Affirmative Client Care: Reconciling Evidence-Based Practices within Humanistic Engagement

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Abstract

Contemporary trends in mental health have furthered the counseling profession's adherence to scientifically-based practices while grounded in core humanistic values. This has created philosophical and clinical tensions, especially for counselors adhering to a humanistic philosophy. Despite the documented pressures, there is a gap in the literature addressing how professional counselors can navigate the integration of evidence-based practices into humanism. This manuscript offers an affirmative stance on the navigation of these tensions through the use of a case discussion and actionable suggestions.

Evidence-Based Practices within Humanistic Engagement

Documented in the counseling discourse are the profession's continued efforts to further integrate and expand Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) into professional counseling (Barrio Minton, Gibson, Wachter Morris, 2016; Patel, Hagerdorn, & Bai, 2013). This is evidenced through the continued emphasis placed on research and practice that are grounded in student learning outcomes and research-based practices (American Counseling Association; ACA, 2014; Barrio Minton & Gibson, 2012; Barrio Minton, Gibson, Wachter Morris, 2016; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2016; Chan, Bezyak, Ramirez, Chiu, Sung, & Fujikawa, 2010; McAuliffe & Erikson, 2011; Norcross, Hogan, & Koocher, 2008; Patel, Hagerdorn, & Bai, 2013). This ongoing movement toward scientifically situated forms of knowledge is fostering the disposition of a scientist-practitioner, which has been recognized as a lens that has the potential to enhance the development of the counseling profession, particularly in terms of client care (Foster, 2012).

Despite its ongoing professional relevance, the concept of EBP is not new to counseling, nor other medicalized professions, as the emergence of evidence-based literature can be traced as early as 1991, in an attempt to ground clinical services in effective and scientifically sound forms of knowledge (Chan et al., 2010; Hansen, 2016; Leibert, 2012). In response to the sociopolitical and sociohistorical context of the word "knowledge," often positioned as a legitimized and scientifically oriented term, this manuscript used the concept of knowledge to represent the vast encompassing continuum of meaning making, lived experiences, and social locations (Hansen, 2016). Documented within the counseling scholarship, Hansen (2012, 2016) addressed the knowledge emerging from evidence-based research as a medicalized cultural shift in professional knowledge and client care.

Specifically, Hansen (2012, 2016) positioned EBP as a incompatible to humanism, by asserting there has not been enough momentum or research to disregard the profession's foundation in humanistic engagement. Authors have further noted that research strongly suggests the importance of humanistic engagement as foundational to the counselor-client relationship and client outcomes (Hansen, 2016; Scholl, Ray, & Brady-Amoon, 2014; Wampold, 2001). Thus, while EBPs have been acknowledged as the gold standard of clinical practice, unlike the benefits of humanistic engagement, EBPs only account for a small portion of counseling related outcomes (Hansen, 2016; Wampold, 2001).

Moreover, EBPs have also been noted for their restrictiveness and lacking in ability to account for the complexity of human behavior (Chan et al., 2010; Wampold, 1997). In contrast to EBPs and its epistemological underpinnings, humanistic engagement and research have been acknowledged as more congruent with the purpose of counselor-client relationships, specifically for professional counselors (Hansen, 2016; Woolsey, 1986). Patel, Hagerdorn, and Bai (2013) and Whiston and Coker (2000) recognized these potential limitations of EBPs and further indicated that counselor educators have reported being resistant to the evidence-based movement in their teaching and practice.

Patel, Hagerdorn, and Bai's (2013) quantitative study investigated counselor educators' attitudes towards EBPs as well as their perceived barriers in utilizing EBPs in educational curricula. The authors suggested that counselor educators had some level of resistance to EBP, which they indicated was due to lack of training and knowledge, the current climate within counselor education, and personal or organizational beliefs. However, due to their research question, methodology, and review of the literature, they did not account for potential epistemological or ontological tensions for those who identify as humanistic or question EBPs as

the gold standard (Patel, Hagerdorn, & Bai, 2013). In addition, the authors delimitated their interpretive analysis to educators' professional commitment to relationships and factors of change, without fully accounting for social, cultural, political, historical, and economic factors that bring significance and complexity to humanism within the counseling profession. Hence, evidencing a relevant philosophical tension within the profession.

Despite the foundational humanistic underpinnings of the counseling profession and current professional trends, counselor trainees and professional counselors are left to reconcile these professional tensions due to their obligations to client care and the counseling profession (ACA, 2014; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). Hansen (2006a) expanded upon these aforementioned tensions and acknowledged the profession's dualism in contemporary research and practice, suggesting that insular ideologies are no longer beneficial for clients or the counseling profession. While advocating for different epistemological and ontological traditions, both Hansen (2006a) and Patel, Hagerdorn, and Bai (2013) suggested the need to account for a spectrum of ideologies in order to be more effective and socially just in counselor training and client care.

Throughout this document, the authors attempt to trouble and expand the clinical application of philosophical traditions within the counseling profession, while contributing to the values of irreducibility, holism, relationships, growth and development, and phenomenology, as these humanistic dispositions are a crucial aspect of human-to-human interaction and engagement (Dollarhide & Oliver, 2014; Hansen, Speciale, & Lemberger, 2014; Scholl, Ray, & Brady- Amoon, 2014). With that, the authors used the term 'humanistic engagement' to represent these critical and engaged aspects of interactions and relationships that are important to counselors and the counseling profession, whether that be in clinical practice, supervision,

research, or in teaching and pedagogy. Thereby, through the use of humanistic engagement and intentionality, the authors suggest that counselors can better integrate scientific forms of knowledge and EBPs within the humanistic ideology (Balkin, 2014; Lemberger, 2012), while also balancing known limitations of his ideology. Throughout this document, the authors aim for affirmative forms of theoretical synergies that lead to integrative approaches that represent optimized counselor education and client care.

The authors' intention is congruent with Balkin (2014) and Lemberger (2012), who acknowledged the potentiality for humanistic research and practice to be informed by quantifiable, scientific, and evidence-based forms of knowledge. Balkin (2014) and Lemberger (2012) further indicated that together, humanism and evidenced-based research can further clinical practice, research, and the counseling profession, if integrated intentionally and critically. Hence, as affirmative client care and professional identity are crucial to the counseling profession (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011), the authors amplified several dichotomies present for counseling practitioners and educators and used this manuscript to enhance the professional discourse regarding the integration of critical and reflexive forms of scientific knowledge into the vast continuum of humanistic engagement.

Evidence-Based Practices

The counseling profession has evolved in response to the demands of those it seeks to serve, while also aligning to a variety of values that inform the practice of counseling in its various specializations. Hence, the profession of counseling has responded to medical values of treatment planning and objective diagnostic categories within counseling, which have led to further alignment with EBPs or EBPs in the service of clients (Hansen, 2006b). The preference for empirically supported treatments in counseling has been institutionalized in the training of

counselors by accrediting bodies and in counselors' ethical guidelines by professional

organizations (Chan et al., 2010).

According to the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational

Programs (CACREP), counselors have the responsibility for clients' welfare, which is enacted by

the use of "evidence-based counseling strategies and techniques for prevention and intervention"

(CACREP, 2016, p. 11). The American Counseling Association's *Code of Ethics* (2014) also

emphasized that counselor training programs and practicing counselors integrate theories,

procedures, and modalities that have an empirical or scientific foundation (F.7.h). Moreover, the

emphasis on EBPs also informs the production of counseling knowledge in its main peer-

reviewed journals in a way to promote excellence and legitimacy in the discourse within the

profession (McGowan, 2003).

Specifically, through the professional commitment to EBPs, counselors abide to the

American Psychological Association's (APA, 2005) establishment of best practices for

professional service as defined by quantitative research evidence produced by randomized

controlled trials and experimental designs (Steglitz, Warnick, Hoffman, Johnston, & Spring,

2015). This philosophical movement serves different purposes. For one part, it seeks to create

uniformity in vocabulary, foundations, and principles across helping professions while rooted in

modernist assumptions of mental health (Hansen, 2006b; Steglitz et al., 2015). On the other

hand, EBPs in counseling become a priority as a system of production of knowledge and

identity, which is aligned with the managed care discourse, funding, legitimacy, and professional

discourse (Hansen, 2016; Sexton, 2000). A brief search of EBPs in the counseling literature

indicated a variety of issues. For instance, Sexton (2000) posited the need of bridging the gap

between research consumption and clinical practice in counseling students. Sexton (2000)

explained the need to create dynamic approaches between the use of research literature in the training of counselors and students' ability to translate these research findings into actionable clinical tools. Additionally, Kosciulek (2010) and Sexton (2000) highlighted the need for the instillation of a training culture that values and privileges the modernist paradigm of research to bridge this gap within counselor education. Moreover, Ingleby (2014) and Titchkosky and Aubrecht (2015) expanded on the professional desirability of the integration of empirically-supported counseling approaches, such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Motivational Interviewing (MI), and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) in the treatment of trauma, addiction, and personality disorders respectively.

Ingleby (2014) posited that the urgency for the use of mental health practices based on research evidence responds to the values and animated interests of Western psychiatry and pharmaceutical industry that seek to medicalize everyday problems through biological reductionism, universally claimed psychiatric nosology (Hansen, 2006b), and clinical treatments that are highly contested and that offer very limited evidence (Hansen, 2016; Hickling & Hutchinson, 2000; Ingleby, 2014; Meekosha, 2011). According to these authors, not only are the fundamental assumptions of Western psychiatry and its derived EBPs highly questionable, but they aim to ignore the complexity of experiences that create human distress and make people mentally ill, such as "poverty, hardship, oppression, social exclusion, and violence" (Ingleby, 2014, p. 208; Wampold, 1997). According to the Western intention to delimitate and specialize knowledge (Connell, 2011), evidence-based and scientific knowledge becomes privileged among other ways of knowing and other ways of healing (Hansen, 2006b, 2016; Ingleby, 2014). This epistemological reality represents important incongruences to the philosophical grounding of the

counseling profession and its core values of human relationships and multiculturalism (Hansen, 2006b).

Humanistic Engagement

Humanistic engagement has provided an alternative epistemological lens as a counter to biological determinism rooted in the medical model, which has been privileged and furthered within counseling and mental health professions (Brady-Amoon, 2011; Hansen, 2012, 2016; Lemberger, 2012), despite humanism serving as the foundation of the counseling profession (Gladding, 2012; Vereen, Hill, Sosa, & Kress, 2014). Unlike the practice of a philosophy grounded in positivism, counselors privileging humanistic engagement honor holistic being through the continual engagement, understanding, and fostering of agency, phenomenology, creativity, self-betterment, and human development (Hansen, 2006a; Rogers, 1980). This endeavor strays from the conceptualization of objectivity and positivism embedded in the way scientists seek to understand the human experience similarly to inorganic matter (Cooper, 2007; Sartre, 1958).

In his conceptual work, Hansen (2016) continued to extend the counseling profession's postmodern understanding of humanism, in which the author reported not only a commitment to a person's phenomenological whole being, but the importance of attending to social, cultural, historical, and the political nature of human experience. Hansen also stressed the complexity of humanism, given the fluid, multiplistic, and ever-changing nature of beings. Humanistic epistemology and ontology has also been acknowledged for its emphasis on engaging a person by continually investing in relationality, meaning making, personhood, experiences, and the identities and communities one belongs to, as they shape one's needs and past, present, and future (Cooper, 2007; Farber, 2010; Hansen, 2012; Rogers, 1980; Scholl, McGowan, & Hansen,

2012).

Despite the known complexity of human experience, mental health culture has continually shifted from the philosophy of humanism in discourse, practice, and research towards a more decontextualized and simplified understanding of people's lives, including their experiences and cultural locations (Hansen, 2014a; Hansen, Speciale, & Lemberger, 2014). This shift has responded to historical trends of objective, measurable, and reductionistic practices, as in the case of behaviorism and psychoanalysis, while humanism has emerged as a reaction to simplistic and essentializing descriptions of lived experiences and human agency (Hansen, 2014b). Thus, humanism positions the importance of fostering holism, development, wellness, respect, irreducibility, and social justice advocacy for clients as well as for the future of the profession (Balkin, 2014; Dollarhide & Oliver, 2014; Hansen et al., 2014, Scholl, Ray, & Brady-Amoon, 2014; Vereen et al., 2014).

Due to the historical tensions between humanism and EBP in conjunction with the current professional demands for objectivity and measurability (Hansen, 2006a, b, 2016), navigating the divide between EBPs and humanistic engagement is an important professional issue for the future of client care and the counseling profession. Until mental health culture and professionals shift to see and advocate for the validity and importance of humanistic practices, EBPs will continue to be deemed the most desirable for counselor clinical work (Cain, 2003; Hansen, 2006a, 2016). This will inherently continue to build upon the professional epistemological and ontological tensions. Thus, as the counseling profession continues to evolve, these issues leave professional counselors, particularly counselors adhering to the practice of humanism, searching for a way to navigate the professional demands. At the same time, counselors are required to balance the emergence and grounding of the counseling profession

and its continually developing identity. This positions counselors in a place of professional and ideological tension, which can have a negative impact on clients, client care, professional environments, and a counselor's professional identity and wellness (Cain, 2003; Hansen, 2016).

While there are many documented strengths within humanistic epistemology (Dollarhide & Oliver, 2014; Scholl, McGowan, & Hansen, 2012), much like EBPs, there are limitations to the philosophy and practice on humanistic engagement. These include, the level of autonomy given to those practicing or engaging in humanistic practices, empirically supported research, and potential difficulty related to those who are in their earlier stages of developing cognitive and emotional complexity (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Gergen, 2015). Other recognized limitations are its emergence within Western and privileged ideology, its historic roots of not critically accounting for various social locations, and its reliance on subjectivity and individuality (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014, Gergen, 2015; Hansen, 2016). These limitations are something that counselor need to be aware of and to attend to in their professional work.

Given the philosophical tensions described throughout this document, the authors use a case vignette and a discussion to illustrate the navigation of these tensions in the work as professional counselors, while representing a potentially affirmative form of theoretical integration for optimized counselor education and client care. Specifically, the authors will illustrate the complexity of variables involved in the navigation of struggles and tensions humanistic clinicians face in contemporary mental health. A suggested action plan is also provided.

Case Vignette

Mariana Gutierrez is a second year doctoral student in counselor education who has recently become a licensed professional counselor. In addition to her duties as a graduate student

and professional counselor, she is a supervisor, adjunct professor, and emerging scholar. In Mariana's personal life, she identifies as a Latina, cisgender woman of color, pansexual, having a disability, and as bilingual. These aspects of herself, in conjunction with her lived experiences, have assisted in her formation of an epistemological lens which embodies the philosophy of humanism. Mariana is currently struggling with the fact that despite her identity and beliefs as a humanist, she experiences this epistemological lens to be devalued, particularly in her work as a professional counselor and supervisor.

In her work with clients, Mariana has integrated a humanistic orientation, as she believes that this will assist her clients' in growth and development, due to the phenomenological experiences they have disclosed in session. She was recently transferred a new client at the agency she works at as per diem staff. This client who was recently released from jail was seeking counseling services; however, this client has difficulty attending session because he lives some distance from the agency. He is constantly in fear of losing his job, which only covers the cost of his basic necessities, and he is uncertain how to navigate the complex system of mental health services. Mariana's client also reports that because he is a black male, he is often seen as aggressive and defiant and has lost much respect and trust in a system that has continuously failed him. Additionally, he received four diagnoses and multiple suggested areas of treatment based upon his initial assessment session done by the agency's intake specialist. Mariana is the second counselor he has seen, as the first counselor left the agency after seeing this individual for four sessions.

Mariana brought this client's case and a taped session to her doctoral internship class in hopes of discussing how she could best serve this individual who believes he is lost in a system that does not care about his personhood or needs. After providing a case conceptualization, her

thoughts and experiences of her work with this particular client, and her perceived expectations at the agency, she played a 30-minute clip of her session. After her clip was over, her peers began to provide feedback and thoughts regarding her work and potential next steps with her client. The class seemed to focus on the client's diagnosis, behaviors, the fact that he missed sessions due to his reported inability to make it, and his course of treatment. Her classmates shared thoughts such as, "If he made counseling a priority, he would make it to session and would not make excuses", "It seems like the client doesn't want to work hard and change his behaviors, he just wants an easy solution", and "Have you asked yourself if the client is coming to counseling to get benefits?". Moreover, when Mariana further processed these comments in group supervision, her peers mentioned "You seem to really care about this client and his struggles, make sure he doesn't manipulate you", "You spent too much time on his experiences and feeling, but did not give him tools to change his behaviors", and "You are spending too much time on his phenomenological experiences, what are the observable and billable outcome goals?"

Mariana shared her struggles and frustrations regarding this feedback and the system, particularly because it reminded her of the client's previous counselor as well as other shared experiences by clients. Even though Mariana had difficulties communicating her thoughts out loud to the class, she was encouraged to share. She disclosed that her beliefs and utilization of humanism is congruent with her, and mentioned that she struggles because her feedback in class, school, and at her clinical site often counters her ontology as a person and counselor. Mariana reported attempting to work from more scientific and evidence-based forms of counseling, but it was not completely congruent with her, nor what she believed most of her clients needed. She disclosed that she constantly receives comments on her notes about her lack of evidence-based or

billable work at her clinical site. Mariana told the class that she attempts to provide feedback to her peers and colleagues, which is congruent to their epistemological lens; however, does not believe she receives that in return. Additionally, she reported that she incorporated techniques and aspects of other philosophies into her work, but because it is from a humanistic orientation, these have discounted its effectiveness and utility.

Mariana's struggles as a humanistic counselor were reified due to the fact that she has consistently heard feedback that often discounts her client's phenomenological experiences as well as her epistemological lens as a professional counselor. While she acknowledges the reality and benefits of other theoretical orientations and philosophies, she believes that she and her clients are often left in the middle of these tensions. Mariana acknowledges that while every orientation has limitations, her ontological understandings are often seen through a deficit lens, while others who identify with a more medicalized epistemology are seen as more knowledgeable and legitimized. She wants to provide her clients with the best services she can; however, that requires her to adopt different forms of knowledge through her humanist philosophy. Thus, she is left to reconcile herself as a humanist who sees the value of integrating EBPs, which are evidence-based and seen as legitimate and the gold standard.

Discussion

While there is literature documenting the applicability and need to account for scientifically grounded evidence-based knowledge as an adjunct to the current body of humanistic research and ontology (Balkin, 2014), professional literature on clinical practice informed by these two frameworks is still lacking. Cain (2003) and Farber (2012) asserted the counseling profession needs to reinvest in the furtherance of humanism grounded research and practice, noting the lack of interest given in contemporary mental health. Moreover, with the

current pull towards EBPs (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2016; Hansen, 2016; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011), there is an even more apparent gap in the literature addressing how professional counselors and counselor educators can integrate EBPs into the philosophical lens of humanism. Thus, the authors used the aforementioned vignette as a platform to expand the professional discourse considering the professional climate of EBPs and to offer fitting types of humanist research.

Cain (2003) reported in his conceptual article that less than 10% of counselor educators and professional counselors identify themselves as humanists; therefore, the author asserted that humanists, particularly emerging humanists, face a greater disadvantage in comparison to their evidence-based or cognitive behavioral colleagues. The author further purported that this lends itself into the process of clinical supervision, noting that whether it be in academia or clinical practice, humanists will experience increased pressures and a lack of professional modeling as a humanistic clinician. Linking these arguments to the case of Mariana, she faced internalized tensions due to her lack of representation, including others' understanding of her epistemological lens when working with her client. Therefore, in order to further legitimize humanism in contemporary mental health as well as to increase professional support, the authors in this manuscript suggested integrating evidence-based or empirically grounded research through a humanist lens, as it can add to the furtherance of the continuum of humanism (Balkin, 2014; Cain, 2003; Lemberger, 2012). This was represented when Mariana acknowledged the value of integrating EBPs into her work. However, she struggled to conceptualize how she might integrate different philosophies through her epistemology, which are often presented as incongruent and incapable of being subsumed into humanism (Hansen, 2016).

After a review of the literature, there are different research articles that link evidence-based knowledge and practices to the philosophy and enactment of humanism or humanistic engagement. Thus, similar to the case of Mariana, professional counselors and counselor educators can use this to intentionally integrate evidenced forms of knowledge into the practice of humanistic counseling. Therefore, professional counselors and educators should look to the literature to enhance their ability to integrate EBPs into their work. Welfare, Farmer, and Lile's (2013) cross-sectional study found evidence suggesting that through the use of strengths-based conceptualizations and holistic client understandings, counselors were better able to empower clients in a way that was congruent to the client and their needs. Lenz and Sangganjanavanich (2013) asserted based on their quasi-experimental study that through the utilization of photovoice in counselor training, they were able to enhance counselors in training dispositions and skills when conceptualizing and working with clients.

In addition, to the previously mentioned research evidencing humanism or humanistic engagement; Balkin, Perepiczka, Sowell, Cumi, & Gnilka (2016) evidenced in their quantitative study, a forgiveness model grounded in humanism and noted its potential to assist in improving relationships, personal growth, and physical health and well-being. In addition, these authors indicated humanism's ability to increase the journey of forgiveness, intrapersonal and interpersonal forgiveness, and creativity. Another evidenced form of humanistic engagement is Myers and Sweeney's (2004) model of wellness, which has been documented for its correlation to strengthening human wellness and holism in peoples' daily lives.

Linking these evidenced forms of humanistic practice to the struggles Mariana faced when attempting to integrate EBPs or interventions, the counseling literature has tools for professional counselors, much like Mariana, to connect EBPs to humanism or humanistic

engagement. Therefore, the authors suggested that professional counselors and counselor educators incorporate practices such as these into the training and practice of counseling, in order to prepare counselors for the current realities they may face in clinical practice and that are informed by managed care demands. As an extension, intentionally and critically fostering evidenced practices and interventions grounded in humanism will assist in providing more support for humanistic counselors working in a contemporary mental health culture that privileges evidenced and measurable forms of knowledge. Noting that these professional tensions impact humanistic counselors individually and collectively further highlights the need for training programs to prepare counselors for the professional roles and tasks that are inextricably linked to client services and care.

The case of Mariana presents multiple other factors, which are embedded in contemporary mental health culture, specifically professional counseling. Due to the prevalence of scientifically grounded approaches to counseling, humanistic-oriented counselors and counselor educators are left with the responsibility to instill humanistic values on professional counselors through teaching, supervision, and research, and further foster the intentional and critical integration of evidence based forms of knowledge into humanism (Cain, 2003). While the practice and philosophy of humanism as an epistemological lens is still conceptualized differently and debated amongst humanists (Guterman, Martin, & Kopp, 2012; Hansen, 2012; Leibert, 2012; Lemberger, 2012), the integration of a larger spectrum of knowledge into humanism will assist in the furtherance of acceptance and practice of humanism (Cain, 2003). Moreover, as in the case of Mariana, counselor educators and supervisors would benefit from being aware of the professional privileges given to EBPs and the frequent discounting that may occur amongst students who identify as humanists as well as for those who attempt to integrate

EBPs through a humanistic lens. Thus, training and advocating for humanism and humanistic engagement can work to counter these tensions, so that individuals like Mariana can better serve clients thorough her epistemological lens as a humanistic counselor, especially due to the negative associations related to the practice of humanism (Cain, 2003). Expanding upon the case vignette and discussion of Mariana Gutierrez, the authors utilized conceptual and empirical counseling scholarship aimed to provide future directions for counselor educators, supervisors, and professional counselors situating EBPs within humanistic ideology.

Future Directions

Given the continued efforts within the counseling profession to commit to medicalized epistemology (Hansen, 2016; Patel, Hagerdorn, & Bai, 2013), counselor educators and supervisors have a professional responsibility to assist both humanistic and evidence-based oriented counselors in exploring and reconciling these ways of knowing and being (ACA, 2014; Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). It is important that all counselors are prepared to provide ethical, effective, and socially just client care (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2016; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011), as well as to be responsive to their professional colleagues without reducing or delegitimizing their philosophical and clinical practices. By preparing future counselors to explore and address the tension between humanism and EBPs, counselors are better prepared to face the culture and climate within their clinical practice, as well as to not further perpetuate the notions of irreconcilable tension between the two different epistemologies (Balkin, 2014; Guterman, Martin, & Kopp, 2012; Lemberger, 2012; Scholl, Ray, & Brady-Amoon, 2014).

There are a few counseling scholars who have critically and intentionally expanded upon this needed area of professional development. One example of affirmative client care and research integrating evidence-based forms of knowledge into humanistic engagement is

exemplified in Welfare, Farmer, and Lile's (2013) quantitative research study. Welfare, farmer, and Lile (2013) analyzed 120 emerging and post-master's level counselors positive and negative client characteristic conceptualizations in order to better situate the need for strength-based practices, research, and client care. In doing so, the authors used strength-based counseling, which is informed by irreducibility, human growth and potentiality, and subjective experience to enhance the counseling profession's empirical research and client care practices (Hansen, Speciale, & Lemberger, 2014; Welfare, Farmer, & Lile, 2013). Welfare, Farmer, and Lile's (2013) work documents the reconciling of philosophical tensions and provides a platform to assist humanistic counselors like Mariana in having current and relevant scholarship validating their work.

Another illustration was documented in Lenz and Sangganjanavanich's (2013) study, in which, the authors used a participatory method of pedagogy called photovoice to compare 38-master's-level emerging counselors' acquisitions skills related to empathic reflections to those receiving traditional dialectic lectures. The authors suggested that their quasi-experimental study results supported their hypothesis, which was that the use of photovoice as a pedagogical approach to developing emerging counselors' empathic reflections was more effective than traditional dialectic lectures. In addition, the authors indicated that photovoice has been intentionally used within humanistic epistemology to assist counselors in better understanding community, culture, empathy, holism, and human growth and development in their training and clinical practice. Similarly, to Welfare et al. (2013), the authors engaged in research and practices that used scientifically grounded epistemology in a way that could be intentionally grounded within humanistic epistemology and ontology (Lenz & Sangganjanavanich, 2013).

The authors used the two aforementioned quantitative research studies to highlight relevant practices (e.g., clinical, teaching, supervision, research) that documented the importance and benefits of critically and intentionally utilizing evidence-based knowledge within humanism. These authors are not alone, as another important aspect of working to further integrate EBPs within humanistic engagement is the important role of consultation and supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Welfare, Farmer, & Lile 2014), especially for those impacted by this professional tension and working to address this within their own professional context. Supervision and consultation has been documented as a practice that has the ability to enhance one's conceptualizations, skills, cognitive complexity, professional identity, and to address and process potential barriers that could impede a counselor in working to further integrate EBPs within humanistic epistemology (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Welfare, Farmer, & Lile 2014), whether that be in their clinical practice, research, or teaching (Cain, 2003). While the benefits of supervision and consultation are well documented (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014), there is a gap related to its increased importance for counselors working to integrate EBPs within humanism. Given the professional need and scholarship addressing the epistemological tension and ability to subsume EBPs within humanistic engagement (Balkin, 2014; Guterman, Martin, & Kopp, 2012; Patel, Hagerdorn, & Bai, 2013), the authors reviewed the existing literature to further articulate the needed investment as well as to provide potential actionable tools to support those who are looking to be engage in such professional work (see Appendix).

Conclusion

As evidence-based knowledge is the current zeitgeist in the practice of professional counseling and counselor training; humanistic counselors, educators, and supervisors are left in the midst of these professional tensions. Thus, as a response to the professional pressures, which

are often presented as binary, the authors used this manuscript to enhance the professional

discourse, asserting that within the epistemology and ontology of humanism, professional

counselors would benefit from integrating EBPs through an intentional and critical humanistic

lens. The analysis and discussion in this manuscript aim to contribute to the literature addressing

one of the issues that humanistic professional counselors face in a contemporary mental health

culture, and use a case vignette and suggested action plans (see Appendix) to assist a variety of

counselors in the process of critical integration. Due to the aforementioned tensions humanistic

counselors face, this manuscript's implications can foster professional collaboration amongst

professional counselors whom adhere to humanist values, while attending the variety of

evidence-based needs embedded in contemporary clinical practice, client care, and within

professional identity.

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Appendix

Suggested Action Plan

The following are actionable suggestions, which can be incorporated to assist in reconciling and

further situating evidence-based practices into humanism.

- Develop an understanding of evidence-based practices.
- Develop an understanding of humanism.
- Explore the similarities and differences between humanistic and evidence-based epistemologies.
- Explore the sociopolitical and sociohistorical influence and context of evidence-based practices.
- Explore the sociopolitical and sociohistorical influence and context of humanism.
- Explore personal meaning makings and phenomenological experiences, as they shape your conceptualization and enactment of epistemological lenses.
- Frame evidence-based practices in a way that is congruent and situated within the philosophy of humanism.
- Incorporate intentionality, criticality, and reflexivity when integrating evidence-based practices into humanistic practices.
- Develop an understanding of limitations and find effective and ethical ways to account for such limitations.
- Develop an understanding of the professional tensions and experiences humanists face. whether it be before, during, or after the integration of evidence-based practices.
- Seek consultation or supervision for further exploration or assistance regarding situating evidence-based practices in humanism, both professionally and personally.
- Continually explore current literature and developments of humanism and evidence-based practices.
- Frame assessment and reflexivity as continuous processes when integrating evidence-based practices into humanism.
- Expand upon the professional discourse regarding humanistic practices and the integration of evidence-based knowledge into humanism.
- Expand the counseling professions body of humanistic literature and research.
- Advocate on the behalf of humanism and humanistic engagement in its various forms (i.e., research, clinical practice, supervision, teaching, and being).