors and when students feel like their professors actually care about their success, the students care more about the material of the course and are more motivated.

In another study, Robinson et al. (2019) were interested in better understanding what factors could change in order to improve the findings of decreased retention. In researching this topic, they found studies that discussed the factors contributing to student outcomes and motivation, but all found were centered around the grade school (K-12th) age group and very little was known about the population of interest, college students. Prior findings suggested the importance of relationships called Instructor-Student Relationships (ISRs) in the classroom was crucial to student success. Prior research focused on the particular concept of similarity between student and teacher and how being similar to each other can create better relationships and how better relationships relate to much better outcomes in school (Robinson et al., 2019). Due to very little research conducted on the college student population, Robinson et al. (2019) sought to study this particular population. Robinson et al. (2019) found that teaching is a social behavior and it requires psychological qualities. Robinson et al. (2019) also found that students overrate

their positive relationships with teachers whereas, instructors do not rate having positive relationships with students except with those students that perform well in the classroom.

Miller and Mills (2019) focused on the importance of teachers caring for students. Rather than simply evaluating if students did better when cared for, they took a deeper evaluation and tried to explore how these particular groups define caring and their perception of actually being cared for by teachers. Data was collected by assessing students enrolled in five courses that are known to be more difficult. Students voluntarily participated in this experiment and the demographics of the subjects were as follows, either millennials or generation z, majority female, majority first-time generation, and had an average GPA of 2.75. Students responded to the questionnaire by answering standardized questions about their mindset, instructors, study habits, readiness, and classroom experiences in algebra, world civilization, chemistry, biology, and anatomy. Researchers recorded the interviews and analyzed the data. The findings were high in interrater reliability where there was an 80% similarity in response ratings. In addition to the consistent results, researchers gathered other information that sparked their interest. They focused on the relationships between student and teacher with an emphasis on trying to better understand the effects of feeling cared about by teachers. Researchers came up with two themes, caring as an attitude and caring as a teaching practice (Miller & Mills, 2019). Caring as an attitude is viewed as more than a personality trait (Miller & Mills, 2019). Students described things like empathy when discussing their experience with a caring attitude. This idea is that the teacher moves past seeing the student in the class role and having strict expectations that lack understanding but seeing the student as a person with various roles and expectations and being more open to communicating their understanding of such. Caring as a teaching practice is the second theme recognized. Caring as a teaching practice was viewed as more than a behavior but

something that they demonstrated to the students during lessons (Miller & Mills, 2019). Rather than delivering course content one way, teachers actively teach, assess, and alter any content that students may have difficulty understanding. These teachers go beyond just teaching the material and offer alternative ways to increase the likelihood that students understand. These findings agree with previous research when exploring the benefits of positive faculty-student relationships but differ in the way that research has found answers to explain what the variable, caring, means.

Overall, the studies done by both Dickenson et al. (2021), Miller & Mills (2019), and Robinson et al. (2019) demonstrate the importance of these nontraditional qualities like faculty-student relationships, but more attention is needed in exploring what components of the relationship are valuable. A closer look at empathy will be considered below since the theoretical framework utilized in this study will be based on the work of Carl Rogers whom placed a lot of emphasis in the role of empathy in the collaborative relationship between both clients and counselors and in this case, the student and the professor.

A Need to Focus on Empathy. In an effort to further explore the benefits of teacher empathy on teacher-student interactions and student outcomes, Aldrup et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive literature review that was conducted by utilizing data from 41 different sources. Although recent studies demonstrate the correlation between teacher empathy and student outcomes, the data from this literature review did not demonstrate these findings. Instead, the sample of teachers from various different age groups, disciplines, and geographical locations, reported greater levels of concern and intervention for hypothetical situations where students faced danger, particularly in bullying-related situations rather than reporting results that yielded a relationship between perceived teacher empathy and supporting students emotionally and the overall outcomes of students. Aldrup et al. (2022) did not find that teachers reported empathy for

students regarding nonpsychological matters like anything pertaining to course requirements and student responsibilities.

Altavilla et al. (2021) completed a theoretical argumentative study to study the impact of empathy in the faculty-student relationship. The theory of relational professionalism was reviewed in this article because the authors were interested in determining the factors of empathy that aide in students achieving academic success. The authors sought to focus on the importance of empathy for both students and teachers in order to promote academic excellence. Teacher empathy is viewed as essential because according to these researchers, it is the key to removing obstacles for students when they are struggling at school. The researchers hypothesize that if teachers cannot offer empathy, then the strong relationship between the students' cognitive ability and emotional sense of self will not be apparent nor beneficial. There is limited research on ways to improve empathy and this topic was captured in this study. The supportive environment, productive instruction strategies, systematic support, and the social and developmental aspects are all considered important in improving empathy. The researchers found that both students and teachers must be empathetic in order for all of these circumstances to occur.

Weger (2018) was interested in studying student incivility and hypothesized that the quality of the professor, active empathetic listening (AEL), contributed to the outcomes of the students behavior. Weger (2018) surveyed students by asking questions pertaining to student observations on whether or not the professor understands how people in class feel and whether or not students observe professors smiling while students are speaking. These qualities specifically measure the construct, empathy, and Weger (2018) found that the greater level of active

empathetic listening observed by students had a negative correlation with the other major outcome, incivility.

Overall, Aldrup et al. (2022), Altavilla et al. (2021), and Weger (2018) focused on the effects of empathy but the findings were divergent. Aldrup et al. (2022) found that teachers reported empathizing in more psychological situations, but there is doubt on the reliability of these findings because the survey is a self-report measure where teachers may report inaccurately. There are divergent findings because Altavilla et al. (2022) and Weger (2018) found the benefits of faculty empathy on successful outcomes. These differences in findings regarding the teachers' roles in the relationships with students, especially the differences in reasons to empathize calls for the need for further research to be conducted.

A Need for Further Research

Although there is a lot of feedback on what students feel as being beneficial in their endeavors, there is limited information on how professors feel. In an effort to take into consideration a quality of the teacher, Weger (2018) surveyed students regarding professor qualities, but this did not encompass how the professors felt regarding offering empathy or the knowledge that they possess about offering empathy from their frame of reference. One study did take into account the feelings of the faculty where researchers evaluated how teachers feel about the relationships with students (Hagenauer et al., 2022). In this qualitative study, data was collected from 15 teachers in the college of education. Experienced teachers were interviewed on two separate occasions. The first interview was conducted to capture perspectives on the interactions between students and teachers in general and then later teachers were interviewed to assess the development of the relationships. According to Hagenauer et al. (2022), teachers want to observe students that pay attention, arrive on time, and take initiative. Also, Hagenauer et al.

(2022) found that teachers believe that caring behaviors, approachability, consistency/flexibility, and trust make up for the relationship in general, but these characteristics occur at different levels and during different processes of the student-teacher interaction. The teachers reported that being close is a positive characteristic, but can result in boundary crossings where the roles between students and teachers may be harmful. The researchers decision to take into consideration the perspective of the teacher is a more novice idea because it gives insight of the teacher whereas a lot of other studies evaluate students' perceptions.

Summary

Researchers have given much attention to the factors that can increase college success for students due to the increasing problems with attrition and retention (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Altavilla et al., 2021; Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Bohannon et al., 2019; Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019; Caldwell et al., 2021; Caruth, 2018; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021; Gheith et al., 2017; Green et al., 2023; Guzzardo et al., 2021; Hagenauer et al., 2022; Hoffman, 2014; Johanson et al., 2023; Lillis, 2022; Mahfouz et al., 2018; Millea et al., 2018; Miller & Mills, 2019; Mokher & Jacobson, 2021; O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018; Paolini, 2019; Raposa et al., 2021; Robinson & Hope, 2013; Robinson et al., 2019; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018; Shi & Lin, 2020; Swan et al., 2020; & Weger, 2018). Although a lot of emphasis has been placed on the students ability to be prepared and ready for college (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018; Paolini, 2019 & Mokher & Jacobson, 2021), some find that faculty at the college level need to be more open and accepting of students' needs in and outside of the classroom (Caldwell et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018). Some find that even though it is imperative to set rules at the outset of the faculty-student relationship regarding classroom expectation, the personality and approach of the professor can

make an impact on the students' outcomes when incivility does appear in the classroom (Weger, 2018). This pedagogy is more therapeutic for teachers and at the forefront of retention and success in college research since the traditional variables like the students' grade point average and standardized tests scores are not always enough to ensure academic success (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019 & Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Today, the expectations of college professors and students may resemble the role of the therapist and client in a therapeutic relationship. These ideas have been researched by Carl Rogers in his Person-Centered Education framework where students were offered the same type of acceptance and understanding as would clients in a therapeutic setting (Swan et al., 2020).

The traditional factors, like ACT/SAT scores and grade point averages are still found to be important and utilized to predict academic success, but only sometimes are these measures reliable (Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Millea et al., 2018; & Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Researchers found that scores matter for enrollment purposes or to obtain a scholarship in order to be able to financially afford college, but these traditional variables are not enough to conquer the rigorous challenges of the curriculum and one's subjective experiences (Bohannon et al., 2019). Like grades, test scores, and proper planning, there are qualities of students that can increase success in college (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018; Abraham et al., 2018; & Gheith et al., 2017), but sometimes, students found that feeling accepted by professors and experiencing a sense of belonging was more important than their own personal characteristics (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019).

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that students want healthy relationships with their professors (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Altavilla et al., 2021; Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Dickinson &

Kreitmair, 2021; Raposa et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018). These healthy relationships are those where students feel engaged with staff in and out of the classroom. Students reported wanting an opportunity to have direct contact with their professors and respond better when their professors are willing to offer empathy and understanding even if when communicating subjective experiences outside of course-related content (Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021; Raposa et al., 2021; & Robinson et al., 2019). Although students communicated their desire to have these therapeutic relationships with their professors, little is known regarding how professors at the college level feel about being therapeutic nor their knowledge to be able to even do so.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the planned research method for this study. The problem that was addressed in this study is that there is a limited understanding of four year, undergraduate college professors' knowledge and perceptions of incorporating therapeutic approaches in their relationships with students in college. The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a greater understanding of professors' knowledge of therapeutic strategies and their perceptions of incorporating these therapeutic approaches with students while in college to support students' academic achievement. This study was done by conducting a qualitative exploratory case study to gain insight into how college faculty at a small southern university feel about being therapeutic with students at this level. This exploration was conducted utilizing in-person via zoom and in-person observations. The data collected was analyzed through thematic analysis using NVivo software and manually. The method and design, participants, materials used, and the procedures are also be covered in this chapter.

Research Methodology and Design (Nature of the Study)

Qualitative research rather than quantitative research is conducted when researchers are interested in gathering information on the participants' subjective experiences and want to gain a more in-depth understanding of the research questions (Privitera, 2020). Yin (2018) suggests that case studies are used when answering questions related to the "how" and "why" of social-science investigations. The various qualitative designs include designs like the case study, phenomenological approach, and a narrative approach. Each of these different types of qualitative designs serve various purposes, dependent on the research questions. The exploratory case study was appropriate for developing the problem which is that there is a limited understanding of college professors' knowledge and perceptions of incorporating therapeutic

approaches in their relationships with students in and out of the classroom because the majority of the research done on student success pertains to the students. The exploratory case study was appropriate for developing the purpose in hopes to develop a greater understanding of professors' perceptions and knowledge of incorporating therapeutic approaches with students while in college because professors may be expected to be more therapeutic in the future in hopes to promote student success. The exploratory case study was appropriate for developing the research questions which ask *how* the professors perceive being therapeutic at the college level and *what* they know about being therapeutic because if the professors contribute to academic success, then knowing what they know and how they perceive the concepts may be beneficial.

The qualitative, phenomenological design was not chosen for this study because information will be gathered through archival review of documents, interviews, and observations. The phenomenological design usually gathers the subjective, conscious experiences of subjects in interviews only. A qualitative narrative approach was not the chosen research method either because the research questions do not pertain to how the professors make sense of their experience of being a professor nor will a thorough background inquiry take place prior to conducting the study.

Conducting the alternative method, a quantitative design is not appropriate because it would not allow an in-depth, subjective understanding of the phenomenon regarding how college professors perceive being therapeutic and what they know about being therapeutic nor insight into the how and why the therapeutic constructs of empathy, genuineness, and acceptance apply to the professors under investigation. Quantitative research would be used if the research questions pertained to gaining an understanding of the relationship between variables like empathy and retention. Although these constructs may be explored, the boundaries of this

particular study have to do with college professors perception and knowledge; not the relationship between variables or the cause and effect relationship between variables as a quantitative study would produce.

Population and Sample

The population in this study was at least 10 college faculty at a small southern university to gain a better understanding of how college faculty perceive therapeutic relationships with their students and their existing knowledge on therapeutic relationships since there is limited information on the topic, there are no requirements from the university to do so. The chosen university has five major colleges consisting of the Colleges of Business, Liberal Arts, Science and Technology, Nursing/Allied Health, and Education and Behavioral Sciences. The population was appropriate because there is a limited amount of information on how professors perceive being therapeutic with students at the college level and their existing knowledge on being therapeutic. Within these five colleges, the sample was purposeful sampling, one of the types of sampling used in qualitative research since random sampling is not utilized in qualitative research. The sampling was purposeful because the research questions pertain to a particular group of people, full-time faculty at a university and no attempt to compare full-time to adjunct is being made where the chosen sampling method would have then been quota sampling for qualitative research. Saturation was reached by obtaining information from these various professors in the sample.

The researcher obtained a sample of 10-15 faculty from the university. The inclusion criteria was that faculty must be fluent in the English language, teach at least one in-person course, and teach full-time at the university, excluding adjunct faculty.

A site permission form (Appendix A) was sent to the Deans of each perspective college at the university explaining the study with a request for an intent to cooperate. Once the researcher obtained at least 10 participants from the university, an informed consent (Appendix B) was emailed to all participants. The participants were asked to submit their course syllabus in encrypted format for review as archival data via email request (Appendix C). Once all participants were secured and syllabi obtained, an in-person interview via zoom took place as well as at least five in-person, in-class observations for data collection.

Materials or Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study included the syllabi, interviews, and observations. Participants were asked to submit their syllabus for at least one in-person course (Appendix C). The researcher used the syllabus to review the professors' policies on attendance, punctuality of assignments, and professor availability to explore their perception on being therapeutic and if there is any indication of their knowledge of these concepts. The researcher looked for themes related to empathy, unconditional positive regard and genuineness. The researcher also conducted one in-person interview, created by the researcher, via zoom with each of the ten professors. During this interview, a series of open-ended questions created by the researcher (Appendix D) were asked to explore the faculty perception of being therapeutic as well as the faculty knowledge of the therapeutic concepts like empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. The researcher also conducted at least five in-person observations (Appendix E). During the observations, the researcher evaluated the professors' behavior and communication of demonstrating Rogers' three core conditions in the classroom. The researcher also contacted a content expert analysis at the university and conducted a field test to determine the effectiveness and clarity of the questions for interviewing.

Study Procedures

The researcher submitted the research proposal idea to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at National University. Once approval was granted, then the Deans in each of the five colleges at the small southern university were emailed (Appendix A) to explain the study and recruit participants. The Deans were asked to respond to the email confirming intent to participate. If the Dean communicated their intent to cooperate, the Dean was asked to notify all faculty that meet the criteria and copy the researcher on the email for contacts. Once notification was complete and participation was accepted, the data collection began. At least 10 participants were emailed the informed consent form (Appendix B) and asked to submit the syllabus for one in-person course (Appendix C). All information required to be submitted through an encrypted email. The scheduling for the in-person interview took place via Calendly. The researcher met with each professor individually to complete the in-person interview via zoom (Appendix D). The interview was scheduled for 60 minutes. The researcher attended at least five in-person classroom sessions to observe the faculty member(s) only to determine their demonstration of their existing knowledge of Rogers' core conditions (Appendix E). Once the procedures were complete and all data was gathered, data analysis began.

Data Analysis

All data was analyzed in an attempt to find answers to the two research questions related to what professors perceive regarding therapeutic strategies at the college level and what existing knowledge they may have regarding these concepts. Carl Rogers' concepts, empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard that make up the therapeutic triangle were used as the framework for the analysis. The data were analyzed using various methods to ensure data source triangulation. All data was analyzed manually and the interviews and observations were

also analyzed by using the software NVivo where the researcher was able to come up with codes, categories, and themes.

Course Syllabi

Course syllabi were analyzed by reviewing each syllabus submitted for review of the professors' policies on attendance, punctuality of assignments, and professor availability. These topics were analyzed manually by highlighting the topics within the syllabi and recording the topics into groups to determine if the professors incorporated any of Rogers' therapeutic conditions into their course syllabi. Empathy was identified when and if any professors communicated an understanding for students when and if they could not attend class, turn in assignments, and if the professor communicated any availability to students outside of their scheduled office hours. Unconditional positive regard was identified when and if any professors communicated acceptance to students regarding any policies on attendance despite the students lack of effort, acceptance regarding extensions on assignments despite the students lack of effort, and acceptance of student when and if students were not fulfilling their responsibilities to meet with students during and outside of office hours. Genuineness was identified when and if any participant documented any statements in the syllabi that indicated something about themselves that explains authenticity of the professor.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and then coded and analyzed using thematic analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Once the researcher had all of the data from each of the 10 faculty, thematic analysis took place using the NVivo data analysis system and manual coding also took place. The researcher looked for themes related to the perception and knowledge of

undergraduate college professors' regarding Carl Rogers' three core conditions, empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard.

NVivo is the software program for qualitative data and is used to increase rigor in qualitative data entry and analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). NVivo is designed to capture all of the various data entry components of qualitative research that is told in interviews, stories, observations, diaries, journals, transcriptions, and permanent records (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). This program has seven major functions that allow researchers to capture very important subjective data that oftentimes, researchers and educators think can only be captured in quantitative studies as evidenced by the lack of usage of qualitative research and often relying on manual record keeping and analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The first function is constant comparison analysis. This function allows for continuous comparison; therefore, as something is mentioned in the qualitative study, this function will capture the ideas and continuously compare. The second function is classical content analysis. This type of function is closely related to constant comparison analysis; however, types of reasoning can be detected (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The third function is for the researcher to obtain key words in context. This function allows researchers to make special note of certain things that the subject(s) say in case the words have symbolic or special meaning. Word Count is another function of NVivo and it allows the researcher to be able to extract patterns more easily, check on the actual hypothesis of the study, and continue to conduct research input and analysis with integrity (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). NVivo's domain analysis function allows for cultural knowledge of the data and analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The ability of NVivo to conduct taxonomic analysis will allow the researcher to determine how the participant has used certain words and is best understood as a classification system (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

Lastly, componential analysis is a function that will allow the researcher to give meaning to words utilized in the study. Manual analysis will be done by the researcher and a statistician within the psychology department at the small southern university to ensure reliability and decrease any chance for observer bias and investigator triangulation.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted by the researcher to observe therapeutic strategies by each participating professor for one course session (typically 45-60 minutes). The classroom was observed for the researcher to achieve data on two areas of focus related to the research questions which were to capture existing knowledge of Rogers' theoretical framework of therapeutic strategies and their [professors'] perceptions of being therapeutic with students. The researcher recorded notes on the following areas: environment/setting, professor/student interaction, empathy demonstration, genuineness demonstration, and unconditional positive regard demonstration. The researcher documented the observations for subthemes under each of the areas of focus. The subcategories that fell under the category were listed on the observation questionnaire and gave the researcher an opportunity to have access to some of the subcategories that may have pertained to both of the research questions.

The Environment/Setting. The environment/setting was defined as the atmosphere of the classroom. The researcher documented the various observations related to the environment/setting of the classroom under the category, the environment/setting. The content that the researcher looked for was type of desks/tables, temperature, and lighting. The researcher manually documented each of the five participants' classroom environment/setting. Once the initial list was made, the researcher totaled the similarities and differences.

Professor/Student Interaction. The professor/student interaction was defined as the professors presentation of material, interaction with students as evidenced by soliciting student feedback and interaction, asking open-ended questions, calling students by name, and proximity of the instructor. The researcher manually documented each of the five participants' professor/student interactions. Once the initial list was made, the researcher totaled the similarities and differences.

Empathy Demonstration. Empathy demonstration was defined as body language of the professor, language/statements related to empathy, and any communicated understanding from the professor. The researcher used these subcategories as a guide to capture the items to look for during the observation. The researcher manually documented each of the five participants' demonstration of empathy. Once the initial list was made, the researcher totaled the similarities and differences.

Genuineness Demonstration. Genuineness demonstration was defined as the professors responses to any questions he/she may not have accurate answers to and/or self-disclosures. The researcher developed the following subcategories prior to the observation to determine if genuineness was demonstrated during class: eye contact, responses that communicated lack of awareness where professors were authentic, and any self-disclosure communicated to students. The researcher manually documented each of the five participants' demonstration of genuineness. Once the initial list was made, the researcher totaled the similarities and differences.

Unconditional Positive Regard Demonstration. Unconditional positive regard demonstration was defined as recording any indication in communication and body language where the professor communicated acceptance of student. The researcher developed these

subcategories prior to the observation and listed them on the observation questionnaire where the researcher documented specific examples that were mentioned by the participant or observed by the researcher during the class. The researcher manually documented each of the five participants' demonstration of unconditional positive regard. Once the initial list was made, the researcher totaled the similarities and differences.

Assumptions

The assumptions in the study were that the researcher assumed that the faculty would cooperate with the study by responding to the email in a timely manner and agree to participate in the process. Once participation was established, the participant worked with the researcher in the coordination of meetings and observations so data could be collected for the case study. The researcher assumed that all participants would be honest in their responses and not report results to be viewed in a favorable manner.

Limitations

There were limitations in this study that needed to be controlled for so that the trustworthiness of this study is upheld. The limitations in this study were that the study was conducted at a small southern university where the size of the university may impact the ability and depth of the relationships in comparison to if the study was conducted at a larger university. The next limitation has to do with the participants depending on the sample group. Age, race, and gender may play a part in the perception of being therapeutic and the professors existing knowledge on being therapeutic with students which may be a threat to the transferability of participants because the findings are specific to those researched. Reactivity is possible, since the researcher is employed by the university that the study will be conducted. Lastly, bias is also possible in this study. Researcher bias may exist and in order to decrease this type of bias and

arrive at inductive reasoning, the researcher had a statistician from the psychology department at the small southern university assist in the data analysis. Lastly, respondent bias is possible because those being questioned and observed may alter behavior/responses due to being questioned and observed due to wanting to appear favorable.

Delimitations

Adjunct faculty were excluded because the duties of these faculty do not align with the full responsibilities of full-time professors at the university. All participants must speak English so that the researcher(s) can properly understand all data. The researcher did not ask the Deans of the colleges to participate because although the Dean may have a relationship with students, the primary responsibility of the Dean is unrelated to direct student outcomes. Lastly, the researcher did not disclose the existing credentialed background since the researcher is not only an instructor at this university, but also a licensed professional counselor. The researcher's aim is to gain a better understanding of how the professors perceive being therapeutic and what existing knowledge they may already endure.

Ethical Assurances

This qualitative design received approval from National University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Nicholls State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to any data collection to ensure that the risk to participants is not greater than minimal. Participation in this study was voluntary and the researcher obtained informed consent. The risk was minimal because the information obtained will be utilized for research purposes only. None of the information collected will be communicated to anyone that is responsible for the monitoring, rating, or any decision-making processes regarding the participants' employment status. Confidentiality of results was achieved because all information obtained was kept secure and/or

anonymous. The researcher had identifiable information regarding email address initially, but once the participant committed to the study, all submitted information was done so via encrypted emails. The documents that are not electronic that result from interviews and observations were captured using numbers for each participant. For example, participant 1, participant 2, and participant 3 will be the title information for each of the 10 participants. Numbering participants ensured that any identifiable information was not exposed in the findings.

The researcher is an instructor at this small southern university and is a licensed professional counselor in the state of Louisiana that practices from a humanistic approach both in therapy and in the classroom. The role of the researcher increased the risk for observer bias due to the value that the researcher places on the importance of positive therapeutic relationships especially the three main core conditions identified by Carl Rogers. The main strategy that was used to prevent the bias of the researcher had to do with the research questions of how do faculty perceive therapeutic relationships with their students and what they know about the therapeutic process. The focus of the research questions addressed to the faculty created bracketing to prevent any observer bias and value imposition (Corey, 2017).

In conducting this qualitative research study the goal was to determine how faculty at a small southern university feel about being therapeutic with their students and their existing knowledge on what it means to be therapeutic with students at this level. With IRB approval, the researcher strived to obtain information related to being therapeutic with students from full-time professors at the university, assuming that they were willing to fully participate in this study by giving their accurate, honest perceptions and knowledge of the topic at hand. Minimal risk to the faculty was considered so that the faculty felt comfortable disclosing valid information related to the topic and demonstrated little to no desire to be viewed favorable or have any information

disclosed publicly without it being anonymous. This prevention of risk was done by encrypting online documents and labeling participants by number on all documents to ensure that the participants' full name was not disclosed. All records were stored electronically in a password protected computer. Any hardcopy of documents were securely stored in a locked fireproof lockbox and then shredded by the researcher.

Summary

The researcher analyzed the results of this case study through thematic analysis in NVivo for the interview, manual recording and coding for the syllabi, interviews, and observations to determine the professors perceptions of being therapeutic with students and their existing knowledge on what it means to be therapeutic. The focus was on Rogers' three core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness since these three conditions make up the therapeutic environment. The next section serves to outline the findings of this exploratory case study to gain a better insight into how professors instead of students perceive being therapeutic and what they know about the concepts.

Chapter 4: Findings

Many students spend the majority of their academic life preparing for college, but many do not stay enrolled due to various reasons, despite their academic ability (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019; Green et al., 2023; & Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). College students report that today, nontraditional factors, like having positive relationships with their professors may enhance the likelihood of successful outcomes, including an increase in retention (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Altavilla et al., 2021; Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021; Raposa et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018). These positive faculty-student relationships can be identified as being therapeutic in nature, resembling a therapist-client relationship both in and outside of the classroom (Aldrup et al., 2022; Swan et al., 2020). The problem that was addressed in this study is that there is a limited understanding of four year, undergraduate college professors' knowledge and perceptions of incorporating therapeutic approaches in their relationships with students in and out of the classroom. The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a greater understanding of professors' knowledge of therapeutic strategies and their perceptions of incorporating these therapeutic approaches with students while in college to support students' academic achievement. The review of qualitative data in the study, will allow a better understanding of how professors perceive and what they know about being therapeutic at the college level by reviewing the qualitative data in the study, institutions may be able to incorporate intervention programs to train college faculty on effective therapeutic tools and strategies to be used.

The organization of Chapter 4, the findings of this qualitative study, includes a closer look at the trustworthiness of the data, which includes the credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability of the design. The results of this study are presented and the findings are evaluated based on the alignment with the research questions. Chapter 4 concludes with a brief summary of the key points presented throughout the chapter.

Trustworthiness of Data Collection in Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers must strive to establish trustworthiness of data and findings by ensuring that four main criteria are met or at least attempted to be met (Shenton, 2004). The research questions in qualitative data collection are more subjective in nature and allow the researcher to obtain more personal experiences and subjective information from participants (Privitera, 2020). Researchers must strive to obtain trustworthiness that encompasses the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings (Shenton, 2004). Trustworthiness was obtained in my study by making sure that the definitions of all four of the concepts were clear and understandable. These four components of trustworthiness will be discussed below and will include the ways in which each component was obtained or at least attempted to be obtained.

Credibility

Achieving credibility in qualitative research is equivalent to achieving internal validity in quantitative studies (Shenton, 2004). Both credibility and internal validity allow the researcher and participant to develop a certain level of trust regarding the research findings (Shenton, 20024). During the research process, various steps were made to ensure credibility of the research findings of this qualitative design.

The first step taken to ensure credibility in this study was during the consent process. Participants were given information regarding confidentiality of topics discussed in hopes that participants felt comfortable in disclosing honest perception and knowledge of being therapeutic

at the college level without any fear of retaliation or judgement. During the consent process, participants were also given the opportunity to voluntarily participate and were informed of their ability to withdraw from the study at any time in hopes that participants felt like participation was their choice.

Another step that was taken to ensure credibility was through member checking. Member checking is used by researchers to ensure that what is reported during data collection is interpreted as it was intended to be understood (Shenton, 2004). Member checking also occurred during the interview when the researcher asked clarification questions during the conversation to ensure that a clear, concise understanding of the participants' responses were captured. Also, when questions included a definition of one of the main therapeutic concepts, the researcher used the participants words to define the concept. This tactic was done to ensure that the participant reported their honest thoughts and knowledge and the material presented was consistent. If there was ever a question on the transcript from the zoom recording and the otter.ai app, the researcher would go back into the recording to listen to the live interview to ensure accuracy. The participants were emailed the codes to ensure that the communication coded was valid.

Triangulation was also used to ensure credibility of this study. Triangulation is using multiple data sources and locations to gather information in qualitative studies (Stahl & King, 2020). Data triangulation and environmental triangulation were both used in this study. Data collection was done by using syllabi, interviews, and observations of the participants. The syllabi collection and the two assessments were designed to capture the therapeutic concepts addressed in the research questions. Environmental triangulation was also utilized because the researcher was able to question participants on zoom regarding concepts related to the research questions as well as observe some of the participants in their natural environment.

Transferability

Transferability is another goal of the qualitative researcher's work to increase trustworthiness in research. Transferability in qualitative research is similar to external validity and generalizability in quantitative designs (Shenton, 2004). Quantitative researchers strive to generalize findings from the sample of participants to a larger population in hopes to explain the phenomenon of interest (Shenton, 2004). Quantitative researchers are able to obtain external validity and generalizability due to the nature of the design. Qualitative researchers, although unable to generalize results, strive to transfer findings from the study to a larger context and this was done through various methods in this research study.

The first step to ensure transferability was through purposeful sampling. Those eligible to participate in the study were only full-time, non-adjunct professors, who teach at least one in-person class at a small, southern university. This specific eligibility criteria increases the transferability of the findings to other full-time, non-adjunct, professors.

The final step taken to ensure transferability was providing a thick description of the methodology of the design. The participants were aware through the informed consent process the eligibility criteria, length of the interviews and observations, and any and all other data collection procedures, including, but not limited to storage mechanisms. Researchers should strive to perform all of these steps of transferability to increase the likelihood that the findings be extended across various contexts; despite the various challenges of qualitative studies since the research questions serve to answer very personal, experiential questions (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research (Shenton, 2004). There is some overlap between dependability and creditability in qualitative

research, making both very closely related (Shenton, 2004). Dependability deals more with the ability for the researcher to create a design where future investigators could replicate (Shenton, 2004). Again, due to the nature of qualitative research, this is challenging to obtain due to various factors, but listed below are the ways in which creditability was attempted in this design.

The first step to ensure dependability in this study was making sure that various factors were taken into consideration when developing the eligibility criteria. The requirement for the participant to be full-time faculty members instead of an adjunct faculty member was to rule out any external variables that may impact the outcome of the study. Obtaining dependability of the results is more likely if the participants have some level of consistency in employment with the university. The next step to ensure dependability in this study is to list the method section of this design in a step-by-step method for future research replication. Dependability in qualitative research is challenging due to the nature of the participant responses, but taking these extra steps to attempt to factor in this level of trustworthiness is important (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research is the steps that the researcher takes to ensure a sense of objectivity even though the research questions and data is based on subjective findings (Stahl & King, 2020). This construct of trustworthiness was challenging to obtain due to the researcher's background as a Rogerian counselor and college instructor at the local university where the research was conducted. In order for the researcher to obtain confirmability, the researcher had to use the participants' definitions of the terms when speaking to the participant since the research questions involved assessing the participants' knowledge of certain therapeutic terms. The researcher also had a peer review the questions on the assessment to ensure that the questions were not biased since the researcher believes that being more therapeutic in the

classroom is effective. These steps were taken to ensure confirmability since the possibility for subjectivity and bias is possible in qualitative research.

Results

The results of this study were based on the framework of Carl Rogers and his therapeutic triangle that consists of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. The results of this qualitative, exploratory case study, come from the collection of three different type of data collection: collecting of syllabi, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The participants were not asked their age nor gender during the collection of syllabi, interview, or observations, but the research was conducted by obtaining information from seven female professors and three male professors. The attributes that were captured in this design included the department that each of the professor participants belonged to, years of experience, and the professors' rank at the university. Out of the five major colleges at the small southern university, participants were from only two of the colleges, to include participants from the College of Business and College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. These demographics of participants are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1*Professor Participant Demographics*

Participant	Department	Years of Experience	Rank
Participant 1	College of Business	11-20	Assistant Professor
Participant 2	College of Education	0-10	Assistant Professor
Participant 3	College of Business	0-10	Assistant Professor
Participant 4	College of Business	21-30	Assistant Professor
Participant 5	College of Business	21-30	Professor
Participant 6	College of Education	0-10	Assistant Professor
Participant 7	College of Business	11-20	Instructor
Participant 8	College of Education	0-10	Assistant Professor
Participant 9	College of Business	41-50	Associate Professor
Participant 10	College of Education	31-40	Assistant Professor

The ten participants came from two of the five colleges at the university. The participants were from the College of Business and the College of Education. The professors' year' of experience varied ranging from 0-50 years. Four of the professor participants have been teaching at the university for zero-10 years. Two of the participants have been teaching for 11-20 years. One of the participants taught for one year. Lastly, one participant taught for 41-50 years. The ranks of each participant were captured. A total of eight assistant professors participated, one professor, and one instructor.

After all data were collected, the evaluation process began for syllabi, coding for interviews, and the evaluation for observations was done. The researcher participated in various calls organized by National University staff, who specialized in qualitative data analysis with

NVivo, to ensure that the proper procedures occurred for coding in NVivo. During the coding process, the researcher removed data that was irrelevant to the research questions of interest, especially in the interview questions since some of the interview consisted of conversation that was unrelated to the study. This process for coding was done by inductive reasoning, where the researcher coded specific information into more general categories and then eventually, arrived at general themes. The researcher also used deductive reasoning but not deductive coding. The goal was to come up with the themes based on the codes that answered the research questions. This system of checks and balances allowed the researcher to ensure that objectivity was met with such qualitative data.

Once the initial coding was done in NVivo, the researcher also created a code notebook for the codes of all data. The researcher focused specifically on the content from the syllabi related to the research questions, questions of the interview that pertained to the research questions, and interview data relative to research questions. The researcher took each category and used the category as a heading and then listed the participants' responses. Once this was done, it gave the researcher another opportunity to evaluate the professor participant responses and gave the researcher the ability to recognize overlap, differences, and common themes related to the research questions.

The researcher went through each sentence of the syllabi and evaluated the sentences related to the research questions. The data from the syllabus was also captured in one of the questions during the interview where the researcher asked the professor about the most important area of his/her syllabus for the in-person course.

The participant interviews were conducted and recorded on Zoom. During the interview process, member checking was utilized by asking clarification questions to ensure that the data

collected was done in the manner that the participant intended to deliver. Once all of the interviews were conducted, the interviewer used the Otter. ai. app to transcribe all of the interviews. The researcher read through each of the transcriptions and compared the transcription to the video in Zoom if there was a question or what seemed to be discrepancy in the transcription. The transcripts were not printed or downloaded into any word file, but rather remained in NVivo on a password protected computer.

After each interview, the researcher asked each professor if he/she would allow observation in the classroom. The first five professors that taught an in-person course during a time that the researcher did not teach were asked to be studied for further data collection. The observations were done on five of the participants by naturalistic observation in the participants' classroom. During this time, the researcher sat in the back of the classroom and observed the professor. The researcher used an observation outline to capture information related to the therapeutic concepts of the study. The researcher did not have any interaction with the professor or the students other than informing the professor of the researcher's presence. The findings of these observations were entered into NVivo on a password protected computer.

Research Question 1 : What are college professors' perceptions of being therapeutic in their teaching by offering students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard?

Course Syllabi. The first data point obtained by the researcher was the professors' syllabi. The researcher obtained syllabi from 9 out of the 10 participants. The syllabi were collected to capture the information related to the professors' credentials and rank. The researcher also used the syllabi as a supplemental data point for triangulation. The main areas of interest on the syllabi pertained to research question regarding professor perception of being therapeutic by offering empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness. The researcher

focused mainly on the professors' policies on attendance, punctuality of assignments, and professor availability.

Attendance Policies. All of the participants explain attendance policies in their syllabi. Participant one adheres to the university policy on mandatory attendance, but mentions that students are “encouraged” to attend. Participant two adheres to attendance or the lack thereof as a professional decision; whereas, participant five describes attendance as an obligation and privilege. Participants two, four, and seven require attendance and include attendance as a quantitative value in the grading system. Participant three specifically reports, “if late, just do not walk in front of me”. Participant four asks students to “refrain coming to class if you are feeling disengaged, disinterested, disrespectful, or disruptive”. Participant six elaborates on not only the importance of arriving on time, but has instructions if the student needs to leave the class before the scheduled time period is over. Professor seven requires attendance, but also states, “if you do plan to attend class, try to be on time”. Attendance is so important to professor eight that he mentions that since classes meet only twice per week that a student that predicts multiple absences should schedule a different section of the course.

Punctuality of Assignments. All of the participants except for participant five have a clear policy on the punctuality of assignments with exceptions. Participants one, two, three, four, six, seven, and nine, require that all work/tests be done by the due dates. The policy for make-up assignments differs amongst participants. Participants one, two, four, six will decide if the student's excuse is accepted for the potential to complete a make-up. Participant three and eight list specific areas beyond the students' control like illness or family emergency. Participant nine approves for students to make-up work for extenuating circumstances but includes “travel for work” as a reason for lack of punctuality. Participant two offers an incentive and titles it as

“professionalism points” for turning in assignments in a timely manner. Professor two also deducts points for late submissions per day. Participant seven gives students an opportunity to opt out of the final exam if they have not missed more than 3 in-person class meetings.

Participant five is the only participant that explain that if anything is missed or late the students receive a zero. Participant five is the only participant that does not mention that students can have extenuating circumstances.

Professor Availability. All of the participants have office hours listed on their syllabi. Professors three, four, five, six, seven, and nine mention that if their set office hours do not meet students’ needs, then the students can schedule outside of the set hours. Professor six has a statement on the syllabus regarding the ability of office hours to change and the student can reach out for her availability.

Data were also captured from the syllabi during the interview, as the researcher asked each participant if there was any specific area that he/she found more valuable than others and where each professor devoted the majority of their time if and when reviewing the syllabus with students in the classroom.

Interview Data. The data in Table 2 (See Appendix F) demonstrate the identification of the codes, categories, and themes of data sources from the interviews related to research question one regarding gaining an understanding of college professors’ perceptions of being therapeutic in their teaching by offering students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard.

Table 2*Research Question 1 Codes, Categories, and Themes*

Codes	Categories	Themes
Listening Sounding Board Role model Advocate Skill Teaching Direction Advising Support Disclosure Uphold Confidentiality Cautious Professor Decision	Therapeutic Qualities Resemblance of Therapist and Professor	Professors and counselors share qualities, but not skills
Available Employment Death Subjective Experiences Opportunity-Teachable Moments Excessive Absences Cheating Offenses Noncompliance Self-Inflated Problems Relatable Experiences	Empathy Offered Empathy Refused Empathy Hindsight	Student responsibility yields empathy from professors
Self-Disclosure Admitting Mistakes Constructive Feedback Consistently Honest Boundaries	Genuineness Offered Genuineness Refused Genuineness Hindsight	The Inconsistencies of Genuineness
Consistency Acknowledgement Difficult Students Subjective Experiences Poor Student Qualities Careless Rude	UPR Offered UPR Refused UPR Hindsight	UPR Contingent Upon Student Responsibility

Note. UPR: Unconditional Positive Regard

Theme 1: Professors and counselors share qualities, but not skills. The first main theme is professors and counselors share qualities, but not skills. The categories for the first major theme are therapeutic qualities and resemblance of therapist and professor. The researcher

asked participants questions related to the role of therapists vs. professors, specifically focusing on if the participants thought that the relationship between the student-faculty should resemble that of therapist-client. All 10 participants in this study shared their perceptions of being therapeutic at the college level by answering the question of whether or not faculty-student relationships should resemble therapist-client relationships. Overall, the majority of the participants reported that therapists and faculty may share the same qualities, but the difference is the content of what is or should be discussed, depending on the relationship.

During the analytical phase of the process, the 10 participant transcripts were reviewed and 13 codes transpired and brought about the findings of two categories and then developed into the theme of *Professors and counselors share qualities, but not skills*. The 13 codes were as follows: listening, sounding board, role model, advocate, skill teaching, direction, advising, support, disclosures, uphold confidentiality, cautious, and faculty decision. There were two categories that came from the codes were therapeutic qualities and resemblance of therapist and professor.

Overall, the ten professor participants agreed or disagreed at varying levels regarding the resemblance of relationships between therapist and client to professor and student.

Convergence was found as the majority of the professors believed that professors and therapists may share similar qualities, but the actual content of what should or could be discussed differs. Participant one shared:

..I'm happy to ..., *listen* to them and help them. But if it gets to the point where .., I'm not a licensed counselor, so I would recommend to send them to our counseling center. And I give them those resources.

Participants two, three, five, six, eight, and ten all reported “yes” that professors can have some of the same qualities that a therapist may have, but the differentiating factor is the content that would be discussed. Participant three spoke specifically about the perception of this:

...In terms of being their counselor, like for any psychological problems, I don't think I have proper training do that. So I would ultimately say No, ..., in terms of more of a counselor, ... skills that you need to have for a job ... I would say, I can counsel them in that way. But in terms of ... any psychological issues, I've just refer them to someone else.

Participant five shared that if it would be offering advice on a career path, then yes; participant six reported that professors should offer support, whereas participant eight was very specific that listening would be offered, but in the event that the needs became psychological that a referral would be made.

Divergence was found in this theme because some of the participants were very specific in their perceptions of this relationship. For example, participant four reported that this is totally up to the professor. Participants six and eight commented on the question during the interview and said that the word *should* was not the right term. Both participants six and eight communicated that not all professors even have the ability to be therapeutic. Although participant seven shared that there are times where therapeutic conversations take place, these experiences are “not for every student.” Participant nine reported that this idea was too deep and some students may take this too far. Lastly, Participant 10 perceives the relationship to be therapeutic whereas the professor/student relationship resembles that of the counselor/client because participant 10 reported:

Which means everything that you do your actions serves as a model for them. And being able to show empathy, being able to be soft spoken when needed, being able to be stern, but not forceful, like all of those, I think, maybe good characteristics that a counselor probably would have with a client, teachers need to have with their students as well. And this is coming from a person with absolutely no background in counseling whatsoever. But when I think of what that relationship is, in my head, yeah, I think is very much the same as a teacher and a student.

Theme 2: Student Responsibility Yields Empathy from Professors. The second major theme was student responsibility yields empathy from professors. The categories associated with this theme were empathy offered, empathy refused, and empathy hindsight. All 10 participants shared their perception of empathy towards students at the college level. The participants answered three interview questions regarding their perception of empathy: What was a time that empathy was offered; Was there a time when empathy was not necessary; and lastly, was there a time where you wish you would have offered empathy to students? These three questions allowed the researcher to gather various information related to the professors' perceptions of empathy for students at the college level.

During the analysis process of the transcripts, 11 codes were found. The codes were: available, employment, death, subjective experiences, opportunity-teachable moments, excessive absences, cheating offenses, noncompliance, self-inflicted problems, excessive excuses, and relatable experiences. These codes were then turned into the following categories: empathy offered, empathy refused, and empathy hindsight. These codes and categories, then developed into the theme of *student responsibility yields empathy from professors*.

All of the participants shared that they were willing to offer empathy to students for various reasons, but more than half of the participants reported that empathy was offered to students when a death of a loved one was experienced or any health-related issues occurred. The way that these professors offered empathy was by allowing students to have extensions on assignments and/or tests. The other half of the participants reported offering empathy for other reasons like a cheating situation where rather than giving both students a zero for a cheating incident, the professor willingly listened to the story and only recorded a zero for the student that actually cheated on the work. The other professor reported having empathy for students' inability to understand material and rather than decreasing a grade, this professor uses these experiences as teachable moments.

Convergence was found when all of the participants reported that empathy was not needed when students do not show up for class, are rude, and do not follow course procedures and requirements. All 10 of the participants responded with very clear-cut responses regarding this question. For example, Participant one reported:

If I have a student that never shows up to class ... approach them and say, Why are you not showing up to class? Oh, well, I slept late or you know, it's just not making it a priority. Then I feel like you are not holding up your end of the bargain. You're not being responsible enough to come to class, so I'm not going to bend.

The other participants were very consistent in their responses by reporting that empathy was not needed when students were not responsible in their role as a student. Participants two, seven, and eight all reported that students that have excessive absences do not need empathy from them.

Participant four reported that when a student cheats, then empathy is not warranted. Participant

10 reported that if a student makes their own problems, then it is not necessary to offer that student empathy.

Divergence was found in this theme when participant two was the only participant to discuss a time where a student could have been offered empathy for a medical reason, but participant two did not offer the empathy because that particular student was not on good academic standing with course procedures. None of the other professors shared a specific instance where their perception of empathy did not extend because of the student's behavior like professor two shared.

The 10 participants were also asked to tell about a time where they wished they were more empathetic to a student. Participants five and six had no reply. The other participants shared ways that they wish they were more empathetic by disclosing desires to be more patient, understanding, insightful, and relatable and one even disclosed that the level of empathy increased as the years of teaching increased:

I remember this in my mind, and it still bothers me today. And I wish I would have handled it differently. But I tell everyone to bring a scantron to the test. This is my first time teaching...And so someone said, ... I don't have a scantron. I said, ... get up and go to the bookstore and get one that didn't come back and start your test. And they said, ... I don't have any money to buy a scantron. I said, well borrow money from a friend. And then I turned around and kept handing out the tests. And I wish I should have said, Hey, guys, does anyone have an extra Scantron that someone so can have? And usually someone does, and they lend it to them? And so I could have done better in this situation.

Theme 3: The Inconsistencies of Genuineness. The third theme found is called the inconsistencies of genuineness. The categories associated with this theme were genuineness

offered, genuineness refused, and genuineness hindsight. All ten professor participants answered questions regarding their perception of being genuine with students at the college level. The professors all took a few moments to respond to these questions. During analysis of the transcriptions, five codes were recorded, three categories, and one overall theme. The five codes were self-disclosure, admitting mistakes, constructive feedback, consistently honest, and boundaries. The categories that were found were genuineness offered, genuineness refused, and genuineness hindsight. Like the questions related to empathy, the various questions related to genuineness allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of the professors' perception of being genuine, times where they did not think that being genuine was necessary and in hindsight if they ever wished that they would have been genuine. The overall theme that arose from these codes and categories is called *the inconsistencies of genuineness*.

Four out of the 10 professors described themselves as being genuine when they can self-disclose, laugh in class, own up to mistakes, and offer grace as participant six stated, "I need grace so I cannot not give grace, you know." The other five professors reported that they are genuine when they give the students honest feedback and when critiquing their [students'] work. Participant six reported it is important to be genuine because during accreditation, no one has to worry because procedures would be in place consistently.

When asked the question regarding naming a time where the professor did not need to offer genuineness to their [professors'] students, three out of the 10 participants reported that there are times when they [professors] wish that their opinions could be given, but it is not appropriate to cross this boundary in the student-professor relationship. Three of the professors did not have a reply to this question. The other participants reported responses that differed: participant four reported that genuineness was not necessary because "students get the grade that

they get.” Participant six reported that genuineness was not necessarily due to the expectation that new professors will wear masks. When the participants were asked about a time where they wished that they would have been genuine, the responses were divergent as well. Participants one, four, five, and nine did not have a reply. Five of the other participants reported that they wished that they would have been more honest with students for example, participant six reported, “I wish that I would have just been real because students were impacted.”

Theme 4: Unconditional Positive Regard Contingent Upon Student Responsibility. The fourth theme found was titled unconditional positive regard contingent upon student responsibility. All of the 10 participants in this study were asked to report on their perception of offering students unconditional positive regard. A series of three questions related to unconditional positive regard were asked that included the following: what is an example of a time that you offered unconditional positive regard, a time where you did not feel like unconditional positive regard was necessary, and lastly, was there ever a time where you felt like you wished you would have offered more unconditional positive regard to students.

During the analysis of the transcripts, seven codes were found. These codes were consistent, acknowledgement, difficult students, subjective experiences, poor student qualities, careless, and rude. After the codes were developed, then the categories were developed. The categories included unconditional positive regard offered, unconditional positive regard refused, and unconditional positive regard hindsight. The theme that was developed based upon the outcomes was *unconditional positive regard contingent upon student responsibility*.

There were convergent findings regarding the professors perception of offering unconditional positive regard to students at the college level. Seven out of the 10 professors reported that they would offer unconditional positive regard to students at this level if the student

demonstrates responsibility and followed the requirements of the course. Participant eight reported directly, “I feel like I am accepting if they do what they are required.” Although participant seven discussed how unconditional positive regard is offered, there was also a statement made where participant seven reported that “they [students] need to struggle in order to grow.” Participant one reported that unconditional positive regard is always a quality that has to be offered.

There were divergent findings and limited replies to the third question pertaining to hindsight of unconditional positive regard. Four out of the 10 participants did not have a response to the question. Some of the responses did not answer the question clearly as evidence by the response of participant four when asked about hindsight of unconditional positive regard, “Once when working on final grades, I had a student calling me at 12 am and 1 am telling me that they would pay me 750.00 for the grade. I had to call [name of official] for bribery.”

Participant two also shared a time where in hindsight she wished she would have offered conditional positive regard, but the response is unclearly related to the topic:

Um, ...I have dropped the ball. This semester has been, in my role with some of the professional organizations that I've been involved with this semester. And I think part of it has been with some of the other university or commitments I have the meetings times have conflicted this semester... they've been overlapping. So what's been going on? My student organizations are going on the backburner. So I'm doing it but not getting as much attention.

The other professor participants reported that in hindsight, there were times that they [professors] wished that they would have been more accepting and all of the rest of these

professors discussed their own personal qualities like having more patience, less accepting because of being a new professor, and too proud because of the role.

Classroom Observations. Triangulation was also done by observing five out of the ten professor participants in their classrooms while teaching. The researcher focused on the following areas: the environment, professor/student interaction, empathy demonstration, genuineness demonstration, and unconditional positive regard demonstration. The environment was defined as the setting of the classroom which included the position of desk, lighting, and the position of the professor and students. The researcher evaluated the professor/student interaction by specifically documenting whether professors read from PowerPoints, solicited student feedback and interaction, and whether or not the professors asked open-ended questions. The concept of empathy was evaluated by documenting body language, communication regarding understanding from professor. The concept of genuineness was evaluated by observing if any self-disclosures occurred during the class period. Lastly, the concept of unconditional positive regard was defined as documentation if the professor demonstrated any type of acceptance to students.

The Environment/setting. The classroom environment was very similar for all participants. In each classroom, the professors all stood in the front of the classroom. All students sat at tables, but students in two out of the five classrooms students had computers on the table desks.

Professor/Student Interaction. Participants three and four lectured and attempted engagements by calling on students, but often had minimal reply from students. Participant four used students' names in examples in class, but often had minimal reply from students unless students were responding when called upon. Participant five experienced a lot of reciprocal

interaction during the class period. The professor called students by name, walked around the front of the classroom, and spoke to students in an engaged lesson. Participant six conducted class in a lecture format. Participant six did speak to students often and ask if the material was attainable, but students did not interact with professor. Professor eight read from the PowerPoint slides, spoke in a very low tone, and had no interaction with the students.

Empathy Demonstration. Three professors demonstrated empathy to students by showing encouragement regarding their [professors'] belief in their ability to keep persevering because the semester was ending shortly. One professor made comments like "if I were you, I would study...". This professor was willing to give insight into what students should expect from the tests. One professor also talked about how scary giving an upcoming presentation may seem, but offered not only empathy, but encouragement.

Genuineness Demonstration. Genuineness was not consistently demonstrated in the observations. Participants three and eight told personal stories during the lecture. Participant five demonstrated genuineness by making a mistake during the class and admitting when wrong. Participant four offered no self-disclosures during the class.

Unconditional Positive Regard Demonstration. Lastly, all of the professors demonstrated acceptance during the class period. Participants three and four allowed students to enter the class late and did not make any comment when the students entered. Participant five made jokes with students when not participating and laughed with them telling them to respond.

Research Question 2: What existing knowledge do college professors have related to empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard?

Syllabi Data. The syllabi were collected for various purposes. The syllabi were used to capture the information related to the professors' credentials and ranks. The researcher also used

the syllabi as a supplemental data point for triangulation. The main areas of interest on the syllabi pertained to the research question regarding professor knowledge of being therapeutic by offering empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness. There was no information regarding the professors' knowledge of these therapeutic concepts other than ways in which these concepts were communicated under Research Question 1. The syllabi did not obtain any way to indicate the professors' knowledge of the therapeutic concepts: empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness.

Interview Data. The findings outlined in Table 3 (See Appendix G) demonstrate the identification of the codes, categories, and themes related to research question two regarding the existing knowledge of college professors related to empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard.

Table 3*Research Question 2 Codes, Categories, and Themes*

Codes	Categories	Themes
Understanding Compassion Walking in Someone's Shoes Listening Unsure Grace	Empathy	Professors Accurate Knowledge of Empathy
Nonverbal and Verbal Match Real Authentic Honest Sincere Truth Direct	Genuineness	Professors' Accurate Knowledge of Genuineness
Not Negative Positive Toxicity No Matter What Happens Unsure Codes Despite the Problem Nonjudgmental Tolerance Benefit of the Doubt Positive Attitude	Unconditional Positive Regard	Professors' Uncertain Knowledge of UPR

Note. UPR: Unconditional Positive Regard

Theme 1: Professors' Accurate Knowledge of Empathy. The first theme under RQ2 was Professors' Accurate Knowledge of Empathy. The categories under theme one was empathy. All of the professor participants in this study were asked to define empathy during the interview. During the analysis process for the concept, empathy, six codes were found. These codes were understanding, compassion, walking in someone's shoes, listening, unsure, and grace. The category that developed from these codes was empathy. Based on the outcomes, the theme that developed from these codes and this category was *professors' accurate knowledge of empathy*.

Empathy is part of a reciprocal relationship between two people where one person understands what is being communicated as well as has an interest in understanding (Swan et al., 2020). There was convergence in the professors' knowledge of empathy because all of the professors except participant five defined empathy in this manner. Participants one, four, six, eight, and nine all reported that empathy means understanding where someone is coming from. Another common definition of empathy was when participant two, three, and 10 reported that empathy means the ability to walk in someone's shoes. In addition to these findings, participant seven discussed the quality of listening when describing empathy:

You know it's sitting with...listening to holding space for those, those expressions of feeling with compassion and grace. Holding space.... So that's the next, listening to probably sitting with listening to holding space for other people to have feelings, you know, for them to express their feelings, and doing so with compassion. I don't know what the textbook would define empathy as, but that's what I say.

Participant four also described empathy in a way specific to students when reported that empathy is “understanding and caring of a student’s position.” Divergence was found in this theme when Participant five reported, “I have no definition for it.”

Theme 2: Professors' Accurate Knowledge of Genuineness. The second theme related to RQ2 is Professors' Accurate Knowledge of Genuineness. The category is genuineness. All of participants in this study were asked to define the term genuine during the interview. During the analysis process for the term, genuine, six codes were found. These codes were nonverbal and verbal match, real, authentic, honest, sincere, truth, and direct. The category that developed from these codes was genuineness. The theme that developed from these codes and category was *professors' accurate knowledge of genuineness.*

According to Swan et al. (2020), genuineness is authenticity and specifically related to professors, it is when they [professors] are willing to bring their personalities into their work with students. Convergence was found in the responses as all 10 of the professor participants were accurate in the description of what it means to be genuine. Three out of the 10 professors used the exact word, authentic like Swan et al. (2020) used in the definition. Three of the professor participants also used the word, real when defining what it means to be genuine. Two of the professors chose to define genuine as being honest. Participant one reported that genuineness occurs when:

I think your nonverbal communication needs to match your verbal communication, and it all needs to be in alignment with your values for you to be genuine. So what you're feeling on the inside has to match what you're portraying on the outside. Okay. Inside, say what you said about the feeling on the inside, like, I want you to feel like how you feel on the inside matches what you portray on the outside.

There were no divergent findings in this theme.

Theme 3: Professors' Unfamiliar Knowledge of Unconditional Positive Regard. Theme three was Professors' Unfamiliar Knowledge of Unconditional Positive Regard. The category of this theme is unconditional positive regard. All of the participants in this study were asked to define the term unconditional positive regard during the interview. During the analysis process for the term, unconditional positive regard, nine codes were found. These codes were not negative, positive toxicity, no matter what happens, despite the problem, nonjudgmental, tolerance, benefit of the doubt, and positive attitude. The category that developed from these codes was unconditional positive regard. The theme that developed from these codes and category was *professors uncertain knowledge of unconditional positive regard*.

According to Swan et al. (2020), unconditional positive regard does have to do with positivity, but it is more about being accepting of others despite their obstacles. During the analysis of the transcripts, the findings were not only both divergent and convergent, but for this concept, various professors reported not knowing or never hearing of the term like the other two concepts, empathy and genuineness. Many of the professors reported using the context of the words and took a guess at the definition. According to Participant three, “unconditional positive regard? I have honestly never heard that phrase before. “Hmm. I would say if I had to guess, perhaps always viewing as a situation or a person in the best light or envisioning them to have the best intention even if they are acting poorly.” Participants four and ten also reported that this was a term that was unfamiliar, but when defining the term, used descriptions like, “first time I heard this. Regardless, trying to find a positive aspect with respect to students. Trying to find positive in them or their work.”

Divergence was found in the definition of unconditional positive regard when participant seven continued to focus on the word, positive in unconditional positive regard, by stating that being positive was not always appropriate for growth. According to participant seven:

So holding space for people to have negative experiences is really important to me.

Because as much as I look at the world through rose colored glasses, most of the time you know, I still think even if that's okay, for me, that's not you know, that's not necessarily what everyone else needs, when they're expressing feelings, disappointment, et cetera.

My biggest pet peeve is if somebody is upset or disappointed, and the response from a person is, oh, it's going to be okay.

Observation Data. There was limited observation of professors' knowledge of being therapeutic to students during the observation as evidenced by no time during the observation did any of the participants define the concepts.

Evaluation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a greater understanding of professors' perceptions and knowledge of incorporating therapeutic approaches with students while in college to increase the likelihood that students' needs are being met. Participants participated in this qualitative design so that more information could be found regarding two research questions related to the perception of professors regarding Rogers' therapeutic concepts like empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard and an evaluation of the professors' existing knowledge of the terms. Carl Rogers' theories, the Person-Centered Approach and the Person-Centered Learning Approach were used as the theoretical framework for this study.

This study was guided by the work of Carl Rogers in his two major perspectives, Person-Centered Approach for his work between counselors and clients and his [Rogers] Person-Centered Learning for students. Rogers' believed that at the heart of any work was the relationship between the two parties involved, whether client-counselor or student-teacher. The main conditions of his approach were therapeutic and he used the concepts of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard to demonstrate the important qualities and offerings of those within the relationships (Swan et al., 2020).

Four themes emerged in response to the first research question where the researcher sought to better understand the professors' perceptions of being therapeutic at the college level. According to the findings, these themes emerged, *professors and counselors share qualities, but*

not skills; student responsibilities yields empathy from professors; the inconsistencies of genuineness; and unconditional positive regard contingent upon student responsibility.

I found theme one that states that *professors and counselors share qualities, but not skills*. Swan et al. (2020) based their entire research study on the importance of therapeutic qualities and concluded that positive regard, empathy, and presence were found to be essential for student success in both therapy and in an online learning curriculum. Like the participants in this study, Guzzardo et al. (2021) found that students value warm professors who are willing to listen to concerns and then refer when necessary. Another theme that I found was theme two that states that *student responsibility yields empathy from professors*. This theme differs from the findings in a literature review done by Guzzardo et al. (2021) where they found a theme called *creating pedagogical space* where students that were struggling with distress needed the flexibility of the professors so that they could possibly get back on track. Although the majority of the professors in this study suggested to be empathetic with circumstances out of the students control like the death of a loved one, most verbalized that empathy is not granted for students with excessive absences especially if they [the student] does not follow the course protocol. I found a third theme that states the *inconsistencies of genuineness*. The participants in this design had differing views of genuineness. Some had no response. Others viewed being genuine as being honest with students about their [students] work and others, being genuine meant that the professor was willing to disclose authentic thoughts, mistakes, and moments. Many [professor participants] reported that early in their teaching careers they were less genuine because of ideas like imposter syndrome and the need to appear competent. Bardach et al. (2022) focused their work specifically on the qualities of professors and found that self-efficacy is an important component. This is very similar to the findings on genuineness and the examples used in this

study to support theme three because some of the professors levels of self-efficacy improved over the years and they were able to become more genuine. The fourth theme that I found was *unconditional positive regard contingent upon student responsibility*. Like the findings on empathy, the literature reviewed differs than what was found. The professors in this research design mainly suggested that students will be accepted if they follow the rules of the course concerning attendance, communication protocol, despite any concerns. When reviewing the work of Carl Rogers by Swan et al. (2020) sometimes acceptance or unconditional positive regard is necessary for moments when students/clients are not living up to their most optimal potential, regardless of any circumstances. Also, Hagenauer et al. (2022) found similar findings to the professor participants in this study where many of the professors interviewed suggested that they [professors] can offer students support, but they [students] have to be willing to share responsibilities.

Three themes emerged from the second research question where the researcher sought to better understand if the professors had any existing knowledge on the therapeutic concepts of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. These themes that emerged were: *professors accurate knowledge of empathy, professors accurate knowledge of genuineness, and professors unfamiliar knowledge of unconditional positive regard*.

I found theme five that states *professors accurate knowledge of empathy* and theme six that states *professors accurate knowledge of genuineness*. The professor participants in this study were all aware of the definition of empathy and genuineness. There is not study in the literature review that specifically identifies whether or not faculty know what these concepts mean, but in the work by Hagenauer et al. (2022) they did a study where faculty perceptions were taking into consideration regarding the student-faculty relationships and found that faculty are aware of the

meaning of genuineness and empathy as evidenced by reporting the importance of both concepts, but called genuineness authenticity. Overall, the professor participants could define genuineness, but as mentioned above differed in their examples on how genuineness should be implemented. Theme seven was the last theme found and it states *professors unfamiliar knowledge of unconditional positive regard*. Many in this study had never heard of the concept, unconditional positive regard, but used the word *positive* to derive at their conclusions. Again, there is limited information in the literature review where the findings clearly outline the professors awareness of the terms, but many where the professors were able/unable to implement the concept of acceptance which is also known as unconditional positive regard (Swan et al. 2020).

According to Carl Rogers, the relationship is one of the most influential factors in both counseling and academia (Swan et al., 2020). Various studies demonstrate that students also value their relationships with professors (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Altavilla et al., 2021; Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021; Raposa et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018). The findings of this qualitative study demonstrate that the majority of the participants in this study revealed that professors can be therapeutic by sharing skills of a therapist, but when the content crosses the area of the professors' expertise, a referral is necessary. Most of the professors also believed that the responsibility of the student in following the requirements of the course was more important or contingent upon whether or not both empathy and unconditional positive regard would be offered. The participants in this study also were inconsistent in their perception of genuineness with students. Rogers defined genuineness as being authentic (Swan et al., 2020); whereas, most of the participants do also, they [participants] gave examples of how they are real in differing

ways. Some reported being real by being honest with feedback; whereas others reported being real by discussing their own flaws and limitations.

Another important focus of this study was to determine if the professors were even aware of the three main concepts that make up Rogers' therapeutic triangle. The findings suggests that the professors are aware of the definitions of empathy and genuineness, but some, although able to eventually define had never heard of unconditional positive regard.

Summary

Chapter 4 included the findings of the qualitative case study that was conducted with 10 college professors from a small university to determine how they perceive being therapeutic at the college level and what they know about being therapeutic. These findings served to answer these questions in hopes to close the gap in research since there is an abundance of research that suggests that students desire these relationships with their college professors (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Altavilla et al., 2021; Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021; Raposa et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018), but there was a limited understanding of how professors *even* feel about being a part of these types of relationships. The theoretical framework of Carl Rogers was used to formulate the themes found in this design. The professors in this study also verbalized value in having very therapeutic qualities, but overall reported that if the content of the matter is beyond their scope of practice, then referral would be necessary and most believed in offering students understanding and acceptance, but felt that students should uphold their student responsibilities and if and when they do not, then they are not subject to the opportunity to be understood or accepted for shortcomings relative to the course. These findings may set the foundation for the development of an intervention program to be incorporated at the university level so that

professors can continue to be knowledgeable about these therapeutic concepts as well as develop the appropriate skills to utilize in and outside of the classroom within the parameters of the scope of practice.

Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Although so much effort is spent preparing students for college, there is a decrease in undergraduate college retention (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019; Green et al., 2023; National Center for Education Statistics, 2022; & Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). For over 50 years, traditional factors, like high test scores and high scores on aptitude tests have been and currently are viewed as the best predictors for academic achievement, for example college retention (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Although these aptitude tests have been around for over 50 years, some researchers found that college students, despite good grades and high test scores communicate needing more of the nontraditional factors, like positive relationships with professors to increase the likelihood of retention (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Altavilla et al., 2021; Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021; Raposa et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018).

The problem that was addressed in this study is that there is a limited understanding of four year, undergraduate college professors' knowledge and perceptions of incorporating therapeutic approaches in their relationships with students in college. The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a greater understanding of professors' knowledge of therapeutic strategies and their perceptions of incorporating these therapeutic approaches with students while in college to support students' academic achievement. Please note that in this chapter the participants are being evaluated as to whether or not they use Rogers' therapeutic methods. There is no evidence that professors should use Rogers' therapeutic methods with undergraduate students in in-person courses in order to improve academic outcomes at this time. For example, there a dearth of research demonstrating that if professors grant extensions for work for unconventional reasons that students will do better academically; but Rogers therapeutic

methods would likely accept any reasons for extensions (Guzzardo et al., 2021). Therefore, the professors are being evaluated as to how well they fit Rogers' model and not whether or not Rogers model is the scientifically proven method for increasing academic achievement.

A qualitative exploratory case study was used due to the nature of the research questions. Case studies are used when the researcher is interested in gathering in-depth, more subjective experiences, thoughts, and feelings of participants (Yin, 2018). The researcher was interested in finding out the perceptions of professors regarding how they perceive and what they know about utilizing therapeutic strategies with students in college since past researchers found that college students have a desire for these types of faculty-student relationships in order to achieve academically. The researcher had the opportunity to review the syllabi of the professors to evaluate any perception and knowledge of utilizing therapeutic strategies with students, ask various questions during the interview where the professors had the opportunities to define and elaborate on instances that they offered these therapeutic concepts, instances that they did not feel like they needed to, and instances where they wished that they would have offered these concepts to students. Lastly, this qualitative study allowed the researcher to also observe some of the participants in their natural environment, the classroom setting, to be able to evaluate if and how they may or may not have demonstrated any of the therapeutic qualities listed in Rogers' therapeutic triangle.

Once the researcher had the opportunity to gather all of the data from the three data sources, the researcher was able to analyze the data using both manual and the qualitative data analysis software program, NVivo. The researcher analyzed the syllabi manually and found that the majority of the professors are willing to empathize with students regarding noncompliance with attendance and punctuality of assignments when students can provide proper documentation

for experiences that are out of their [students'] control. According to both syllabi and interviews, most of the excused absences were related to topics like death or illness, but one professor did accept the student having to miss class to attend work as a legitimate excuse for noncompliance with student responsibilities. The researcher used both manual and the data analysis software program NVivo to analyze the data of the interviews. The researcher coded all transcripts that were related to the two research questions pertaining to how the participants perceived being therapeutic with students and what they know about this role of using therapeutic strategies. The results of the data collected from the interviews indicate that overall, the participants perceive therapists and professors to share qualities, but differ in the skill level. Depending on the students' needs, both empathy and unconditional positive regard will be offered when and if students partake in the responsibility of being a student at the college level and the professors differ in their decision to be genuine when working with students. All of the professors were familiar with the terms empathy and genuineness, but the knowledge level of unconditional positive regard differed amongst professors.

Analysis of the observations was done manually. The researcher found that the classroom environment was very similar across observations where all of the students sat at table desks, but the type of interaction between professors and students differed amongst participants where four out of the five professors solicited feedback from students. There was one professor that did not solicit feedback nor any type of interaction from students. All five professors that were observed demonstrated unconditional positive regard. Empathy was demonstrated by all professors except for one of the professors. All but two of the professors demonstrated genuineness by either self-disclosures or admitting when a mistake was made during the lecture.

The limitations of the qualitative research design consists of the size of the sample, the areas of focus that the sample included, the age of the faculty not taken into consideration, researcher bias, and participant biases. The university chosen was rather small in size; therefore, the results of this case study cannot be generalized to a greater population due to the case study in general, but the representation of colleges from the university were low. The researcher intended to have representation from all five colleges at this small southern university, but the only participation was from two of the five colleges, the College of Business and the College of Education. The age of the faculty was not taken into consideration although the number of years taught were recorded. The age of the faculty could impact the results due to the possibility that generational impacts may or may not determine the perception of the faculty regarding any need to incorporate the ideas of Rogers' therapeutic triangle into the role of a college professor. Researcher bias could have influenced the results due to the researcher being an employee at the university in the study, faculty within one of the colleges represented, and being a Licensed Professional Counselor who practices from a Rogerian framework clinically. The researcher made sure to work through this bias by using the participants words when interviewing and writing down ideas to ensure that any of the researchers own ideas were not being imposed into the study. Lastly, a limitation of any interview or observation has to do with the participant biases. Most of the participants knew the researcher and the researchers area of interest due to the researcher teaching in the College of Education, Psychology Department. The participants could have also answered questions during the interview in the hopes of being viewed in a favorable manner. During the observations, the participants could have changed their behavior in hopes to also be viewed as favorable to the researcher.

During the beginning of the interview, the researcher communicated a clear, concise explanation of the researcher's nonjudgemental stance during the study. This level of rapport building was done to increase the likelihood that the participants would be honest when answering questions and being observed. Even when participants tried to talk to the researcher about knowing the researcher was a therapist and psychology professor, the researcher was able to make sure that the participant knew that the data collection was about the participant and not the researcher.

Chapter 5 will include the implications of this qualitative exploratory research design. The researcher will present each of the research questions again with the opportunity to present the conclusion and findings from this study. The factors that have possibly influenced the results will be mentioned below. A closer look at existing research and theory will be discussed. The researcher will also include the recommendations for future practice, recommendations for future research, and the conclusions drawn from this study.

Implications

The implications of the qualitative exploratory case study are based upon all of the components of this dissertation that include, the research questions, literature reviews, and the theoretical framework of Carl Rogers that includes both his person-centered framework that exists between therapists and clients and his student-centered approach between students and teachers. The components of Rogers' therapeutic triangle will be discussed within this section to demonstrate the implications of this study.

Research Question 1

Professors from a small southern university were studied across three domains: review of syllabi, semi-structured interviews, and observations regarding their relating to Rogers'

therapeutic triangle, specifically focusing on empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. These three different data points were used to approach a better understanding of the first research question-what are college professors' perceptions of being therapeutic in their teaching by offering students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard? The significance of gathering this information is that it can evaluate how faculty feel about therapeutic relationships and therapeutic strategies.

According to the analysis of the syllabi, all participants perceive being therapeutic in their teaching by offering students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard at varying degrees. The implications of the outcomes related to the syllabi data suggest that the majority of the professors are willing to empathize and offer positive regard/acceptance to students only when students meet the conditions of their [students'] responsibilities or experience situations that may be out of their [students'] control. Only one of the participants had a zero tolerance policy for any lack of punctuality or attendance. Genuineness was not able to be depicted in the syllabi.

These findings exist due to some of the written policies on class attendance where the participants demonstrated the importance of attendance by placing quantitative value on the requirement and only demonstrating understanding to students when and if they meet the exception criteria outlined in the syllabi. This finding answers the first research question where the answer to how they [professors] perceive these therapeutic conditions was sought. The findings address the problem of the study because there was a limited understanding of how professors perceive being therapeutic with students and now we are aware of how professors perceive these conditions when taking the syllabi into consideration. The purpose of this study was also served through the findings because there is now an increased awareness of how

professors perceive being therapeutic with students as evidenced by their [professors] ability to empathize with students, but only in a conditional manner, for example, when the student meets one of the excused reasons for noncompliance.

These findings from the syllabi are partially consistent with the existing literature and the framework of Carl Rogers. Carl Rogers communicated that in order for his clients to pursue their goals, then they [clients] needed to be a part of a therapeutic relationship where the therapist did much more than diagnose and treat (Corey, 2017). Rogers believed that the main criteria for personal growth was for the client to be part of a relationship where they were accepted unconditionally and understood no matter the circumstances so that they [clients] could move towards a greater level of genuineness. Swan et al. (2020) also found that students, like clients too need to feel this level of empathy and unconditional acceptance in order to work toward goals. The data from the syllabi is partially convergent with the theoretical framework and the existing literature because the majority of the professors do offer empathy/understanding and availability, but the majority of the professors communicated in the syllabi that the only way that the students may be excused from their [students'] responsibilities are if experiences outside of the students' control exist. Only one professor documented in the syllabus that students are allowed to have subjective experiences like "work" in order to be excused and qualify for make-up work. To reiterate, it is unclear in the research if offering extensions for unconventional reasons (things not out of student control) would improve academic achievement, but it would be consistent with Rogers therapeutic approach.

The semi-structured interviews also led to implications as the researcher attempted to find answers to the first research question- what are college professors' perceptions of being therapeutic in their teaching by offering students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional

positive regard? The majority of the professors perceive professors and counselors to share qualities, but not skills, perceive empathy and unconditional positive regard as valuable as long as students are cooperative, and have different perceptions of genuineness. This means that the professors attempt to listen (quality), but not counsel (skill) students who are struggling.

Research question number one allowed the researcher to address the problem in the study regarding a limited understanding of four year, undergraduate college professors' perception of incorporating these therapeutic techniques. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how professors, not students perceive being in this therapeutic relationship at the college level. The data collected from the interviews gave the researcher answers as evidenced by the findings that suggests that the professors do feel like faculty and counselors share qualities, but the skillset differs. Professors also perceive that empathy and unconditional positive regard may be necessary to offer students but students need to ensure that they are fulfilling their obligations as a student as well. The findings of the interviews also indicate that professors do claim to be genuine with students, but their perception of genuineness differs from professor to professor. Four out of the 10 professor participants believe that genuineness is being honest and open with students regarding themselves through self-disclosures whereas the other six perceive genuineness as being honest in feedback regarding student progress or lack of progress in course-related content areas.

The first theme found in the interviews, *professors and counselors share qualities, but not skills*, implies that the professors believe that professors, like counselors, could be viewed as a sounding board, role model, advocate, and have good listening skills, but the majority of the professors mentioned that if the content of the matter discussed was beyond the subject matter that they [professors] would refer the student to the university counseling center. This implies

that the qualities may be similar, but the skills are different where professors verbalize that they may be willing to listen, but refrain from giving advice or offering any kind of psychological treatment. Few of the professors reported things like, “It depends on the student” and others directly mentioned if the content of the conversation went beyond the subject matter of the course, then they would refer. These findings are different than what some of the professors actually do with students because participant one actually offered a student a name of a podcast to listen to when the student lost a loved one.

The second theme found in the interviews, *student responsibility yields empathy from professors*, implies that professors in this study are willing to be understanding with students if the students are responsible as evidenced by reporting that if they [students] attend class, fulfill the duties as a student, are respectful, and follow the course requirements, then the students can be excused from class, make-up work, and receive empathy from the professors if and when the student experienced circumstances that were out of their [students’] control.

The third theme found was the *inconsistencies of genuineness*. The professors differed in their perception of this concept as evidenced by four participants reported that they were genuine during class when they made self-disclosures, admitted when they made a mistake, but the other six shared that they were always genuine because they perceive themselves as being honest with students by offering constructive feedback.

The fourth theme found was *unconditional positive regard contingent upon student responsibility*. Almost all of the professors reported that they were willing to accept students when and if they were consistent with the course and were respectful. Most of the professors gave examples of times where they offered unconditional positive regard and some even disclosed very subjective experiences like participant seven where she said, “once a student

disclosed their sexual orientation with me.” This implications from this theme exists due to the answers that the professors disclosed when asked the second question pertaining to unconditional positive regard. When the researcher asked the participants to disclose a time where they did not need to offer unconditional positive regard, the professors reported that they [professors] did not need to be understanding if the students were rude, did not show up for class, non-compliant with the course, etc.

Some of the findings that result from the data collection from the interviews pertaining to the first research question are consistent with the literature and conceptual framework; some are not. According to Carl Rogers’ person-centered theory in counseling, the relationship is essential for growth and development (Corey, 2017). The perception of the professors believing that professors and students share qualities reveals that the professors are consistent with the ideas of what it takes to help students grow towards their academic goals. Like Swan et al. (2020) found, students, like clients in therapy, strive to achieve these types of therapeutic relationships so that they can academically achieve, especially considering the increase in student mental health conditions and subjective experiences today. The difference here is that the majority of the professors may be therapeutic in actual practice as evidenced by offering “a safe space to explore problems related to things like sexual orientation”, but when asked specific questions about offering these conditions of the therapeutic triangle, most report that they do not offer any of the conditions beyond their scope of practice unless related to the topics of the course. Also, the professors mainly offer empathy and *conditional* positive regard instead of unconditional positive regard for students that are compliant. Rogers did not suggest that therapist offer these conditions only when clients are cooperative (Harrison, 2020). Instead, Rogers’ explains that it is imperative to do just the opposite of this. Oftentimes, the unconditional positive regard is the

sheer acceptance of those that may be more resistant or noncompliant. It is through this therapeutic relationship that the client who is living in the state of incongruence may be able to strive towards a greater sense of self, self-actualization, when they receive this level of acceptance from the therapist (Yazdani & Ross, 2019).

According to the findings of the observations, the implications were that the professors are consistent in their reporting of offering empathy, acceptance, and genuineness and demonstrating these concepts as evidenced by professor three, for example, documenting in her syllabus the procedures for arriving late, answering questions regarding understanding and acceptance by disclosing that she perceives these concepts as being integral, and then observing her as she allowed students to enter the room late during class.

There were some discrepancies between the interviews and observations. For example, participant eight discussed during the interview how important the relationship with students was, but when observed, participant eight had limited eye contact with students and read from the book/PowerPoint presentation only. These findings from the observation differ from findings in the work of Weger (2018) where interpersonal skills like good eye contact are considered beneficial to enhance the relationship.

The majority of the professors observed appeared to implement the components of the therapeutic triangle as evidenced by their interactions with students. For example, professors spent time calling on students, asking questions, and some even called students by name. These actions are similar to the existing research regarding the relationship between the therapist/client and the importance of the relationship today to be nonhierarchical (Guzzardo et al., 2021).

The findings obtained from inquiring about the professor participants' perception of being therapeutic with students at the college level will build to the existing body of research by

offering a greater understanding of the professors' perception rather than just taking the students' perception into consideration when trying to improve or resolve the problem with college retention.

Research Question 2

The professor participants were studied across various domains in order to address the problem in this study regarding the limited understanding of four year, undergraduate college professors' knowledge of incorporating therapeutic approaches in their relationships with students. The purpose of gathering the better understanding of knowledge was to hopefully support students' academic achievement in college. The same three different data points were used to approach a better understanding of the second research question-what existing knowledge do college professors have related to empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard? The significance of gathering this information is that it can evaluate what professors know about therapeutic relationships and therapeutic strategies.

The implications of their [professors'] knowledge of the three components of Rogers' therapeutic triangle were not apparent in the analysis of the syllabi. Although the professor participants documented within the syllabi requirements, exceptions, and availability in the syllabi which implied perception, there was nothing written that clearly indicated that the accuracy of the definitions were known.

The implications of the semi-structured interviews were more concise than those of the analysis of the syllabi. The majority of the professors accurately defined the three components of Rogers' therapeutic triangle, even though some verbalized that they had never heard some of the terms before. Although some of the professors reported that they never heard the terms before, some were able to guess the meaning through the context of the words, especially when

questioned about the meaning of unconditional positive regard. In addition to these findings, four out of the 10 professors accurately defined the terms, but when asked to give an example of a time that the condition was implemented, the participants were not able to do so in an appropriate manner that related to Rogers' definition of the concepts. For example, these four participants defined unconditional positive regard as being positive with students and willing to accept students, but when giving examples of times that they [professors] offered unconditional positive regard two of the professors replied with "I acknowledge when they do well", one disclosed that they are consistent with students depending on how the student behaves and participant 10 reported that unconditional positive regard was offered when finding positivity in a sad situation by smiling instead of crying. These explanations are inconsistent with Rogers' definition because Rogers defines unconditional positive regard as acceptance of people and what they are going through (Swan et al., 2020) and the examples given by these four participants demonstrate acceptance of students for doing well and if hard times exist, trying to be more positive.

The first theme found in the interviews that answered research question two was *professors' accurate knowledge of empathy*. The implication that the professors accurately defined empathy was due to the ways in which the professors defined empathy when asked to define the term. The majority of the participants reported that empathy was "the ability to walk in someone else's shoes" and "understanding someone." The researcher also made this implication based upon the comparison between the participants' responses and the existing literature regarding how Carl Rogers defined the condition of empathy. Carl Rogers defined empathy as the ability of someone to understand what is communicated and the desire to assist

the person with the communicated concern. Empathy is imperative to interpersonal relationships (Swan et al., 2020).

The second theme found in the interviews that answered research question two was *professors' accurate knowledge of genuineness*. The implication that the professors accurately have knowledge of the concept genuineness was made due to the majority of the professors communicating that when they think of genuineness they think of someone being “authentic.” According to the theoretical framework of Rogers, genuineness is defined as being authentic and having the ability to communicate this reality with those served (Swan et al., 2020). The participants had existing knowledge of the definition, but when they discussed how they were genuine with student, they did not all knowingly discuss circumstances as Rogers would have intended genuineness to be demonstrated to clients in therapy. Rogers viewed being genuine as a core condition that the therapist would demonstrate to the clients in hopes that the client can view imperfections as acceptable. Although the professors in the interviews were able to recite the correct definition of genuineness, only some were able to actually apply the concept. For example, only four out of the 10 participants responded that they offer genuineness through “self-disclosures, laughing, and owning up to mistakes.” The other participants who were accurate in their definitions did not apply the concepts like Rogers would have suggested and instead, reported that they were genuine with students by “giving accurate and honest feedback when the students demonstrated a lack of understanding of material.”

The third theme found in the interviews that answered research question two was *professors uncertain knowledge of unconditional positive regard (upr)*. The implication for this theme was due to the evidence that some of the professors reported that they had never heard of this term before, but “I could probably figure it out.” The participants oftentimes defined

unconditional positive regard as “no matter what” happens to a student, but when asked to give an example of a time that they offered this, the majority of the professors offered this level of acceptance in a conditional manner, not unconditional like Rogers’ suggested in his theoretical framework. Rogers defined unconditional positive regard as accepting people as they are and what they are going through without imposing any values or judgment (Swan et al., 2020). Rogers’ usage of unconditional positive regard during sessions was found to be effective in facilitating his clients to reach their goals without any judgement (Velasquez & Montiel, 2018). Rogers usage of specific words, like “yes” when clients spoke during therapy created a sense of agreement and nonjudgement. For example, when Rogers replied to a client that was disappointed with “yeah, I get the disappointment”, this made the client feel accepted even though the disclosure may have not necessarily have been favorable (Velasquez & Montiel, 2018). Therefore, the professors were not consistent with this. There is no evidence that they need to be in order to improve academic achievement, but the contrast with Rogers is the point.

Participant 10 defined unconditional positive regard as “despite a given scenario”, but when asked to given an example of a time that she offered this, she replied “finding the positive in a bad scenario.” This example implies that the participant could accurately define the term, but when asked to give the example of how the term was used, the participant responded with a story about needing to be strong at a funeral; therefore, this implies that the professor could not utilize the term in the way that Rogers would have intended since Rogers’ defined unconditional positive regard as more than experiencing positivity, but defined it as offering acceptance (Velasquez & Montiel, 2018). Again, there is no evidence that acceptance would improve academic achievement or be the correct action for a professor but the contrast with Rogers is what is being explained.

Like the syllabi data used to answer research question two, the implications of the observation data was also nonexistent. There were no implications from the observations that clearly led the researcher to believe that the participants observed had the knowledge of any of the terms of the therapeutic triangle.

The findings obtained from inquiring about the professor participants' existing knowledge of being therapeutic with students at the college level will build into the existing body of research by offering a greater understanding of what professors know about being in this type of relationship and offering the conditions of Rogers' therapeutic triangle as Rogers intended for these conditions to be offered. Since there is an abundance of research findings that found that students have a desire to be in these types of relationships with their professors academically, it was necessary to assess whether or not those that are expected to be part of this relationship had the knowledge to do so.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this qualitative design offer two recommendations that can be applied to practice; both having to do with the role of the professor at the college level. This study was done to gain a better understanding of how college professors perceive and if they had any existing knowledge on applying therapeutic concepts when working with students at the college level.

Based on the findings of this research, professors do perceive that they [professors] may share similar qualities to counselors, but communicate that they do not have the learned skillset nor credential to appropriately treat students when faced with any subjective circumstances outside of the course-related content area. Although most of the professors stated this during the interview when asked directly, many of the professors later told stories where they tended to the

students' subjective issues outside of the classroom. Secondly, the specific criteria that makes up the therapeutic relationship between students and professors was based upon the theoretical framework of Carl Rogers (Swan et al., 2020). These findings of this study suggest that the majority of the professors have existing knowledge of the meaning of the terms empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard in general, but do not utilize these therapeutic conditions in the same manner as Carl Rogers built his theoretical model upon. Without the proper training of teaching pedagogy and Carl Rogers' person-centered and/or student centered models, students may not be able to receive the level of support that they desire to achieve academically.

Graduate Level Training on Facilitative Skills for Teaching: Specifically Focusing on Active Listening Skills, Eye Contact, and Communication

The first recommendation serves as an aide in helping college professors improve their overall facilitative skills prior to beginning professorship. The incorporation of a teaching/education class in graduate school despite the graduate student's area of focus could increase the likelihood of meeting students' various needs that may/may not be related to the content area. This incorporation course could be beneficial because those who teach at the college level do not necessarily receive any formal training in facilitative skills training like those that will one day teach k-12th grade (Robinson & Hope, 2013). In addition to the need for teacher training, there is an abundance of research that suggests that students desire professors who are supportive by offering active listening and other interpersonal skills. This level of support at the college level does not typically occur as it does in elementary and secondary education systems (Bohannon et al., 2019 & Robinson et al., 2019).

The outcomes of the study serve as a suggestion/recommendation of the potential benefits because these professors that participated were all at the college level and receiving facilitative skills training is not a requirement in becoming a college professor. Although some of the professors studied were from the college of education and were trained teachers, the majority were not. Three of the professors were very interactive as evidenced by increased eye contact, appropriate proximity to students, and genuine in the classrooms; whereas, two of the professors claimed to be during the interviews, but when observed, were not as evidenced by lack of eye contact and monotone teaching. The importance of facilitative skills and qualities of teachers/professors and the findings of this study are the main reasons why graduate level training for facilitate skills for teaching are being recommended.

Intervention Programs for Acquisition of Student-Centered Teaching by Utilizing Rogers' Therapeutic Triangle for College Professors

The second recommendation is to ensure that college professors at the undergraduate level are given an opportunity to learn about Rogers' therapeutic triangle (Wickman & Campbell, 2003) by offering a student-centered teaching program to increase the likelihood of enhancing academic success. Studies have shown that students do well when they feel like their professors care and support them (Amerstorfer et al. 2021; Bardach et al., 2021; Miller & Mills, 2019; Raposa et al., 2021; & Weger, 2018). In addition to the professor qualities, students also value positive faculty-student relationships (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Altavilla et al., 2021; Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021; Raposa et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018). These relationships have been described as needing to be more therapeutic in nature where the professor is willing to

demonstrate qualities as that of a counselor (Swan et al., 2020). This is suggested, but there is no evidence that this would support students' academic achievement.

The outcomes of this study serve as a recommendation/suggestion for an intervention program for acquisition of student-centered teaching by utilizing Rogers' therapeutic triangle for college professors. This recommendation is due to the various needs of students and the inconsistency of professors' knowledge and application of Rogers' therapeutic triangle terminology and the lack of knowledge regarding the manner in which the theoretical framework of Carl Rogers' was suggested to be implemented.

The professors think that there are times where empathy, acceptance, and genuineness need to be offered to students, but believe that there are times where the concepts of Rogers' therapeutic triangle do not serve a purpose in the student-faculty relationship. For example, specifically regarding outcome measures like tests and assignments, professors are only willing to allow excuses if the students communicate circumstances that are outside of one's control. This perception is inconsistent with Rogers' ideas especially in his description of empathy and unconditional positive regard. Rogers' believed that the relationship that was filled with unconditional positive regard and understanding was the type that paved the way for the best client outcomes in therapy (Velasquez & Montiel, 2018). There is no evidence that unconditional acceptance would improve academic achievement but it would be consistent with Rogers' therapeutic approach.

Another concept that could be focused on in the intervention is that of genuineness. Rogers defined genuineness the same as many of the professors. Genuineness means authenticity (Swan et al., 2020). The professors were aware of the definition, but knowing who or when to be authentic was unknown for most. Rogers believed that the therapist was the one that

demonstrated genuineness to the client so that the client could be part of an environment that was free from perfection and would enable growth. The professors that self-disclosed and admitted to any mistakes made were compliant with Rogers' ideas of genuineness. The majority did not have the knowledge to communicate the concept in this manner.

These recommendations were made because the entire study was prompted by the problem that there is a limited understanding of professors' perception and knowledge of offering therapeutic strategies with students. Even though the majority of the professors studied possess some therapeutic qualities at times, there are times where they may benefit from the way that Rogers' suggested using the concepts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the theoretical framework of Carl Rogers, the outcomes of this study, and its implications, it is recommended that future researchers may continue studying college professors regarding their facilitative skills and knowledge of the terminology and utilization of Carl Rogers' person-centered and student-centered framework to improve academic outcomes for students and possibly utilize the findings from this design for further research. The findings of this study suggest that it would be beneficial for future researchers to conduct an experiment that would include an intervention group where professors receive training specifically on the understanding and implementation of Carl Rogers' therapeutic triangle. These recommendations of future research are given so that future researchers can continue the search for ways to improve the problem with college retention.

Future researchers can improve upon this study in several ways, given its limitations. The limitations in this study were discussed in the beginning part of Chapter 5. The first limitation had to do with the participant representation. Future researchers may want to research

professors from different universities and different departments within the various university colleges. This study was limited because the participants came from a small southern university and only two of the five colleges were represented as participants. If more of a representation of the various departments were captured, then the findings would be more trustworthy in qualitative research. Future researchers may also want to factor in biases on behalf of both researcher and participant by incorporating more measures to ensure reliability of the results. The recommendation that could occur to improve observer bias would have been for the observer to have inter-rater reliability during all data collection procedures. It may also be beneficial for the researcher to not hold a position at the university studied to prevent participant bias which may lead to the participants knowing who the researcher is, what the researcher teaches, and the potential for an expectation as to where the researcher stands on behalf of the study's research questions. All of these limitations exist due to the time constraints of the course and attempt to complete the dissertation.

The next logical step in research would be to assess further the relationship between either those who hold a background in education or counseling and their [professors] impact on successful student outcomes. Any further investigation on professors pedagogy, nontraditional skills, resources, and possibly the need for incorporating any treatment focused interventions in academia so that college professors, like K-12th grade educators, can be trained to deliver the most optimal support to students no matter their experiences.

Conclusions

The importance of obtaining a college education has been at the forefront of academia for decades (Paolini, 2019). Many believe that in order to be financially secure, one must obtain a college degree. Due to the importance of obtaining a college degree, our education systems

across the world have spent years ensuring that students of all ages are actively thinking about their future and concurrently working to obtain the best outcomes on quantitative measures, like test scores to prove ones' ability to succeed (Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Millea et al., 2018; Paolini, 2019; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Students as young as kindergarten are part of conversations that are centered around their [students'] future goals as an adult with a heavy emphasis on college being the only path for career success (Paolini, 2019).

As students enter high school, the conversations become more specific regarding the importance of college planning. For many, college preparation includes enrollment in college preparation courses, networking with potential college personnel, aptitude test preparation and taking, meetings with guidance counselors, and so much more to ensure that students are prepared for college (Paolini, 2019). Traditionally, the best predictors of college enrollment and achievement have been quantitative measures like grade point averages and tests scores on aptitude tests like the SAT and ACT (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). Students with high scores are viewed as more ready for college and likely to successfully obtain a college degree. For years and still today, educators and parents focus heavily on ensuring that students are ready for college.

With all of the preparation and planning to ensure that students are ready for college, the outcomes for enrollment are met. The majority of students do attend college post high school. Although enrollment is on the rise, retention is not (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018). This problem with retention creates questions regarding the heavy focus on only quantitative traditional measures like high grade point averages and test scores on the ACT/SAT. Researchers are now attempting to find out what other factors could play a part in attrition and an increase in retention. Numerous studies have been done where researchers have studied college students to

evaluate what more is needed to improve the likelihood of successful academic outcomes (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Allensworth et al., 2020; Altavilla et al., 2021; Buskirk-Cohen et al., 2019; Caruth, 2018; Guzzardo et al., 2021; Hagenauer et al., 2022, Millea et al., 2018; Paolini, 2019; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018; & Swan et al., 2020). Although various ideas have been presented, one that has been reported through various research findings has to do with students wanting to have and need positive relationships with their professors (Abraham et al., 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Altavilla et al., 2021; Amerstorfer & Freiin von Munster-Kistner, 2021; Bardach et al., 2022; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021; Raposa et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019; & Weger, 2018). Students often report feeling like their relationships with teachers in K-12th grade is supportive, but when the transition from high school to college occurs, the relationship becomes more hierarchical and students do not necessarily feel like subjective experiences are taken into consideration (Guzzardo et al., 2021). Student verbalize those non-traditional variables, that are therapeutic in nature, like sense of belonging, care, and empathy from professors are the factors that may just make the difference regarding improving academic outcomes like retention, especially since so many students today are faced with mental health needs, financial obligations, and various other subjective experiences.

The problem that was addressed in this study was that there is a limited understanding of four year, undergraduate college professors' knowledge and perceptions of incorporating therapeutic approaches in their relationship with students in and out of the classroom. The purpose of this study was to develop a greater understanding of professors' knowledge and perception of incorporating these therapeutic approaches with students while in college to support students' academic achievement. The importance of this study is that if obtaining a college degree is necessary and those with good grades and high test scores are included in

attrition, and students have verbalized that these therapeutic relationships with their professors could be beneficial to their various needs, then research needed to be done to evaluate what professors perceive and know about this new potential role being incorporated into their existing pedagogy.

The results of this study indicate that professors perceive the roles of counselor and professor as separate but they [professors] may already be offering students therapeutic qualities on occasion, depending on the students' needs and fulfillment of student responsibilities. The professors in this study demonstrated the knowledge of the therapeutic terms of Rogers' therapeutic triangle, but failed to use the terms in the same clinical manner as the theory into practice would suggest since nine out of the 10 participants were not trained counselors. The recommendations are based off of these findings in hopes that professors can learn to effectively offer students empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness in hopes of possibly improving student outcomes.

Students' needs surpass an environment where the relationship between professor and student are hierarchical. Today, it is recommended that professors realize that it is not only important but necessary to teach the *whole* student if the goal is to witness academic achievement. Without the cooperation from faculty, students' needs cannot and will not be met and we may continue to see a decrease in college retention.

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Appendix A

Dean Letters

To whom it may concern:

I am sending this letter as a request for you as Dean of your college at Nicholls State University to inform the professors within your college of an opportunity to participate in my research study for my dissertation. I ask that you consider this request as an opportunity for me to gather information for my dissertation topic, Understanding Professors' Perceptions and Knowledge of Being Therapeutic at the College Level: A Qualitative Case Study.

If you intend to allow professor participation, please reply communicating agreement in an email and forward this email to the professors asking them to consider participation in my study. Please copy me on the email so that I can be aware of the professors willing to participate.

Bridget Coddou
PhD Candidate/Northcentral University

Date: 09/14/23

Hello NU IRB,

I am the Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences.

I have reviewed Bridget Coddou's study, and I understand that she is recruiting participants who meet all of the following criteria:

1. Serve as a full-time professor at Nicholls State University.
2. Teach at least one in-person course at Nicholls State University during the Fall 2023 semester.

I grant permission to Bridget Coddou to do the following:

1. Obtain the syllabi from faculty that agree to participate in the study.
2. Meet with any full-time faculty via zoom for at least one hour to interview professors.
3. Observe professors in one in-person course during the Fall 2023 semester.

If you have questions and would like to reach me, please email me at scot.rademaker@nicholls.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Signature

Date: 09/14/23

Hello NU IRB,

I am the Dean of the College of Nursing.

I have reviewed Bridget Coddou's study, and I understand that she is recruiting participants who meet all of the following criteria:

1. Serve as a full-time professor at Nicholls State University.
2. Teach at least one in-person course at Nicholls State University during the Fall 2023 semester.

I grant permission to Bridget Coddou to do the following:

1. Obtain the syllabi from faculty that agree to participate in the study.
2. Meet with any full-time faculty via zoom for at least one hour to interview professors.
3. Observe professors in one in-person course during the Fall 2023 semester.

If you have questions and would like to reach me, please email me at raquel.engolio@nicholls.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Signature

Date: 09/14/23

Hello NU IRB,

I am the Dean of the College of Business.

I have reviewed Bridget Coddou's study, and I understand that she is recruiting participants who meet all of the following criteria:

1. Serve as a full-time professor at Nicholls State University.
2. Teach at least one in-person course at Nicholls State University during the Fall 2023 semester.

I grant permission to Bridget Coddou to do the following:

1. Obtain the syllabi from faculty that agree to participate in the study.
2. Meet with any full-time faculty via zoom for at least one hour to interview professors.
3. Observe professors in one in-person course during the Fall 2023 semester.

If you have questions and would like to reach me, please email me at marilyn.mackik-frey@nicholls.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Signature

Date: 09/14/23

Hello NU IRB,

I am the Dean of the College of Sciences and Technology.

I have reviewed Bridget Coddou's study, and I understand that she is recruiting participants who meet all of the following criteria:

1. Serve as a full-time professor at Nicholls State University.
2. Teach at least one in-person course at Nicholls State University during the Fall 2023 semester.

I grant permission to Bridget Coddou to do the following:

1. Obtain the syllabi from faculty that agree to participate in the study.
2. Meet with any full-time faculty via zoom for at least one hour to interview professors.
3. Observe professors in one in-person course during the Fall 2023 semester.

If you have questions and would like to reach me, please email me at john.doucet@nicholls.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Signature

Date: 09/14/23

Hello NU IRB,

I am the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

I have reviewed Bridget Coddou's study, and I understand that she is recruiting participants who meet all of the following criteria:

1. Serve as a full-time professor at Nicholls State University.
2. Teach at least one in-person course at Nicholls State University during the Fall 2023 semester.

I grant permission to Bridget Coddou to do the following:

1. Obtain the syllabi from faculty that agree to participate in the study.
2. Meet with any full-time faculty via zoom for at least one hour to interview professors.
3. Observe professors in one in-person course during the Fall 2023 semester.

If you have questions and would like to reach me, please email me at jean.donegan@nicholls.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Signature

Appendix B

Consent Form

My name is Bridget Coddou, and I am a doctoral student at National University (NU). I also hold a role as a Psychology instructor here at Nicholls State University.

I am asking you to take part in a research study about professor and student relationships and what professors perceive as therapeutic and their existing knowledge on what it means to be therapeutic. The title of my dissertation is “Understanding Professors’ Perceptions and Knowledge of Being Therapeutic at the College Level: A Qualitative Case Study.”

You may participate in this research if you meet all of the following criteria:

1. You are a full-time professor at Nicholls State University.
2. You teach at least one in-person course.

I hope to include 10 people in this research study.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What you will be asked to do:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Submit your in-person course syllabus via email to bridget.coddou@nicholls.edu
2. Participate in a 1:1 in-person interview via zoom for at least one hour during the fall 2023 semester.
3. Be willing to be observed by the researcher in your one in-person course on one occasion only.

During the activities, you will be asked questions about:

- Your perception and knowledge of being therapeutic with students at the college level.
- An example for demographic topics: “Your age and gender.”

Risks: No foreseeable risks in the research study. The information will be kept confidential.

Benefits: If you participate, there are no direct benefits to you. This research may increase the body of knowledge in the subject area of this research.

Confidentiality: I will keep the records of this study private and take reasonable measures to protect the security of all your personal information. In any report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. I will shred all information when the study is complete.

Taking part is voluntary: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may quit at any time.

If you have questions: Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at bridget.coddou@nicholls.edu or at 985-870-4561.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) via email at irb@nu.edu

Informed Consent

Title of the Study: Understanding Professors' Perceptions and Knowledge of Being Therapeutic at the College Level: A Qualitative Case Study

Principle Investigator:

Bridget Coddou: Department of Psychology, Nicholls State University

PhD Candidate: Department of Psychology-Northcentral University

(985) 870-4561

bridget.coddou@nicholls.edu

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to further investigate professors' perception and knowledge of being therapeutic with students at the college level. You are being asked to participate in this study because you speak English, are a full-time professor, and teach at least one in-person course at the university.

Study Procedures:

Once you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to do several steps. The first request is for you to complete a brief demographic questionnaire and submit your syllabus for in-person course and your vitae. In the meantime, you will schedule one in-person, 60 minute interview with the researcher. You will be asked a series of questions related to your perception and knowledge of being therapeutic with students at the college level. Lastly, the researcher will request to sit in on one lecture where the researcher will evaluate the theoretical concepts of the study. No interaction will take place during the lecture with the professor nor the students.

Risks and Confidentiality:

There are no identified risks in the study because the information obtained will be kept confidential. Any written submissions via email will be done in a password protected email and in-person documents will be anonymous and labeled as participant 1, participant 2, etc. The documents will be stored in a locked box and in the researchers possession.

No students will be contacted in the study.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time necessary.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you in this study, but rather may give insight into how professors feel about being therapeutic with students and if they have any knowledge regarding doing so. The findings from this design may be a catalyst for further research and intervention.

Consent:

I have read and I understand the information outlined above. I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and will not be penalized for doing so. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my own personal record.

Participant's Signature _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Appendix C Document and Artifact Protocol

Please email your syllabus for the in-person class that you will use as your course of observation. Send the syllabus to bridget.coddou@nicholls.edu.

The usage of your syllabus is for the researcher to gain access to your policies and procedures in the course of instruction.

Appendix D**Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire****Understanding Professors' Perceptions and Knowledge of Being Therapeutic at the College Level****Qualitative Exploratory Case Study****Interview**

Initials: _____

Department: _____

Full-time Professor: yes/no

Rank: _____

Degree(s) and discipline: _____

Credentials (Include full names of Acronyms): _____

Professor teaches at least one in-person course at Nicholls State University: yes/no

Name of In-Person Course/Section of Course: _____

I do/do not have any training/background in Psychology/Counseling. Explain response.

General Questions:

1. How many years have you been teaching?
 2. What subjects do you teach?
 3. What is your teaching pedagogy?
 4. Explain items from the Syllabus that was submitted. What are the most important items to you?
-

Focus 1: (Captures existing knowledge of theoretical framework)

Theoretical Framework: Carl Rogers' Three Core Conditions: Empathy, Congruence (Genuineness) and Unconditional Positive Regard

5. What is Empathy?
6. What does it mean to be Genuine?
7. What is Unconditional Positive Regard?
8. What does a therapeutic relationship mean to you?

Focus 2: Research Question 1: What are college professors' perceptions of being therapeutic in their teaching by offering students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard?

9. What do you believe college students need in order to be successful in college?
10. Who is responsible for college students' success while in college?
11. What is one thing that you do to contribute to the success of your students?
12. Is there anything that you think you could improve to enhance the success of your students?
13. Name one circumstance where you demonstrated empathy to students.
14. Name one circumstance where you felt like you did not need to demonstrate empathy to students.
15. Name one circumstance where you wish you would have demonstrated empathy to students.
16. Name one circumstance where you demonstrated genuineness to your students.
17. Name one circumstance where you felt like you did not need to demonstrate genuineness to students.
18. Name one circumstance where you wish you would have demonstrated genuineness to students.
19. Name one circumstance where you demonstrated unconditional positive regard to students.

20. Name one circumstance where you felt like you did not need to demonstrate unconditional positive regard to students.

21. Name one circumstance where you wish you would have demonstrated unconditional positive regard to students.

22. Tell me how you feel regarding the relationship between college students and faculty. Should college student-faculty relationships resemble those of a client-counselor? Explain your answer.

23. If the President of Nicholls required you to participate in an intervention where therapeutic strategies were taught in order to be more effective with student needs would you participate? Explain your answer.

24. Additional questions/comments/notes:

Appendix E

Observation Checklist

Understanding Professors' Perceptions and Knowledge of Being Therapeutic at the College Level

Qualitative Exploratory Case Study

OBSERVATION

Participant Number: _____

Course Name: _____ Section: _____

Focus 1: (Captures existing knowledge of theoretical framework)

Theoretical Framework: Carl Rogers' Three Core Conditions: Empathy, Congruence (Genuiness) and Unconditional Positive Regard and Research Question 2: What existing knowledge of being therapeutic by offering their students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard do college professors possess?

Focus 2: Research Question 1: What are college professors' perceptions of being therapeutic in their teaching by offering students empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard?

Environment/Setting: Describe what the classroom environment looks like:

Professor/Student Interaction: Things to look for: reading from power points, soliciting student feedback and interaction, open-ended questions, etc.

Empathy Demonstration: Look at body language, language/statements, and any demonstration of understanding to students from professor.

Genuiness Demonstration: Look at the professors eye contact, responses to questions he/she may/may not be aware of, self-disclosures (professor).

Acceptance Demonstration: Look at body language, language/statements, and any demonstration of acceptance of students from professor.

Additional Information:

Appendix F

Table 2

Table 4

Research Question 1 Codes, Categories, and Themes

Codes	Categories	Themes
Listening Sounding Board Role model Advocate Skill Teaching Direction Advising Support Disclosure Uphold Confidentiality Cautious Professor Decision	Therapeutic Qualities Resemblance of Therapist and Professor	Professors and counselors share qualities, but not skills
Available Employment Death Subjective Experiences Opportunity-Teachable Moments Excessive Absences Cheating Offenses Noncompliance Self-Inflated Problems Relatable Experiences	Empathy Offered Empathy Refused Empathy Hindsight	Student responsibility yields empathy from professors
Self-Disclosure Admitting Mistakes Constructive Feedback Consistently Honest Boundaries	Genuineness Offered Genuineness Refused Genuineness Hindsight	The Inconsistencies of Genuineness
Consistency Acknowledgement Difficut Students Subjective Experiences Poor Student Qualities Careless Rude	UPR Offered UPR Refused UPR Hindsight	UPR Contingent Upon Student Responsibility

Note. UPR: Unconditional Positive Regard

Appendix G

Table 3

Table 5

Research Question 2 Codes, Categories, and Themes

Codes	Categories	Themes
Understanding Compassion Walking in Someone's Shoes Listening Unsure Grace	Empathy	Professors Accurate Knowledge of Empathy
Nonverbal and Verbal Match Real Authentic Honest Sincere Truth Direct	Genuineness	Professors' Accurate Knowledge of Genuineness
Not Negative Positive Toxicity No Matter What Happens Unsure Codes Despite the Problem Nonjudgmental Tolerance Benefit of the Doubt Positive Attitude	Unconditional Positive Regard	Professors' Uncertain Knowledge of UPR

Note. UPR: Unconditional Positive Regard