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Enacting Stories: Discovering Parallels of Narrative and Expressive Therapies,

A Literature Review

Capstone Thesis

Lesley University

May 5, 2023

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Abstract

This literature review will analyze the use of narrative therapy (NT) techniques, dance/movement therapy (DMT) techniques, and expressive therapy (ET) techniques in an effort to distinguish where theoretical parallels exist between these methods of counsel. Narrative therapy is a postmodern framework of counseling that assists clients in resisting damaging stories that have been embedded through bioecological systems of exposure throughout development. Narrative therapy structures its philosophy through processes of externalization and deconstruction, and encourages the process of reframing or re-authoring one's personal self-narrative. At their core, DMT and ET already utilize components of foundational NT practices, through processes of enactment, arts-based mapping, and reorientation. This thesis will explore ways in which this happens within expressive therapeutic techniques independently, and in combination with NT.

Keywords: narrative therapy, dance/movement therapy, expressive therapies, bioecological systems, externalization, enactment, deconstruction, meaning-making, re-authoring, reorientation

Author Identity Statement: This author identifies as an able-bodied, heterosexual, cis-gender woman, and white American of mixed European ancestry, from North Carolina, residing in Massachusetts. The author recognizes the impact, privilege, and influence of their scope of experience within the context of this research.

Enacting Stories: Discovering Parallels of Narrative and Expressive Therapies,
A Literature Review

Introduction

The foundation of an individual's life story is a dance between internal facilities, external influences, and how the duality of these experiences create meaning. The ways in which individuals position themselves in their personal reality is a dynamic and ever-evolving process. Taking many forms, an individual's self-narrative is encompassed by layers of life experience through the discourse of exposure. This dance of life weaves in and out of social constructs and systems of exogenous factors that guide us in subscribing to beliefs, ideologies, and ways of knowing. Ideally the fabric of these subscriptions aligns with one's personal philosophies and facets of identity. Nonetheless, this is not always the case.

Humans possess impressionable minds that are constantly resourcing information from who and what surrounds them, in an effort to better make sense of their external world. Most often, exposure combines elements of socialization including family, peer, community, cultural, religious, institutional, political, and societal influences. These components of socialization typically encourage us to adopt mentalities that align with the individuals and the ideologies that are most prominent during our formative years of development. The story goes, if an individual subscribes to beliefs that abide by or conform to the norms that they are presented with, these will serve as effective tools that help one integrate in their external world with minimal conflict (Berk, 2018). Wagaman et al. (2018) describes that we live in a world which emphasizes a "status quo that normalizes a hostile environment" (p. 3). With vast social factors and endless

opportunities of exposure at play, individuals risk the possibility of developing beliefs that may intrinsically harm their way of knowing and being with the world.

Richert (2003) describes that “self is conceptualized as both a process of meaning creation and a narrative” (p. 193). Informed by the discourses around them, individuals develop a self-narrative that combines various layers of meaning creation. Throughout this lived-experience, self-narrative can ebb and flow between productive, preferred ways of being, and damaging, conflict-driven ways of being. Narrative therapy (NT) is a postmodern theoretical framework of counseling which embodies the belief that “human dilemmas are manufactured in social contexts rather than embedded in human beings themselves” (Semmler & Williams, 2000, p. 52). This element of NT encourages a strengths-based approach that centers the client as the expert of their lived experience. Alongside that, it encourages the notion that damaging external factors are the largest proponent of negative mental health outcomes.

Whether enforced by family, community, or broader society, the language and messaging that an individual is exposed to throughout their life shapes how they identify themselves. While productive messaging, that is healthy to development, may be present during an individual’s formative years, it is difficult to drown out the remainder of damaging messaging that exist. One of the main NT contributors, Micheal White, explored the notion that “dominant cultural knowledges” tend to be oppressive and problematic in nature (Carlson, 1997, p. 272). When problematic social forces are at play, exposure to marginalized ideologies pose threats and “barriers to clients’ full self-expression” (Semmler & Williams, 2000, p. 52). This level of exposure makes it difficult, and nearly impossible, for an individual to situate themselves outside of these contexts. Often, the experience of conflict and dilemma is the result of problem-

saturated narratives that have become internalized by the individual, by means of repetitive and exhaustive exposure.

Narrative therapists believe “each moment offers opportunities to create an alternative story that builds on strengths and desired outcomes for a satisfying life” (Etchison & Kleist, 2000, p. 61). The foundation of NT techniques involves a process in which “experiences are collapsed into narrative structures or stories to give a frame of reference for understanding and making experiences understandable” (Etchison & Kleist, 2000, p. 61). Through this process, the therapist invites the client to share all components of their life story. In collaboration, the therapist works to build a full amalgamation and understanding of what constitutes the client’s reality, facets of identity, past and present ways of navigating their world, and the personal conflicts they experience on small or large scales. As the therapist encourages the client to uncover their personal stories and narratives, the problem-saturated (conflicting or damaging narratives and dilemmas) come to the forefront, and become the access point for therapeutic healing.

In an effort to address, dismantle, and resist damaging stories, NT utilizes the processes of externalization, deconstruction, and re-authoring. Externalization deliberately separates the client from their personal conflict, and emphasizes the idea that problem-saturated narratives are born from “cultural assumptions rather than personal deficiencies” (Semmler & Williams, 2000, p. 53). Deconstruction invites the client and therapist to think critically about the root of the problem in order to better understand its development within their identity. Re-authoring invites the client to reframe their personal narrative and invite forward the narratives that are productive

in nature and salient to their lived experience. In this process, hidden aspects of the self are revealed and alternative person-centered stories emerge.

Conventionally, NT frameworks take form through verbal and lingual processing, or written communication. For many, verbalizing one's story may be difficult or restricted for various reasons; some being a lapse in communicative ability, difficulty in lingual expression, diagnostic limitations, or trauma-related hindrances. With this in mind, discovering ways to access and facilitate NT in alternative capacities is essential.

Dance/movement therapy is the integration of psychotherapeutic body-based counseling to promote wellness. Chaiklin (2009) describes the impacts of body integration in the process of healing. She writes, "when speaking of the body, we are not only describing the functional aspects of movement, but how our psyche and emotions are affected by our thinking and how movement itself effects change within them" (p. 5). Kronsted (2018) explores the benefits of movement-based narrative counseling, and asserts that "gaining new bodily skills and new bodily awareness changes the story we tell about ourselves" (p. 48). The integration of dance/movement therapy (DMT) helps build skills of "self-referencing, synchrony, sociality, and sense of agency," all of which are tools that aid in the utilization of NT techniques (Kronsted, 2018, p. 48).

Expressive therapy utilizes an intermodal approach to counseling that implements the integration of multiple creative arts expressions. Carlson (1997) considers the parallels of ET techniques and NT techniques. He describes that "art serves as a way for the client to bring forth hidden aspects" (p. 275) of their lived experience, which provides an alternative approach to NT methodology.

This review will consider the intricate nature of ecological systems of socialization and development, consider how NT, DMT, and ET acknowledge client intersectionality and cultural identity, and discuss the parallels between NT techniques, DMT techniques, and ET techniques. Through an investigation of the literature, this writer will demonstrate ways in which foundational NT strategies (externalization, deconstruction, and re-authoring) coincide with movement and arts-based expressive therapy models of practice.

Literature Review

Ecological Systems of Development: Forming Self-Narrative

In order to investigate a client's self-narrative and develop an understanding of their presenting therapeutic needs, clinicians often look at the social contexts, environmental exposures, and external exogenous factors at play throughout development and present day. Urie Bronfenbrenner was a Russian-American psychologist who researched childhood development through a social ecological lens. Bronfenbrenner emphasized the notion that "development varies over time based on vulnerability, risk, resilience, and social environment" (Wooten, 2013, p.700). He believed that the nature of an individual's environment, and the social contexts within them, profoundly impacts their development and understanding of the world. With these components in mind, Bronfenbrenner developed the Bioecological Systems Theory. This framework is composed of a layered web that investigates "interrelated nested structures with bidirectional influences" (Wooten, 2013, p.700). Consisting of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, this model considers the multitude of influences that encompass an individual's upbringing, biopsychosocial development, and present-day exposure.

The microsystem is encompassed by an individual's immediate environment and the social relational influences within them. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the microsystem as a "pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in each setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (p. 22). Environmental settings of the microsystem provide conditions in which "people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction," such as an individual's home or school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). The relational dynamics that exist within these settings normally involve caretakers, family members, teachers, and peers.

Beyond the microsystem lives the mesosystem which "includes connections between two microsystems where developing individuals play active roles" (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 5). Bronfenbrenner hypothesized that "the developmental potential of a setting in a mesosystem is enhanced if the person's initial transition into that setting is not made alone, that is, if he enters the new setting in the company of one or more persons with whom he has participated in prior settings" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 211). Berk (2018) provides an example of the mesosystem's function during childhood— a parent's involvement in their child's education at school can impact the child's academic progress (p. 24). Berk (2018) also describes an example of the mesosystem's function in adulthood — "how well a person functions as a spouse and parent at home is affected by relationships in the workplace, and vice versa" (p. 24).

The exosystem is defined as "connections between different social settings" where the individual is not directly involved (particularly on a day-to-day basis), but that an "event that occurs within this system has an indirect impact on the developing individual" (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 5). The exosystem broadly encompasses formal organizations, including

community health services, welfare systems, extended family members, neighbors or friends, management of a workplace, religious institutions, etc. (Berk, 2018, p. 24).

The macrosystem refers to what consistently encompasses culture, subculture, and national entities (i.e: government), and how these influence the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 5). Whether it be customs, lifestyle, values, or resources, the elements that make up the macrosystem impact the social and psychological features of the systems that operate within them (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 5). The defining features of the macrosystem inherently embellish a norming of ideologies and beliefs that stem from dominant groups and systems that hold positions of power. The macrosystem is also heavily reliant on the chronosystem, which investigates temporal dimensions and events.

The chronosystem “represents individual, social, and historical time-encompassing changes in the characteristics of the individual” (Wooten, 2013, p. 702). As time is in constant motion, the chronosystem is continuously evolving as well. Similarly, as individuals develop and grow into different stages of life, each layer of their bioecological systems continues to shift depending on the environments, contexts, communities, and discourses that they are exposed to (Berk, 2018). Richert (2003) considers the notion that “self is understood as constantly evolving, and specific stories and the overarching narrative are constantly being regenerated and revised as the person lives” (p. 193).

Inevitably, an individual’s development is susceptible to a variety of barriers or disadvantages, and these can drastically inform their bioecological system, and subsequently their self-narrative. El Zaatari and Maalouf (2022) describe that “even a very constructive environment may not be sufficient to foster emotionally positive development” (p. 3). Lopez et

al. (2021) consider the social ecology of early life adversity, and determine that “disruptions in this ecology, including frequent low-grade stressors (insecurity, inattention), marked variability (life changes), and trauma (abuse/neglect), can have deleterious effects on children’s health and wellbeing that may continue into adulthood” (p. 353). A disruption within the microsystem may include an absent, neglectful, or abusive individual within one’s upbringing. A disruption within the mesosystem may include a divorce between a child’s biological parents, and conflict with custody rights. A disruption within the exosystem may include a caregiver becoming unemployed. A disruption within the macrosystem may include systemic marginalization towards an individual’s facets or intersectional components of identity. A disruption within the chronosystem may include a global pandemic.

It is essential for a clinician to assess if any disruptions were present in an individual’s development. From there, the therapist can consider how these may be showing up in a client’s current presentation and lived experience, as well as how the client references their personal stories as a result. Taking these considerations into account helps provide a better assessment of the contributors that may compromise one’s full self expression and self-narrative.

Culturally Informed Components of NT, DMT, and ET

Alongside developmental factors, cultural and intersectional facets of identity should be brought to the forefront in an effort to inform the most integrated method of self-narrative counseling. In combination, NT, DMT, and ET therapeutic techniques can elicit a deeper holistic approach to healing when culturally informed implications are amplified in the therapeutic process. From a NT perspective, the counselor collaborates with the client in deconstructing the dominant narratives that may have been learned and internalized through societal influences.

This process inherently looks into a client's orientation around historical prejudice and discrimination, systemic oppression and marginalization, stigmatization, manifestation of privilege, "norming" of -isms, and the embodiment of how individuals lived stories can be, or have been, written for them by dominant groups. In conjunction, the therapist and client consider ways to reclaim person-centered narratives that are productive and paramount to the clients authentic lived experience. This process is directly informed by a client's intersectional identity, culture, location, social milieu, community, historical roots, family systems, and individual values.

Weaving in DMT and ET into this process allows the individual to artistically represent facets of their identity through medium(s), modalities, and materials of choice. This invites the possibility of integrating movement styles, music, instruments, art methods, etc. that celebrate and are central to a client's personal background, cultural context, and ancestral roots. Nichols (2019) discusses how ET in combination with contemporary NT has the capacity to connect clients to "powerful traditions and may be the crucial catalyst for personal empowerment and spiritual liberation" (p. 33). Wagaman et al. (2018) offer the perspective that narrative techniques aid to "increase resiliency," "sway social justice movements," and engage in a "form of resistance" (p. 9). With this in mind, centering a client's voice in counseling, with intersectional components of identity at the heart, offers the ability to incorporate multicultural capacities of healing and encourage more opportunities for personal growth.

Initial Stages of NT: Understanding Self-Narrative

As the NT process takes form, clinicians invite clients to share their personal story in any way that feels most comfortable to them. In this process of sharing, the therapist remains curious.

Through intentional listening, the therapist focuses on noticing how the client presents their self-narrative and if/how they frame or reference the presenting problem they are experiencing. This may involve observations of the client's inflection, posture, demeanor, or attitudes while sharing. Throughout, the therapist is working to develop an understanding of what parts of the client's self-narrative serve them productively, what parts have brought them to seek or receive therapeutic services, and eventually invite the client to name their dilemma or conflict, if they haven't done so directly (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003, p. 122).

Once identified, it is within NT core values to look at the dilemma or conflict as one part of the client's self-narrative, and not something that encompasses their entire being.

Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) describe that "stories or narratives of our lives are co-constructed," (p. 123) and it is normally the case that an individual adopts an ideology that does not positively serve them. In NT, the ideologies or beliefs that negatively impact an individual's life story and are referenced as problem-saturated. Through the guidance of the therapist, and by the end of NT treatment, the goal is that a client reframes and embodies a self-narrative that emphasizes preferred outcomes. NT processes of externalization, deconstruction, and re-authoring assist in remedying the adverse components of self-narrative, and amplifying the desired parts of one's lived experience and story.

Externalization: NT-based Expression of Personal Story

After identifying which parts of the self-narrative are problem-saturated, the therapist encourages the process of externalization in an effort to help the client "conceptualize the problem as an entity existing outside of themselves" (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003, p. 123).

Conner (2017) describes that externalizing can "create space for the person to freely address their

problems without using up emotional resources to carry the weight of being the problem” (p.187). Through this externalization, the therapist “guides the client in visualizing the problem in a concrete form, as a ‘thing’ that resides separate” from the individual (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003, p. 123). This process gives the client a sense of agency or mastery over the identified conflict.

Separation from the problem is an essential step of NT, but sometimes this process of disembodiment can feel quite abstract. An identified problem may be ingrained by influences from more than one level of an individual’s bioecological system— ie: something that was taught from a microsystem perspective has been reinforced from a macrosystem perspective. Conceptualizing a problem or conflict as “separate” requires scaffolding from a counselor, especially if an individual has deeply internalized the belief that the problem resides within them.

In utilizing externalization in dialogue form, Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) suggest some of the following prompts if the client’s dilemma or conflict is fear-related:

- “Can you describe what the fear looks like?”
- “What color is the fear?”
- “What physical form does the fear resemble?”
- “If the fear were standing next to you, how big would it be in relation to you?” (p.123)

The nature of these questions emphasize the client’s ability to view their conflict in a form that can live in front of them, externally. In the structure of these prompts, Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) do not identify the conflict as “your fear,” and instead, use the intentional

language of “the fear” to further accentuate the quality of separation. From this perspective, the client can operate as a witness and observer, rather than experiencing it internally.

Arts-Informed Externalization: Enactment of Personal Story

As the client begins to develop a more separate relationship with the identified problem, the therapist may consider ways in which the client can utilize externalization beyond dialogue. Keeling and Bermudez (2006) share that “externalization adapts well to alternative forms of representation, such as art, writing, and experiential methods” (p. 405). The externalization (fear-related conflict) prompts, suggested by Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003), provide an access point to approaching expressive externalization through movement or arts-based mediums.

Movement-based Enactment of Personal Story

When agency, particularly bodily agency, is hindered or lacking, movement-based processing “creates a sense of reintegration with the body” (Kronsted, 2018, p. 52). From the perspective of a DMT experiential, it's important to consider how the externalization prompts that Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) suggest could be reframed into body-based explorations. The therapist might ask:

- Can you create a movement that displays what the fear looks like?
- Can you close your eyes, repeat the previous movement, and notice if there is a color that comes to mind?
- If the fear were standing next to you, can you show me how tall or wide the fear is by tracing its shape with your finger?

These questions restructure dialogue-based externalization prompts, and take processing a step further than verbalizing. Movement-based processing can deepen the clients exploration of their

dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem. The action of body-based responses can provide a broadened, more holistic scope of personal meaning-making. Kronsted (2018) reflects that “action leads to perception, which in turn leads to more actions” (p. 50). On top of gaining new insights through initial movement explorations, a client’s use of body-based investigations may expand their perception and encourage healthier outcomes in the future.

Kronsted (2018) describes that “human movement in interaction is a meaningful endeavor, and this meaning becomes important for how we understand ourselves and others” (p. 51). When combined with the foundational components of storying our lives, movement offers the ability to share self-narrative in an alternative form. Kronsted (2018) describes that Enactivism is the body-based process of self-narration and a form of physical separation from the problem. The framework of enactivism “moves away from internalist and computational models of the mind and focuses instead on brain-body-environment couplings in a holistic dynamic fashion” (Kronsted, 2018, p. 49). The interplay of brain and body puts cognition into action, and thus becomes an embodied process of externalization. Simultaneously, it becomes an attunement with self, with body, and with the external environment.

ET-based Expression of Personal Story

In an effort to demonstrate the benefits of arts-based externalization, researchers Keeling and Bermudez (2006) constructed a heuristic methodology and intervention technique in which clients utilize art-making as a means of “increasing awareness of personal resources, separating problems from self,” and providing “a sense of empowerment” (Conner, 2017, p. 188). Keeling and Bermudez (2006) convey their rationale for creating an arts-based NT intervention, noting that psychological and emotional conflict can be a difficult thing to describe in layman terms.

They suggest, “some problems are especially complex, abstract, and hard to grasp (both for clients and ourselves)” and that the use of a “concrete metaphor” might help with a client and therapist’s orientation around presenting problems (p. 406).

Conner (2017) put Keeling and Bermudez’s intervention into action, and performed a qualitative study with a population of adults seeking substance use treatment. The creative process of this study invited clients to explore arts-based externalizations of their conflict, map its influence, and reorient their relationship to the conflict. Through externalization inspired techniques, therapists encouraged clients to come up with an identity or a name for their conflict, dilemma, or presenting problem, and offered examples such as the “cage,” “monster,” or “storm” (p. 189). Clients were then asked to create an artistic representation of the identity that they assigned to their conflict. Connor (2017) provided ample time for the making and creating of the client’s externalized visual illustrations, and encouraged freedom in their use of arts materials. Clients were then invited to share with the group in session, if they felt comfortable to do so. By creating a tangible art piece, the clients actively and physically separated themselves from their conflict. Additionally, the arts-based identity of the conflict became something they could observe and witness as an external entity. This process directly involved classic NT externalization techniques through an innovative, arts-based, non-verbal exploration.

Deconstruction: NT-Based Meaning-Making

The process of sharing self-narrative reveals that not all parts of a client’s story are problematic. The process of deconstruction allows the therapist to collaborate with the client in discovering the meaning behind where each narrative stems from. There are a number of reasons or elements of discourse that instill problem-saturated beliefs whether it be constructed

internally, constructed from productive external factors, or constructed through harmful dominant norms. When constructed through the latter, these factors are often powerful enough to become ingrained in an individual. Additionally, these beliefs inevitably adapt themselves into a source of internal conflict. Heywood (2022) describes that this process “typically takes place on multiple levels, from broader social, political and cultural discourses... to familial and individual factors” (p. 11).

Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) describe that people normally possess the resources to help address and dismantle their problem-saturated narratives, but often, these resources “remain obscured by the power of their dominant stories” (p. 123). In an effort to dismantle the influence of social pervasive power, the therapist’s goal is to help “map the influence” of problem-saturated beliefs, and in doing so, deconstruct the clients presenting conflict. This allows them to build a better sense of agency around naming and addressing it (Conner, 2017, p. 188). Deconstruction is an invested process where both client and therapist work in collaboration to understand the origin, or beginning stages, of the problematic narrative that has been adopted. The origin of a conflict can take form by influence of a number of exposures, including but not limited to bioecological systems of socialization (via an individuals’ microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem). Whether it be instilled by means of societal, political, institutional, familial, cultural, or relational influences, it is part of the NT process to have clients acknowledge the impact of these discourses aloud.

In a study conducted with LGBTQI+ participants, Wagaman et al. (2018) described that by intentionally acknowledging the impact of damaging discourses, “bringing them to the forefront, and naming them, participants were better equipped to counter them with their own

narratives, rather than devaluing their personal experiences because they did not fit the dominant narratives” (p. 9). This study’s impact directly embodies the NT function of centering client as expert. In doing so, it emphasizes that an individual’s conflicting self-narrative is the byproduct of damaging social discourses and not a personal fallacy. Additionally, it utilizes the approach that a narrative can be altered to better fit one’s personal philosophies, values, and beliefs that provide them with a higher sense of meaning (Semmler & Williams, 2000, p. 53).

Arts-Informed Deconstruction: Meaning-Making

As a therapist, it is essential to consider what parts of a client’s story hold productive meaning, and harmful meaning. Additionally, map the influence of what has constructed these sense of meanings. Viktor Frankl, a Jewish-Austrian psychiatrist, devoted much of his work to understanding the human experience of meaning, and coined the theoretical framework of Logotherapy which investigates these notions. Wong (2015) describes that Frankl “made a compelling case that the human quest for meaning was the heart and soul of psychotherapy” (p. 154). Frankl’s philosophy identifies that humans discover meaning in three ways:

(1) through the creation of something, such as a work of art; (2) through an emotional experience, such as loving someone; and (3) through attitudinal meaning in which meaning can be found in the attitude one chooses.

(Landwehr, 2017, p. 178)

As Frankl emphasizes, there are numerous ways that meaning can be derived, with artistic and expressive creations at the forefront.

Movement-based Therapeutic Meaning-Making

Movement-based explorations can provide new-found meaning for clients self-narrative. The body informs and provides entry to different psychological states that may not be easily accessible. Leseho and Maxwell (2010) describe “the body reflects the mind and the mind reflects the body, and that in working with the body-mind, we affect both” (p. 18). This idea considers the notion that more meaningful meaning-making can stem from body and mind interactions. If body-based explorations are neglected, then the mental capacity for meaning-making is limited and inhibited. Leseho and Maxwell (2010) further argue that the body-mind thread and “mechanism of mutual feedback is the key to integrating cognitive process and somatic processing in a therapeutic context” (p. 18).

Authentic movement (AM) is a DMT technique and practice that stems from Jungian frameworks of active imagination. García-Díaz (2018) describes that “Active imagination enables the patient to express images of the unconscious, including those that come from the emotional state” (p. 18). When used in DMT, active imagination takes the form of AM, and is used “in the inner growth environment to facilitate self-knowledge,” and meaning-making (García-Díaz, 2018, p. 18). AM creates a space of exploration where a client can freely explore their experiences in the presence of another and engage in the reciprocal moving-witnessing relationship. García-Díaz (2018) provides the following description of AM in action:

There are two roles in AM, the mover and the witness. The mover, with closed eyes, centres attention on him or herself and tries to identify which physical impulse, emotion, feeling, sensory experience or mental image arises. Then, he or she allows that physical impulse, emotion, feeling, sensory experience or image to

express itself through movement, without forcing it, without it being prevented by an inner judgement, letting go of resistance, distracting thoughts or the need to be recognized. The role of the witness consists in regarding, silently, in stillness and with a non-judgmental attitude, everything that happens to the mover and to him or herself. (García-Díaz, 2018, p. 18)

AM creates a counselor to client dynamic that is not only authentic, but trusting. In its foundation, the client is the expert of their experience, as they allow bodily impulses to guide their explorations. Movement becomes an outlet for processing and a source of meaning-making.

In expanding upon the prompts that Rockquemoore and Laszloffy (2003) suggested for externalization processes, NT therapists might consider ways to structure follow-up prompts that target deconstruction techniques. In thinking about arts-informed mapping approaches and meaning-making of experiences, movement prompts can provide the client with an opportunity to critically consider the origin of their conflict through body-based explorations. The therapist might ask:

- Can you move through the space and create a timeline that maps the beginning stages of the fear? Through movement, can you show me how old you were?
- When thinking about the time in your life when the fear began, can you move in a way that depicts the types of environments you were in? Who was in those environments with you?
- Can you move through the space, continuing your timeline, and show how the fear has developed from its beginning stages up until now?

- Can you walk through the timeline you've created, and show how small or big the fear feels at different stages of life?

These questions provide the client with alternative, body-based forms of deconstructing the conflict of fear. In creating a movement timeline, the client explores the contexts and origin in which the fear began, and how it's developed since. Following these prompts, the therapist is encouraged to invite processing whether it be other arts explorations, journaling, or dialoguing. In doing so, the therapist allows more space for the client to discover further insight on any meaning-making that arose from their explorations, and reflect on their experiences of the movement mapping process.

ET-based Therapeutic Meaning-Making

Discovering meaning-making through alternative expressive forms invites clients to continue accessing authentic and active imagination strategies. Following the arts-based externalization intervention of their study for substance use treatment, Conner (2017) provided ways to map the influence of the client's dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem through imaginative prompts. Connor (2017) suggests that once a client identifies an identity (ie: cage, monster, or storm) for their conflict, the therapist is encouraged to ask a series of questions that further investigates where and to what extent the conflict is constructed or derived from. Conner (2017) provides examples of questions that can guide deconstruction or influence mapping techniques. These include—

“Cage” as identity of dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem:

- “How long have you been in the cage?”
- “What keeps you in the cage?”

- “How did the cage get constructed in the first place?” (p. 190)

“Monster” as identity of dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem:

- “How does the monster know when to attack?”
- “What does the monster try to convince you of?” (p. 190)

“Storm” as identity of dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem:

- “When does the storm tend to come around?”
- “What type of damage does the storm do?”
- “What happens when the storm is most threatening?” (p. 189)

By the nature of these questions, Conner (2017) effectively demonstrates how processes of deconstruction can be adapted into an artistic and imaginative form. The language of these questions further separates the individual from their dilemma, problem, or conflict, while providing opportunities to consider its origin in nontraditional ways.

In an effort to foster critical thinking and expand creativity of student nurses, researcher Casey (2009) conducted an ethnographic study in which participants utilized art-making as an alternative approach to expanding nursing education. The study’s creative process involved group workshops and individual explorations that integrated two methods of arts-based inquiry: visual art-making and creative writing. The art-making process instructed participants to aesthetically replicate or re-enact their personal experiences of caretaking/nursing practice through visual art-making and captioning. Casey (2009) describes that her aim as a nursing educator is to expand the conventional pedagogy of nursing students’ identities, values, knowledge, practice, and vocational orientation by “engaging with more experimental, less prescribed ways of learning and making sense of our worlds” (p. 71). Findings revealed that

participants experienced a deeper contemplation and interpretation of their nursing practice, and a greater ability to embed creative inquiry and critical thinking within their personal nursing pedagogy. This study considers how individuals can expand their understanding of components of their identity (ie: vocation) and utilize expressive art for personal meaning-making.

In addition to clients utilizing art-making as a tool for meaning-making, therapists and mental health researchers can incorporate personal art-making as a means for conceptualizing and better understanding their clients' experiences. Blaikie (2013) conducted a case study in which she used her own art-making in an effort to acknowledge and explore the cultural identity, challenges, and agency faced by women who have converted to Islam. Blaikie (2013) analyzed one female who identified with this cultural identity and experience of Islamic conversion. Blaikie's (2013) creative process integrated visual art-making and prose in order to interpret and contextualize her participant's lived experiences as they were described during a phenomenological interview. Blaikie (2013) created visual representations of the participant using oil paints, watercolor pencil crayons, oil pastels, conté crayons, and mixed media. Islamic art expressions of flat shapes, strong patterning, and linearity were integrated to deepen the art-making process and honor the Islamic identity of the participant. Blaikie (2013) describes herself as an artist-researcher, who embraces a belief system that identity and habitus is revealed through clothed and accessorized body expression. Her ontological perspectives on the relationship of habitus and attire informed her methodology, aesthetic value, and interpretation of this study's data. Through arts-based inquiry, Blaikie (2013) developed an enhanced understanding of the participants' Islamic belief system and their expression of cultural narrative identity. This study demonstrates how therapists can use NT and ET in combination, as a means to better understand

a clients self-narrative and cultural identity, with an integration of their related personal dilemma or conflict.

Re-authoring: NT-based Reframing

Once the construction of a client's self-narrative is better understood through the mapping process of deconstruction, re-authoring helps to offer alternative perspectives to "unhelpful dominant cultural discourses" (Boston, 2005, p. 272). In this process, the therapist encourages the "elicitation of subjugated narratives and unique outcomes that form preferred narratives in which the problem has no place" (Keeling & Bermudez, 2006, p. 406). Alongside this, the therapist helps clients discover and develop strategies that can be amplified in the "face of aversive social conditions that attempt to discredit and defile a personal narrative" (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003, p. 124).

Considering what constitutes an individual's preferred-stories is a complex process of "drawing out alternatives or exceptions to the dominant story" and determining how these alternatives elicit "needed contrast" to the problem-saturated ones (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003, p. 123). In doing so, the therapist and client continue to integrate resources and language that interrupts the assumption that their problems are "fixed, inherent flaws" (Keeling & Bermudez, 2006, p. 406), and adopt the perspective that these originated through means of damaging dominant norms.

In alignment with the process of re-authoring, Wagaman et al. (2018) describe a methodology of "counterstorying," a framework rooted in critical race theory. In this process, clients have the opportunity to create counter-narratives, which amplify preferred-story reclamation. Wagaman et al. (2018) describe that calling dominant ideologies into question can

“validate all lived experiences through empowering the respondents to become the authors” (p. 9). The action of re-authoring prompts clients to consider when they haven’t felt in control of their story, and discover ways to return to the role of author in order to emphasize, reclaim, and empower their optimal self-narrative.

In his counseling research, Richert (2003) provided case vignettes where he encouraged his clients to discuss their conflicts, and consider moments where their relationship to or experience of their conflict matched the outcome that they hoped for, or preferred. In his research, Richert (2003) reported the following experience of his client, Ann:

Ann was a highly intelligent, young, and successful professional woman who had been sexually abused as a child. She entered treatment because of depression, and the two specific problematic situations that she focused on were a conflictual and draining relationship with her parents and the emotional toll her work was taking on her. She could elaborate in great detail on the dysfunctional patterns of interaction in her family of origin and even be reasonably articulate about various ways she had and could again disentangle herself from these interactions. She tentatively identified those times when she had done so as preferred outcomes.

(Richert, 2003, p. 201)

When presented with an experience such as Ann’s, a therapist can help to uplift the pieces of the client’s story that represent preferred outcomes. In this case, it was times in which Ann was able to disengage from dysfunctional interactions within her family unit. From here, the client and therapist can explore ways in which this outcome can be accessed more readily and frequently. Additionally, there are ways to consider unique outcomes that can reframe the client’s perception

of how the conflict is ultimately impacting them. In doing so, the client may recount times in which they've avoided, strayed away from, or advocated for themselves in the presence of the conflict. This process amplifies the preferred components that are more aligned with the client's ideal or desirable experience. Through this process, the client engages in a reorientation that establishes new norms for their self-narrative that are more productive to their well-being.

Arts-informed Re-authoring: Reorientation of Self-Narrative

Richert (2003) describes that alongside verbalizations, actions can also “be effective in either blocking or facilitating the thickening of any particular story” (p. 203). Ricks et al. (2014) describe that limited expression can lead clients to “reach an impasse in therapy sessions when they experience difficulty expressing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences” (p. 99). When verbal expression is limited, discovering ways to adapt self-narrative through creative arts-based capacities is an effective alternative. In conjunction with the other NT techniques, there are ways to discover unique outcomes and encourage a reframing of self-narrative through DMT and ET reorientation techniques.

Movement-based Reorientation of Self-Narrative

Streater (2022) describes that expressive and creative dance has the capacity to “shape new individual and collective narrative and meaning, in the context of work with relational, complex, developmental, racial, historical or severe trauma” (p. 45). Through a qualitative, embodied arts-based research study, Streater (2022) examined the use of DMT as a form of trauma treatment. Her method integrated objectives that linked “inner sensing, creative exploration and enactive movement, to meaning-making, and cognitive and identity restructuring” (p. 34). Results of the study revealed the following outcomes:

The body self narrated stories in sensation, image, movement and dance. As implicit, unconscious or silenced body stories were consciously experienced and safely re-integrated, distressing arousal or affect diminished. Stories facilitated choice and control over narratives of self and other, allowing intentional redirection towards alternative, empowering narratives emphasizing survival.

(Streater, 2022, p.45)

This study incorporated a positive utilization of DMT that allowed for empowerment and reorientation of self-narrative within a safe and controlled environment. Through DMT facilitation, clients found voice to the silenced parts of their stories that lived in their bodies.

In expanding upon the prompts that Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) suggest for NT processes, and the prompts for DMT-based techniques, NT therapists can consider ways to structure follow-up re-authoring prompts. In thinking about arts-informed discovery of unique outcomes, as well as reframing self-narrative, movement prompts allow the client to re-examine and re-write the experience of their conflict, through body-based explorations. The therapist might ask:

- If the fear were standing next to you, can you explore movement in a way that ignores the fear or moves the fear out of sight?
- Can you create a box that keeps the fear contained or hides it away? Place the box in the room, showing the distance you'd like the fear to be in relationship to you.
- If the fear were standing next to you, can you explore movement in a way that silences the fear? Can you move as if you were telling the fear to stop?

- Can you move in a way that invites a conversation with the fear? Can you move as if you're asking the fear how it can help you, motivate you, or protect you?

These questions provide the client with alternative, body-based forms of re-authoring and re-orienting the conflict of fear. By engaging in different interactions with the fear, the client may develop further agency around it. Additionally, the client can consider new ways to approach, acknowledge, and perceive the fear so that it is diminished, more tolerable, or can support them in some capacity. These various prompts are structured to provide the client with choice and freedom to explore in whichever way feels most comfortable and healing for them. Following these prompts, the therapist is encouraged to invite processing whether it be additional arts explorations, journaling, or dialoguing. In doing so, the therapist allows more space for the client to discover further insight on any unique outcomes that arose from their explorations, and reflect on their experiences of movement reorientation.

ET-based Reorientation of Self-Narrative

Consistent with ET-based techniques, re-authoring self-narrative can take form by means of artistic and imaginative expression. Ricks et al. (2014) describe that art “is a tangible way to help clients process memories and experiences,” additionally, it can help with “facilitating expression and shifting feelings from negative to positive” (p. 104). Following the arts-based deconstruction intervention of their study for substance use treatment, Conner (2017) provides ways to reorient the client’s relationship with their dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem by investigating unique outcomes through imaginative prompts. Once the client has engaged in explorations of externalizing and deconstructing the origin of their conflict (ie: cage, monster, or storm), Conner (2017) encourages therapists to ask a series of re-authoring questions that guide

the discovery of productive and desired perspectives. Conner (2017) provides questions that can help implement reorienting techniques. These include—

“Cage” as identity of dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem:

- “Have you ever escaped the cage or wiggled the chain loose?”
- “What helps open the door to the cage?”
- “How do you make use of the space given in the cage?” (p. 190)

“Monster” as identity of dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem:

- “What’s usually happening when the monster isn’t as noticeable?”
- “What do you say back to the monster when it tries to convince you that you’re not good enough?”
- “How do you keep the monster from attacking at other parts of your day?” (p. 190)

“Storm” as identity of dilemma, conflict, or presenting problem:

- “Can you ever predict when the storm is coming?”
- “How do you seek shelter from the storm?”
- “Was there a time when the storm was threatening but didn’t cause much damage after all?”
- “Who or what helps you clean up after the storm passes?” (p. 190)

By asking these questions, Conner (2017) effectively demonstrates how processes of re-authoring can be adapted to an imaginative context, in which the individual can consider the unique and preferred outcomes of their conflict. Additionally, provides approaches to reorientation and re-authoring, wherein the presence of the problem is less hindering, and more

productive. In turn, the client's self-narrative adopts new ideologies that make for a more contented and desired way of life.

The NT tools of externalization, deconstruction, and re-authoring have the ability to be uniquely restructured to nonverbal forms. Integrating imaginative and expressive adaptations of these techniques provide clients with broader capacities to process their self-narrative.

Method

The intention and foundation of this literature review examined, defined, and conceptualized NT practice as its own theoretical framework, and emphasized its verbal-based approach. This provided readers with context around the importance of integrating non-verbal expressive techniques in NT counseling and treatment. This literature review then considered ways in which DMT and ET frameworks inherently coincide with NT techniques in practice. Some of the following considerations were considered for NT, DMT, and ET approaches: (1) How was it initially integrated in the counseling field? (historical roots and beginning stages of its theoretical development), (2) How has it been adapted? (evolution of it in practice), and (3) How is it utilized today? (current implementation and success as a clinical tool). This review evaluated the existing parallels between NT, DMT, and ET, and in doing so, identified the gathering place for these theoretical approaches. Alongside these considerations, it was paramount that the landscape of this review incorporated multicultural perspectives throughout. In addition, included an individual section that described ways in which NT, DMT, and ET intersect with diverse cultural components of client identities.

In reviewing literature that blends NT, DMT, and ET, research combined peer-reviewed resources and journals from Lesley Library, Google Scholar, Lesley Digital Commons, and

Academia.edu. Key search words included (but were not limited to): narrative therapy, self-narrative, narrative development, dance/movement therapy, body-based healing, expressive therapies, arts-based research, bioecological systems, externalization, enactment, deconstruction, therapeutic mapping, meaning-making, re-authoring, and reorientation.

Literature of interest integrated processes of expressive externalization, body-based healing methods, creative expression of self-narrative, therapeutic enactment strategies, narrative meaning-making, narrative influence mapping, and expressive reorientation in counseling. Throughout, this review investigated a compare and contrast model in an effort to provide readers the opportunity to delineate where NT in combination with DMT and ET models are most successful, and where empirical gaps exist.

Discussion

The integration of dance/movement therapy and expressive therapy counseling techniques utilize arts-based explorations as a means of discovery. While there exists evidence that NT, DMT, and ET are successful therapeutic models independently, blending these approaches opens up a broader potential for healing beyond verbal capacities. Research and psychotherapy models that integrate arts-making methodologies allows for clinicians to interpret a better understanding of participants' subjective experiences and allows for clients to integrate a deeper understanding of self-narrative and personal experiences through dynamic, nonlinear, therapeutic processing.

Self-narrative is constructed by the environments and social discourses that inform our way of knowing, perceiving, and making sense of our external world. Faculties that combine environmental exposure and social discourses create the bioecological system of development,

composed of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Each system informed by the other, an individual's internal world is made up of the threads that connect their external world. When one or more of these systems of exposure exhibit damaging ideologies and messaging, this threatens self-narrative, and inevitably well-being.

Wagaman et al. (2018) remind the counseling field that "traditional research methods have a reductionist lens that minimize the breadth of experiences and complexity of intersecting identities within a population" (p. 9). With this in mind, it is critical that the field of counseling continues to adapt its foundational theoretical structures and integrate multimodal means of expression in an effort to account for all forms of experience and processing. DMT offers the potential to connect the mind and body in a way that elicits new insight and understanding.

Leseho and Maxwell (2010) reflect that when an individual is engaged in "dance and creative movement, deep feelings are evoked which can lead to a cathartic release or have the effect of transforming our emotional state, promoting health and psychological growth" (p. 18). Carlson (1997) displays ways in which ET and art exploration "can enhance the process of assessing the dominant story, externalizing, discovering alternative stories," all while being in an evolving reciprocal relationship with the therapist (p. 282). These notions reflect that DMT and ET therapies are effective tools that inform the therapeutic processing, and encourage alternative ways that the client can explore creative expertise of their self-narrative.

In NT, the process of externalization is the deliberate separation of a conflict, dilemma, or presenting problem from the internal self. This process is most closely associated with the DMT techniques of mind-body action and enactivism, and the ET techniques of expressive storytelling through tangible, physical art-making. The NT process of deconstruction invites the client to

consider the origin of their conflict, dilemma, or presenting problem that is inhibiting the healthiest potential of their self-narrative. This process is most closely associated with the DMT and ET techniques of arts-based influence mapping and meaning-making. The NT process of re-authoring is the intentional delineation of unique outcomes and highlighting of preferred-stories, allowing a client's self-narrative to evolve into the version that feels most productive and salient to their highest sense of self and well-being. This process is most closely associated with the DMT and ET techniques of arts-informed reorientation, in which the client discovers alternative ways to express their personal story that honors all parts of their lived experience.

Understanding personal narrative through expressive movement and art provides clients with a deeper contextualization of self, and strengthens the process of meaning-making in the therapeutic space. Heim Shepard (2022) describes "meaning creation becomes an active process connecting head, hand, and hearts" (p. 40). When NT is integrated through body-based and expressive arts-based modalities, clients discover and align more closely to their personal story. In doing so, gain agency around naming, processing, and reframing the parts of their story that don't serve them, and reclaim and empower the parts of their story that uplift the fullest expression of their identity.

Conclusion

Blending research and literature that demonstrates the similitude of NT, DMT, and ET promotes the collaboration of expressive therapies with post-modern clinical models. This literature review reveals the already existing link that corresponds narrative based approaches with arts-based theoretical foundations. In addition, it reveals a positive utilization of NT and DMT approaches in combination, and by extension, NT and ET approaches in combination.

Further, this inquiry may encourage narrative therapists to broaden the scope of their counseling and consider ways to expand and integrate expressive arts within narrative-based practice.

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**THESIS APPROVAL
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In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

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