

EVERYDAY CREATIVITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO MENTAL WELL-BEING,
EMOTION, AND IDENTITY

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KAITLYN COOPER BROCK, M.ED.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family, friends, and supporters of all kinds. Thank you for allowing this work to become a reality. Also, a special nod to all of the creatives out there, keep working to make this world more interesting, colorful, bright, healthy, and exciting.

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ABSTRACT

KAITLYN COOPER BROCK

EVERYDAY CREATIVITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO MENTAL WELL-BEING, EMOTION, AND IDENTITY

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Evidence suggests that engaging in creative activities positively impacts people's mental well-being through promoting relaxation, reducing stress, and fostering life satisfaction (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti, French, Kabel, & Farnan, 2017). Despite creativity's benefits, creativity is relatively understudied in psychology (Gillam, 2012, 2018; Gladding, 2011; Long, Plucker, Yu, Ding, & Kaufman, 2014; Plucker, 2017; Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Additionally, stereotypes negatively affect how individuals feel about their creativity often causing them to downplay or deny their creativity (Plucker et al., 2004; Proudfoot, Kay, & Koval, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative that researchers not only continue to investigate how creativity can be used to enhance mental well-being, but also dispel some of the prominent myths surrounding creative individuals. The investigation expanded on prior literature by examining the role of cultural identity in creativity. The current study also increased the scholarship on creativity and mental well-being by examining the lived experiences of 20 individuals who engaged in everyday creative activities at least one time per week. The present study addressed gaps within the literature related to understanding creative individuals and the emotions that facilitate

creativity. The goal of the study was to generate a therapeutic model of creativity that can be used to enhance the mental well-being of psychotherapy clients. This study utilized a grounded theory approach and a semi-structured interview guide to explore how participation in creative activities relates to mental well-being, identity, and emotion. The researcher used triangulation methods to analyze data across participants. In constructing the therapeutic model of creativity, overarching themes, future implications, and recommendations for mental health professionals were discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Key Study Concepts

This chapter will briefly introduce the following study concepts: mental well-being, creativity, identity, and emotion. Next, the introduction will include a discussion about creativity within the helping professions, including psychotherapy, and the need for on-going creativity research. The introduction concludes with a discussion of the rationale and purpose for the study.

Mental Well-Being

Although mental health was traditionally viewed through a medical lens and was equated with the absence of pathology (Lamers, Westerhof, Glas, & Bohlmeijer, 2015), modern studies have shifted the focus towards emphasizing mental well-being and positive mental health (Diener, 1984; Huppert, 2009; Ryff & Singer, 1998). By broadening the definition of mental health to include mental well-being, researchers have shown that psychopathology is related to, but distinct from, positive mental health (Westerhof & Keyes, 2010). Mental well-being, which has sometimes been referred to as psychological well-being or mental health wellness, is characterized by Granello (2013) as (1) an overarching concept encompassing elements such as life satisfaction, quality of life, affect, functionality, life purpose, and management of stress, and (2) comprised of positive and fulfilling relationships, the adaptive management of stress, and a lack of distress.

Creativity

People used creative practices long before modern scientists formally investigated the concept of creativity; however, it was not until the 1950s that researchers began a formal study of creativity (Sawyer, 2012), due to the important contributions made by the then-president of the American Psychological Association (APA), J. P. Guilford. Though considered controversial at the time, Guilford spoke openly about his disappointment that creativity research was not more established, urging psychology researchers to take a greater interest in the subject (Sawyer, 2012). This event marked the beginning of a modest upsurge in creativity research.

Since its exploratory genesis, researchers have struggled to define the concept of creativity (Gillam, 2018; Plucker, 2017; Sawyer 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Most definitions of creativity include novel works meant to facilitate solutions to existing problems, which encompass both originality and usefulness (Sawyer, 2006; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Some creativity theorists have struggled to delineate between everyday acts of creativity and high-performance creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009), while other theorists have focused less on defining creativity and more on understanding the creative process (Runco, 2014). Everyday acts of creativity typically involve creative activities like painting, sewing, or writing, which are used for personal enjoyment. Everyday creativity differs from professional or global types of creativity that can be accomplished in broad domains such as education, career, or even to engender global change (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Sawyer, 2006). Moreover, some scholars have suggested that creativity is an innate ability, whereas others believe that creativity can be cultivated (Gillam, 2012). For the

purpose of this study, the researcher adopted Sternberg and Lubart's definition of creativity, which states that creativity is the ability to think and/or behave in ways that facilitate novel, useful, and adaptive work.

Patterns of creativity research. Over the years, creativity research has been deemed a “fuzzy, soft construct” (Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004, p. 86) and referred to as “psychology’s orphan” (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999, p. 4), suggesting it is a neglected area of psychology research that traditionally has remained unprioritized. Due in large part to many creativity researchers promoting creativity and urging others to take it seriously, creativity research is more prevalent today than in the past (Plucker, 2017). Despite researchers crafting creative assessments and research methods to enhance creativity scholarship, many barriers hinder the progress of creativity research (Plucker et al., 2004; Plucker, 2017; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Chief among these obstructions are creativity’s ties to spirituality and mysticism, ambiguous definitions and paradigms of creativity, and early research differing from mainstream psychology theories (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Additional impediments, such as the myths and stereotypes about creative individuals and whether creativity is innate or can be acquired keep creativity research lagging behind other areas of study in psychology (Plucker et al., 2004; Plucker, 2017; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999).

Emotion

Emotions are vital aspects of human life and relationships because they help ensure the survival of species (Izard, 2009; Rogers, Schroder, & von Scheve, 2014). On a more personal level, emotions help individuals understand and communicate their feelings (Rogers

et al., 2014). Although emotions are thought to impact thinking, decision-making, behavior, interpersonal relationships, well-being, and health (Izard, 2010), investigators often have trouble defining and operationalizing emotion despite the breadth of emotion research (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2018; Izard, 2010; Scherer, 2000).

Most emotion theorists assume that emotions are the result of triggering events that cause noticeable changes in physiology, behavior, or other aspects of individuals' functioning (Scherer, 2000). These triggering events are of personal significance to each organism and can be caused by internal or external stimuli (Scherer, 2000). Once triggered, people appraise a situation and determine its meaning, prior to undergoing an emotional response (Scherer, 2000). Most emotion theorists agree that emotion is a complex construct (Izard, 2010; Scherer, 2000) composed of affective states that are relatively stable over time (Scherer, 2000). While emotion states can fluctuate temporarily, they tend to decrease in intensity prior to fading away (Izard, 2010; Scherer, 2000). For the purposes of this study, emotion was defined as coordinated mental and physical changes in the body that occur in response to both internal and external stimuli (Scherer, 2000). Some of the mental and physical changes include neurophysiological activation, motor expression, subjective feeling, cognitive processes, and action tendencies (Scherer, 2000).

Creativity, positive emotion, and mental well-being exist in a set of reciprocal relationships to each other (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski, Lebeda, Szumski, & Firkowska-Mankiewicz, 2017; Yuan, 2015); positive emotions can enhance creative thinking and facilitate motivation to engage in creative activities (Conner & Silvia, 2015). Essentially, positivity, mental well-being, and creativity are related (Yuan, 2015). For instance, Yuan

determined that happier employees tend to be more creative, problem solve more regularly, and tackle more difficult problems.

Researchers have also identified some predictable patterns of emotion that naturally occur during the creative process (Gnezda, 2011). These emotional patterns typically include periods of heightened enthusiasm, which can lead to increased productivity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 2017; Ghiselin, 1952; Gnezda, 2011) as well as phases of inactivity and lethargy often accompanied by feelings of frustration and self-doubt (Gnezda, 2011). While this emotional intensity may decrease as projects conclude, researchers have found that creative individuals often long to be re-immersed in the creative process once projects reach completion (Gnezda, 2011).

Identity

Although the term *identity* can be defined in many ways, this study primarily focused on two types of identities. These two identities are: (1) *individual cultural identities*, which are personal identifications with, and sense of belonging to social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); and (2) *creative identity*, which is defined as an individual's identity as a creative person. There may be links between these two types of identity. For example, Pachankis and Goldfried (2010) found that creative activities positively impact the mental well-being of individuals battling systemic oppression. However, such relationships have remained largely unexplored at present.

Cultural identity. Cultural identities are tied to one's nationality, heritage, race, ethnicity, religion, etc. This study examined social location as it relates to identity. Brown (2010) defined social location as experiences occurring in the psychosocial, political, and

historical context that can inform identity. Brown further described social location as continually evolving over one's lifespan and involving both points of privilege and disadvantage.

Individual cultural identities and social location can influence mental well-being. For instance, significant experiences of oppression based on variables such as race (Tran & Sangalang, 2016), sexual orientation (Woodford, Kulick, Garvey, Sinco, & Hong, 2018), and ability status (Conder, Mirfin-Veitch, & Gates, 2015) can adversely impact mental well-being.

Creative identity. For the purposes of this study, creative identity encompassed both *creative metacognition* and *creative personal identity*. Creative metacognition is defined as a person's knowledge of when and how to be creative, as well as knowledge of their own creative abilities (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2013). Creative personal identity is the belief that it is important to be creative (Pretz & McCollum, 2014). Several researchers have noted commonalities in the identities of creative individuals (Sawyer, 2012). These include cognitive flexibility (Runco & Albert, 2005), openness to new experiences and curiosity (Costa & McCrae, 1992), enthusiasm and innovation (Furst, Ghisletta, & Lubart, 2016). Creative people may also have strong variable emotions (Furst et al., 2016). Finally, creative individuals tend to struggle with negative self-perceptions of their creativity and their creative identities (Karwowski, 2011). Self-efficacy, the belief that one can actually be creative, plays a part in creative identity (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Since stereotypes may adversely influence the ways in which individuals view their creativity (Plucker et al., 2004;

Proudfoot, Kay, & Koval, 2015) this negative perspective often causes individuals to minimize their creative identities (Plucker et al., 2004; Proudfoot et al., 2015).

Creativity within Helping Professions

Whether performed as solitary activities or in groups, creative tasks promote relaxation, reduce stress, and foster life satisfaction (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti, French, Kabel, & Farnan, 2017); participating in everyday creative activities, therefore can enhance mental well-being. Creativity can enhance the mental well-being of professionals employed in helping fields (Huet, 2017; Schuessler, Wilder, & Bird, 2012). Additionally, creativity can be used to enhance mental well-being when working directly with clients. Furthermore, in psychotherapy, creative arts interventions can be used to facilitate arts-based groups (Cole, Jenefsky, Ben-David, & Munson, 2018), conduct tele-health services (Levy et al., 2018), and provide dance or music therapies (Baker, 2017; Baron, 2016).

Purpose of the Investigation

Researchers have indicated that additional scholarship surrounding creativity would be desirable (Plucker, 2017; Plucker et al., 2004; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Thus far, researchers have determined that creativity is linked to fundamental areas of functioning including cognition (Sternberg, 2018), personality (Furst et al., 2016), and mental well-being (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti et al., 2017). Creativity involves divergent thinking (Guilford, 1956; Sternberg, 2017), is multidimensional, and partially domain specific (Barbot, Lubart, & Besancon, 2016). Creative performance is determined by many different factors including individual abilities, task-specific demands, and the environment

(Barbot et al., 2016). Creativity is not associated with one distinct personality trait (Sawyer, 2012) but has been linked to many traits including openness, enthusiasm, assertiveness, curiosity, and flexibility (Batey & Furnham, 2006; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Feist, 1998; Furst et al., 2016). Creativity does not manifest after grand moments of insight, nor is creativity unique to certain individuals; rather creativity results from hard work that is comprised of many small insights (Barbot et al., 2016; Sawyer, 2012) and is shaped by individual interests, motivations, and experiences culminating in products that are unique to individuals (Barbot et al., 2016).

Furthermore, engagement in creative activities can reduce stress, improve quality of life, and promote overall happiness (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti et al., 2017). Creativity has been used within helping professions, including psychotherapy, to aid clients in developing coping skills, increasing emotion regulation, and processing experiences (Gladding, 2011; Morse, Thomson, Brown, & Chatterjee, 2015). Creative arts therapy groups can provide therapy services while incorporating creative activities such as drawing, sculpting, poetry, and music (Cole et al., 2018). However, researchers have found many therapists struggle to incorporate creative interventions into their regular daily practice (Gladding, 2011) and few formal courses (McCarthy, 2017; Smith, 2011) or academic positions (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999) are available to formally study creativity, leaving a beneficial resource underutilized. Therefore, a more thorough understanding is necessary to determine how creativity can be used to improve mental well-being in therapeutic settings. This study has added to the collective of literature surrounding creativity, as well as enhancing a more thorough understanding of how creativity improves mental well-being.

In addition, many researchers have noted the importance of dispelling some of the myths surrounding creativity (Diedrich et al., 2017; Gillam, 2012, 2018; Plucker, 2017; Plucker et al., 2004; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999), including debunking stereotypes about creative individuals, as well as understanding more about creative experiences and the emotions that facilitate them. What often causes individuals to diminish or deny their creativity is the negative effect stereotypes have on their creativity. To better understand creative individuals and identities beyond shared personality characteristics, this study examined how individual cultural identities, such as race, age, gender, and sexual orientation impact creativity. Moreover, within creativity research, the majority of studies have attended to creative cognition and personality, while far less emphasis has been placed on how emotion impacts creativity, culminating in a significant gap. A more thorough understanding of creative experiences is necessary to comprehend how emotion impacts creativity and ultimately how creative experiences impact mental well-being. Furthermore, understanding how individuals use everyday creativity to enhance mental well-being is essential because this understanding could lead to the development of creative interventions that improve people's mental well-being.

Finally, this study presented a version of a therapeutic model of creativity that can be used to enhance clients' mental well-being. Qualitative responses provided evidence to indicate how creative activities impacted mental well-being. To the researcher's knowledge, no studies have sought to utilize a therapeutic model of creativity to enhance individuals' mental well-being within the course of psychotherapy. Not only did the current study add to the existing body of research on creativity and mental well-being, but it also created an

original therapy tool that can be used alongside existing therapeutic interventions to improve client functioning.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review begins with sections summarizing the scholarship on mental well-being, creativity, emotion, and identity including definitional issues and a brief history of research in each area. After discussing each construct individually, the scholarship regarding the relationships between these four constructs is explored. A section on creativity in the helping professions is presented prior to detailing the need for on-going creativity research. Finally, a summary, rationale, and research questions are presented prior to discussing the study's methods.

Mental Well-Being

Defining Mental Well-Being

Mental well-being, though defined in a variety of ways, may also be referred to as mental health wellness and psychological well-being. Granello (2013) defined mental well-being as individuals' perceived evaluation of their lives, health, and mental functioning. Common factors of mental well-being include life satisfaction, quality of life, affect, functionality, life purpose, and management of stress. For instance, positive mental well-being consists of elevated mood, active cognition, fulfilling interpersonal relationships, the ability to manage stress and hardship, and a general lack of distress (Granello, 2013).

Recently, researchers have made efforts to differentiate the constructs of mental health and mental well-being (McAneney et al., 2015; McKay & Cole, 2017). Mental health has been defined as a state of being that encompasses individuals' ability to cope effectively

with life circumstances in a manner that allows them to contribute productively to society (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). In contrast, definitions of mental well-being generally include factors such as life satisfaction, self-esteem, and life's purpose (McAneney et al., 2015; Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). Laidlaw, McLellan, and Ozakinci (2016) questioned whether lay individuals genuinely understand the distinction between these two concepts and asked whether perceived differences would impact help-seeking behaviors. Researchers found that most people did acknowledge differences between mental health and mental well-being, which was confirmed by the consistency of their responses. However, this knowledge did not affect their efforts to seek help (Laidlaw et al., 2016).

Additional research by Grealish et al. (2017) found that empowerment also enhances mental well-being. Using self-report measures, researchers found self-efficacy, coping skills, locus of control, and thinking style were all predictors of mental well-being (Grealish et al., 2017). However, these positive effects were mediated by empowerment, signifying that empowerment contributes to mental well-being (Grealish et al., 2017).

Mental Well-Being and Pathology

Due to early influences from the medical field, mental health was traditionally defined as the absence of pathology (Lamers et al., 2015). However, in recent decades, as strength-based approaches in healthcare have developed, focus has shifted toward emphasizing mental well-being and positive mental health (Diener, 1984; Huppert, 2009; Ryff & Singer, 1998). In an effort to re-define mental health, Keyes (2005) developed the mental health continuum, which incorporates three components—mental, social, and emotional well-being—into its model. Additionally, Westerhof and Keyes (2010) broadened

the framework into a two-continua model, finding that psychopathology represents its own continuum related to, but distinct from, positive mental health. Westerhof and Keyes determined that mental well-being and pathology are correlated, but separate, constructs (Keyes, 2005; Lamers et al., 2015; Westerhof & Keyes, 2010).

Expanding on this research, Lamers et al. (2015) demonstrated a bidirectional relationship between positive mental health and psychopathology. As a result, Lamers et al. developed a comprehensive model that proposes that positive mental health care should both treat symptoms of distress and foster positive mental well-being. For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused primarily on aspects of positive mental health, specifically emphasizing mental well-being, rather than pathology. Although mental health is characterized broadly to include pathology, the factors of life satisfaction, quality of life, affect, life purpose, and management of stress align more closely with the researcher's intentions for the current investigation.

Promoting Mental Well-Being

As the concept of prioritizing mental well-being grows in popularity, mental health professionals, communities, and universities alike have begun incorporating well-being practices and ideologies into their organizations. Barden, Conley, and Young (2015) highlighted the importance of the relationship between mental health and mental well-being in promoting integrative healthcare. Because mental health professionals are knowledgeable in preventative healthcare and the power of positive lifestyle choices—such as self-care, nutrition, spirituality, exercise, healthy relationships—their insights are invaluable.

Granello (2013) noted the importance of mental health professionals engaging at the forefront of understanding mental well-being. Barden et al. (2015) purported that the changes within the healthcare system have created a demand for mental health professionals to receive more advanced training on the relationship of physical and mental well-being. Additionally, Barden et al. suggested that fostering interdisciplinary relationships with other healthcare professionals might stimulate more holistic views of mental well-being, encompassing healthcare from a biopsychosocial perspective that integrates biological, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives into its approach to treatment.

To assist mental health professionals in the promotion and education about the influence of mental well-being, researchers have developed psychoeducational programs, such as the Wellness Recovery Action Planning program (WRAP; Keogh et al., 2014). Originally established in the United States (US), WRAP is an educational tool geared toward providing communities with coping skills to combat stressors that negatively impact mental well-being (Scott & Wilson, 2011). WRAP's philosophy is rooted in empowerment, such that it aims to destigmatize mental health treatment by providing a positive approach to client-centered care (Keogh et al., 2014). WRAP strives to inspire individuals to invest in their own mental well-being by attending workshops and cultivating skills to improve life satisfaction (Keogh et al., 2014).

Universities also recognize the need to promote well-being efforts. For instance, to promote student well-being, Drexel University established the first ever mental health kiosk, which provides students access to mental health resources through the use of a digital kiosk (Mental Health Weekly, 2015). Since the first kiosk's 2015 debut, other institutions such as

the University of Alabama (2018), Oakland University (Broda, 2017), and Kutztown University (2018) have instituted similar technologies to improve mental well-being awareness by providing students with information about how to invest in their mental health, obtain resources, and connect with peers. Mental health kiosks are also now used in community centers and workplaces (Screening for Mental Health Inc., 2018). Student organizations, such as the Student Health Council (SHC) at Alpert Medical School of Brown University, have created opportunities for students to discuss the negative impact stress can have on mental well-being (Brooks, Karp, Ramirez-Babble, Chiu, & Montross, 2015). Similar student groups, such as the Wellbeing Program at the University of Minnesota (2018) and Wellbeing Services at the University of Exeter (2018), serve as outlets for students to discuss difficulties with maintaining positive mental well-being while obtaining information about healthy coping skills.

Mental Well-Being and Stress

Stress can deeply impact an individual's mental well-being; researchers have consistently found that those with fewer adverse experiences generally rate their mental well-being more positively than those with a longer history of adverse experiences (Filipkowski, Heron, & Smyth, 2016). Researchers have found that stressful experiences affect individuals' mental well-being and how they respond to stress (Barr, 2014; Filipkowski et al., 2016). For example, researchers have examined the effect stress has on parents of infants in Neonatal Intensive Care Units (Barr, 2014) and students transitioning to their first year of college (Filipkowski et al., 2016) and found early exposure to adverse experiences negatively

impacts individuals' ability to manage stress later in life, diminishing their overall mental well-being.

Employment stress also impacts mental well-being. Emergency response workers reported that supportive relationships and well-organized work structures helped manage many of the stressors associated with high pressure occupations (Schneider & Weigl, 2018). Schneider and Weigl found when emergency department staff had peer support and positive work experiences, such as manageable workloads and healthy working conditions their mental well-being was positively impacted. Additionally, Bosmans, Hardonk, De Cuyper, and Vanroelen (2016) examined how transitory employment impacted the mental well-being of temporary workers. Bosmans et al. found coping resources, including feelings of support, trust, fairness, and control helped individuals manage perceived stress associated with temporary employment; individuals who possessed better coping skills reported more positive mental well-being.

Attachment and Mental Well-Being

Other potential factors that impact individuals' mental well-being are secure attachments and positive partnerships, which suggest that healthy relationships improve people's perceptions of mental well-being (Barr, 2014). According to Bowlby (1988), secure attachments develop when individuals trust that another person is available to meet their needs and provide security. Barr highlighted the importance of healthy attachments necessary to maintain a positive mental well-being and found that when comparing parents of sick infants, those parents with more secure attachments exhibited less distress, fewer

codependent tendencies, and higher mental well-being than parents with less secure attachments.

Stevenson, Millings, and Emerson (2018) found adult attachment, mindfulness, and emotion regulation predicted mental well-being. Disorganized or insecure attachment styles contributed to difficulties with maladaptive thoughts and emotion regulation, making it challenging for individuals to reevaluate negative emotions and manage them effectively (Stevenson et al., 2018). Mindfulness exercises helped combat negative coping behaviors, which enhanced resilience and mental well-being (Stevenson et al., 2018). Anxious attachment can also impact mental well-being. Anxious attachment comprises an individual's ability to separate their thoughts and feelings (Bowen, 1976), whereas poor differentiation of self impacts self-forgiveness, life-satisfaction, and increases emotionality (Holeman, Dean, DeShea, & Duba, 2011). Hainlen, Jankowski, Paine, and Sandage (2016) found high attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were related to lower degrees of interpersonal forgiveness and positive affect, suggesting attachment is a key component of emotion regulation and self-compassion, and by extension mental well-being.

Creativity

Defining Creativity

Creativity has been defined as the ability to think innovatively and foster new ideas or bodies of work (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995). Sawyer (2006) posited that creativity is encompassed by the ability to cultivate novel innovations and produce works that overcome existing limitations. Cropley, Kaufman, and Runco (2010) argued that creativity should feature a third component, ethicality, such that creative endeavors should not be done in

malice, with selfishness, or destructive behavior. Sternberg and Lubart (1999) theorized that creativity should incorporate both novelty and appropriateness, which harkens back to the idea that innovations should be useful and practical, as well as original. Some researchers have suggested that creativity can be classified contextually into various types of creativity including, *little c* creativity and *Big C* creativity (Gladding, 2011; Sawyer, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted Sternberg and Lubart's (1999) definition of creativity, which states that creativity is the ability to think and/or behave in ways that facilitate novel, useful, and adaptive work.

The Four Cs of Creativity

The Four Cs of creativity —Big C, little c, Pro C, and mini c— were derived as a way to conceptualize and study various types of creativity. Big C creativity includes larger undertakings recognized by communities such as scientific discoveries and inventions, while little c creativity refers to smaller achievements of everyday creativity (i.e., personal expressions of creativity done by non-experts; Sawyer, 2006). Expanding on Sawyer's explanation of creativity, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) delineated creativity into third and fourth categories called Pro C and mini c creativity. Pro C refers to types of creativity people undertake professionally, often seeking specialized training or formal degrees to obtain mastery (Deidrich et al., 2017; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). Mini c encompasses creativity unique to learning experiences (i.e., students experimenting with novel ideas or materials; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009).

The four Cs model of creativity has led to controversy among some creativity theorists. Some researchers support the idea of deconstructing creativity because it is so

complex (Diedrich et al., 2017; Japardi, Bookheimer, Knudsen, Ghahremani, & Bilder, 2018), while others refute the model, because it can limit how creativity is conceptualized (Runco, 2014). Runco discussed the origin of the Big C/little c model prior to its establishment in creativity research, noting that a similar model had been used to describe culture (see McCarthy & Carter, 1994; Singerman, 1996). Runco contended that the Big C/little c dichotomy does not fit with creativity for two reasons. First, Runco noted that Big C creativity is typically associated with fame and achievement which he saw as inaccurate because fame does not contribute to creativity; it is merely a by-product of the creativity itself. Second, Runco argued that creativity cannot be construed as a true dichotomy because the creative process does not differ across types of creativity. Though the activities may be different among everyday creativity and high-level performance, the creative process remains the same.

Despite these definitional debates, creativity research utilizing the four C model of creativity continues to be published. For instance, Japardi et al. (2018) examined the frontal lobe activity of people in *Big C* careers (i.e., visual artists and scientists) and a comparison group of individuals matched for intelligence and parental educational attainment. Researchers found Big C groups had less brain activation during divergent thinking tasks compared to the comparison group (Japardi et al., 2018). Additionally, brain activation differed among visual artists and scientists (Japardi et al., 2018). Researchers accounted for differences in activity by stating that highly creative individuals expend less effort on tasks involving creativity, consistent with the task positive network theory. According to the task positive network theory, highly creative individuals can enter a default mode during creative

activities or mind-wandering tasks, resulting in less brain activity during divergent thinking tasks (Christoff, Irving, Fox, Spreng, & Andrews-Hanna, 2016).

The four C model of creativity has been studied across cultures to determine its generalizability among different populations (Puente-Diaz, Maier, Brem, & Cavazos-Arroyo, 2016). For instance, researchers determined that among Mexican and German college students, the four-structure model was only partially supported, suggesting that participants viewed creativity differently across cultures (Puente-Diaz et al., 2016). In this study, participants significantly distinguished between little c and Pro C creativity but failed to identify with the Four C model regarding the differences between mini c and Big C creativity (Puente-Diaz et al., 2016). Researchers posited that the participants' perceptions of creative tasks and creative individuals likely differed across cultural groups (Puente-Diaz et al., 2016).

Innate or Learned?

Some scholars have suggested that there are certain people who possess creative abilities and some who do not (Gillam, 2012). Weston (2007) suggested that individuals learn to be creative over time, while others have theorized that creativity is an innate ability. Bohm (2004) disagreed with Weston stating that creativity and originality cannot be taught; rather, individuals can cultivate a state of mind that fosters creative thinking.

Bandura (1986) demonstrated that many behaviors are learned socially, through observation and modeling, but does this extend to creative behaviors? Yi, Plucker, and Guo (2015) examined the influence modeling on divergent thinking and artistic creativity, finding significant modeling effects on verbal tasks, consistent with previous findings (Belcher,

1975; Harris & Fisher, 1973). Modeling effects were found for both divergent thinking and artistic creativity, supporting the notion that certain aspects of creativity may very well be learned (Yi et al., 2015).

Innovation, Inspiration, and Creativity

Although creativity and innovation are sometimes used synonymously, researchers have highlighted some pivotal differences between these constructs. Munt and Hargreaves (2009) argued that creativity encompasses the stage where ideas are generated, while innovation occurs when ideas are applied. Munt and Hargreaves further proposed that innovation is a domain of creativity, along with experimentation, problem solving, and analysis. One key difference between creativity and innovation is that creativity involves both empathy (De Sousa, 2009) and aesthetics, whereas with innovation, empathy and aesthetics are not as relevant (Munt & Hargreaves, 2009). Creativity employs both emotion and sensory stimulation to immerse individuals in an experience (Munt & Hargreaves, 2009).

Inspiration is the motivational state believed to energize the application of creative ideas (Thrash, Maruskin, Cassidy, Fryer, & Ryan, 2010). Thrash and Elliot (2003) found that there are three facets of inspiration: transcendence, evocation, and approach motivation. First, transcendence occurs when individuals become aware of something that has not been seen or heard of before (Thrash et al., 2010). Second, ideas, people, or actions evoke inspiration (Thrash et al., 2010). Finally, when people decide to bring their ideas to fruition, they reach approach motivation (Thrash et al., 2010). Thrash et al. noted that most researchers do not distinguish among creative ideas, innovations, or motivations.

Thrash et al. (2010) also demonstrated that the process of generating ideas differs from inspiration, finding that ideas come first, followed by inspiration, and end with creative products. Additionally, Thrash et al. distinguished between effort and inspiration, demonstrating that each one predicts different outcomes. For example, effort yielded more technical prowess, whereas inspiration predicted creativity within scientific writing (Thrash et al., 2010).

History of Creativity Research

Prior to the modern scientific era, creativity's roots largely existed within mysticism (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Innovative ideas were believed to be superhuman character traits or manifested from the gods (Sawyer, 2012). For example, Plato (380 BCa, p. 1) described creativity with the word *enthousiasmos*, which means “divine madness” and Shakespeare (1594–1596) described lunatics, lovers, and poets as having similar imaginative mindsets.

The earliest research on the topic of creativity involved the testimonies of various authors, composers, inventors, and scientists (Harding, 1948); however, these data sources harbored a potential for biases due to lapses in memory, impression management, or misinterpretation (Fehrman, 1980). Researchers also utilized a *works in progress* methodology, which incorporates personal notes, manuscripts, or observations taken directly from creators during a project (Gruber, 1981). The works in progress method of data collection is not without weakness; the ability to revise creative works can limit the scope of an individual's initial creative process, leading researchers to question the role of inspiration in creative development (Thrash et al., 2010).

At the 1950 annual American Psychological Association (APA) meeting, a pivotal moment in creativity research occurred when APA president Dr. J. P. Guilford used his keynote address to speak directly on creativity (Sawyer, 2012). Because the leading psychological theories of the time remained heavily influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis and behaviorists (Plucker, et al., 2004; Sawyer, 2012), Guilford's efforts were pioneering, as he expressed his discontent for psychologists neglecting creativity research (Plucker et al., 2004; Plucker, 2017; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Many modern creativity researchers credit Guilford's speech as a critical milestone that led to the development of new studies on creativity (Chen, Hu, & Plucker, 2016; Plucker, 2017; Sawyer, 2012).

Developments in modern creativity studies continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. During this time, creativity researchers focused on measuring creativity (Sawyer, 2012). At the time, psychologists believed that creativity was correlated with intelligence, so researchers focused on investigating the relationship between creativity and IQ (Sawyer, 2012). Furthermore, creativity was frequently associated with scientific innovation; therefore, researchers developed tests that could identify gifted and talented children with the hope that these creative children would have careers in scientific fields (Sawyer, 2012). Psychologists tried to measure creativity by evaluating individual creative works, but these methods were far too subjective and therefore biased (Sawyer, 2012). Finally, paper-pencil tests were developed to measure creative potential and to identify common traits of creativity (Sawyer, 2012). However, it is difficult to measure creativity with paper-pencil tests because they cannot easily determine whether researchers are measuring creativity or other personality traits (Barron & Harrington, 1981).

By the 1970s, many researchers abandoned efforts to measure creativity through investigating personality traits or individual intelligence measures (Sawyer, 2012); however, some continue to pursue this work with more sophisticated methods (e.g., Cho, Nijenhuis, van Vianen, Kim, & Lee, 2010; Ilagan & Patungan, 2018). Cognitive psychologists investigated creativity by examining common cognitive processes (Sawyer, 2012). Cognitive psychologists predominantly conducted creativity research until the 1980s (Sawyer, 2012), though current investigations continue (e.g., Zhou, 2018). Most researchers at this time believed that every person possessed the mental capabilities necessary for creativity, suggesting that creativity grew out of everyday mental functioning rather than extraordinary attributes (Sawyer, 2012).

The culmination of many unsuccessful attempts to study creativity effectively steered the development of sociocultural theories about creativity (Sawyer, 2012). These new theories spurred psychologists to communicate with other social science specialties to analyze creativity from multidisciplinary perspectives (Sawyer, 2012). Today, sociocultural approaches are the predominant method to examine creativity, which exemplifies how social and cultural factors impact creativity (Sawyer, 2012).

Modern Creativity Research

Although creativity research is more prevalent today (Gillam, 2018), studying creativity still proves challenging (Plucker, 2017). Difficulties reflect creativity's complexity (Diedrich et al., 2017; Plucker, 2017; Rojas & Tyler, 2018; Silvia, Wigert, Reiter-Palmon, & Kaufman, 2012). For instance, creativity can be classified by various domains, studied differently across fields, and vary in terms of public acknowledgement (Diedrich et al.,

2017). The multifaceted nature of creativity leaves many researchers wondering how to obtain a thorough understanding of creativity (Diedrich et al., 2017; Plucker, 2017). Silvia et al. added that trying to measure concepts that are innovative or uncommon may contribute to the difficulty of assessing creativity.

Quantitatively, creativity is often contextualized into measures of creative achievements, activities, or character traits (Diedrich et al., 2017; Lubart, 2016; Silvia et al., 2012). Most assessments of creativity collect information using self-report measures (Hocevar, 1981; Kaufman, 2006). Still, self-reporting causes some researchers to question how individual differences in cognitive ability, proficiency, personality, and environment influence creativity (Diedrich et al., 2017).

Silvia et al. (2012) noted that due to the complicated nature of creativity research, reviews of creative assessment have not always been positive (e.g., Hocevar, 1981; Michael & Wright, 1989). Silvia et al. described how many researchers have expressed discontent with the existing assessment tools due to the reliance on self-report measures or because some assessments simply total or average domain scores, rather than utilizing multifactor analyses. Regardless of the complicating factor, developing efficient ways to measure creativity is an imperative and on-going pursuit (Rojas & Tyler, 2018).

Qualitatively, researchers have used the following methods to study creativity: semi-structured interviews (Teti et al., 2017), diary studies (Conner & Silvia, 2015), experience sampling methods (ESM; Karwowski et al., 2017; Silvia et al., 2014), group discussions (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016), and written responses (Pearce, 2017). ESM technology utilizes programs to contact participants randomly and has them respond to questionnaires in real

time (Karwowski et al., 2017). While methodologies such as examining diary entries and ESM generally require that studies be micro-longitudinal, they are sometimes preferred to other types of data collection that rely on memories (Karwowski et al., 2017) because memories can be prone to suggestion, false recall, or distortion (Robinson & Clore, 2002). Qualitative studies of creativity allow researchers to examine personal perspectives and obtain information unique to the creative experience (Reynolds, 2003). Recent studies used ESM technology to learn about the ecology of creativity as it unfolded in participants' natural environments (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski et al., 2017).

Emotion

Defining Emotion

Emotions are a fundamental aspect of human life and relationships (Izard, 2009; Rogers et al., 2014). Emotions play a key role in the survival of species as they help organisms organize information and motivate the actions necessary to adapt to surrounding stimuli (Izard, 2009). Furthermore, emotions are a crucial aspect of social relationships, which help ensure that individuals thrive and feel fulfilled (Rogers et al., 2014). However, while humans and non-human animals alike are both capable of emotion, researchers have struggled for decades to unanimously define, conceptualize, and operationalize emotion (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2018; Izard, 2010; Scherer, 2000).

Many theorists believe that the difficulty of defining emotions is due to several unanswered questions about emotions. Two of the most prominent looming questions about emotion are: (1) How do we differentiate between emotion states from other affective states? and (2) What causes a change in emotional state? (Izard, 2009; Scherer, 2000). In addressing

these questions, Scherer noted that many theorists have chosen to focus on the episodic nature of emotion (e.g., Ekman, 1992), which presumes that emotion is caused by triggering events that cause noticeable changes in physiology and/or behavior. Triggering events are significant to each person and can be internal (i.e., thoughts, memories, sensations), or external (i.e., by the behavior of others) in nature (Scherer, 2000). Upon recognizing the initial stimulus, people evaluate and decipher its meaning (Scherer, 2000). From there, individuals undergo an emotional response. Many theorists concur that the initial stimulus evaluation determines the type of emotional state that will follow (Scherer, 2000).

Despite the controversy over conceptualizing emotion, most emotion theorists subscribe to the notion that emotion is a multifaceted construct comprised of many components (Izard, 2010; Scherer, 2000). Many theorists agree that emotion states are temporary in duration and tend to dissipate in intensity prior to fading away (Izard, 2010; Scherer, 2000). Through research, it has been affirmed that emotions impact thinking, decision-making, behavior, interpersonal relationships, well-being, and health (Izard, 2010). Additionally, while some researchers believe that emotions are processes that change throughout the course of a lifetime, most emotion theorists believe that emotion states remain relatively stable over time (Scherer, 2000).

The current study adopted Scherer's (2000) definition of emotion, which states that "emotions are coordinated changes in several components (including at least neurophysiological activation, motor expression, and subjective feeling but possibly also action tendencies and cognitive processes) in response to external or internal events of major significance to the organism" (p. 137). Scherer further delineated the terms *feelings* and

emotions stating that these terms, though often used synonymously, are not the same. Scherer described feelings as the responsive aspects of emotion, while the term emotions refers to a much larger construct.

History of Emotion Research

For over two millennia, philosophers and scientists alike have endeavored to understand emotion (Scherer, 2000). As early as 380 BC, Plato philosophized about the concept of emotion. Plato's doctrine of the tripartite soul argued that an individual's soul is composed of three separate entities: cognition, emotion, and motivation (Plato, 380 BCb). Nearly 50 years later, Aristotle refuted Plato's doctrine of the tripartite soul, positing instead that cognition, emotion, and motivation are inseparable, interacting parts of the soul (Fortenbaugh, 1975). Notwithstanding these early disagreements, Plato's ideas about emotion and cognition continue to spark conversation in what theorists now call the *Cognition-Emotion Debate* (Lazarus, 1984; Leventhal & Scherer, 1987; Scherer, 2000; Zajonc, 1980; 1984). In fact, Plato's philosophies have influenced many emotion theorists succeeding him including Descartes. Descartes (1649) continued to speculate about the nature of emotion in what is now known as *The Mind-Body Debate*. Descartes is considered a revolutionary among emotion theorists because he was the first to suggest that emotion involved both mental and physical processes (Scherer, 2000).

Centuries later, Darwin (1872) began to investigate commonalities between the emotions of humans and non-human animals. Darwin emphasized the emotional expression of humans and animals by examining facial expressions, tone of voice, and body posture. Many psychologists believe that Darwin's discoveries paved the way for current theories

about the universality of certain emotions (e.g., Ekman, 1972, 1992; Izard, 1992). Since Darwin's early comparisons of human and animal emotions, theorists have questioned whether emotion is the result of biology or culture, while others contend that strong arguments can be made for both biology and cultural factors influencing emotion (Ekman, 1972, 1992; Mesquita, Frijda, & Scherer, 1997; Scherer & Wallbott, 1994).

Modern Emotion Theory and Research Models

Scherer (2000) argued that most modern emotion theory models can be separated into four categories including: dimension models, discrete emotion models, meaning oriented models, and componential models. Theorists who propose unidimensional models measure emotion using one spectrum, such as measuring emotional activation or valence (i.e., low to high activation or valence respectively) (Scherer, 2000). For instance, a unidimensional model might allow a researcher to distinguish between positive and negative emotions (for an example see Duffy, 1941 as cited in Scherer, 2000). In contrast, multidimensional models allow researchers to investigate similarities and differences between emotions, while investigating more than one dimension at a time (e.g., Borod, 1992; Lang, Greenwald, Bradley, & Hamm, 1993; Scherer, 2000).

Discrete emotion models propose that there are fundamental human emotions (Scherer, 2000). Various discrete emotion models will differ based on how they differentiate between these fundamental human emotions (Scherer, 2000). For instance, proponents of circuit models (e.g., Cannon, 1927; Papez, 1937) believe there are fundamental emotions which differentiated by neural circuits that determine behaviors (Scherer, 2000). Similarly, basic emotion models (e.g., Ekman, 1972; Izard, 1994) posit that there are basic, universal

human emotions including joy, anger, sadness, disgust, and fear. Proponents of basic emotion models suggest that each of the fundamental emotions warrants a unique physiological response which determines expressive and behavioral reactions (Scherer, 2000).

Comparatively, meaning oriented models focus on the meaning of emotions which dictate behavior (Scherer, 2000). For example, lexical models (e.g., Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987) primarily focus on labeling emotion states and the language that is used to characterize psychophysiological processes (Scherer, 2000). Similarly, social-constructivist models (e.g., Harre, 1986) propose that the meaning of emotion is socially constructed through ongoing interpersonal behaviors which are embedded in cultural and values and messages.

Finally, componential models (e.g., Lazarus, 1984, 1991) assume that emotions are the result of triggering events or stimuli, which are cognitively evaluated and lead to reactionary responses (Scherer, 2000). Proponents of componential models believe that physiological changes, expression, action tendencies, and feelings are the result of these cognitive evaluations (Scherer, 2000).

Types of Emotions

Izard (2009) proposed that there are two overarching types of emotions: basic emotions and emotion schemas. Basic emotions are emotions that are fundamental to a human's mental state and adaptive behavior (Izard, 1992), whereas emotion schemas are emotions that interact with an individual's perceptions and cognitions, thereby influencing thoughts and behaviors. From infancy, individuals begin transitioning from using only basic emotions to developing a vast system of emotion schemas through learning and experience

(cf. Fredrickson, 1998). Researchers have found that even very young infants experience emotions (Izard et al., 1995) and can communicate their responses to stimuli nonverbally (Izard et al. 2008).

Neurobiology and Physiology of Emotion

A common belief among emotion theorists is that while cognition and emotion essentially have separate functions, features, and influences (e.g., Bechara, Damasio, & Damasio, 2000; Talmi & Frith, 2007) they are interrelated (cf. Lewis, 2005; Pessoa, 2008; Phelps, 2006). As a result, the field of affective neuroscience seeks to understand the brain's involvement in emotional responses (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2018). From a neuro-affective view, emotions impact an organisms' perceptions, cognitions, and behaviors to help them adapt, survive, and thrive (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2018). Complex brain structures work integratively to form a network that responds to different needs (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2018). Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones contended that particular emotions are not located within one area of the brain, but rather emotional responses involve complex neural networks throughout the brain which causes some overlap in brain response across different emotions (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2018). The cerebral cortex, in particular, is highlighted as being responsible for generating basic emotions (Berridge & Kringelbach, 2013), although future research may identify other important brain structures that are involved in emotional processes (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2018).

In summary, emotion research is quite extensive and covers such topics as emotion regulation; outward expressions of emotion and suppression; emotion and psychopathology, universal emotions, and emotion in psychotherapy. As a result, many of these vital areas of

study within emotion research lie outside the scope of this investigation. Emotion topics that were central to this study included the relationships between emotion and creativity, the associations between emotion and mental well-being, as well as the relations between emotion and identity.

Mental Well-Being and Emotion

Emotion can also impact mental well-being. For example, happiness tends to benefit individuals across multiple life domains, such as interpersonal relationships, income, and mental and physical well-being (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Researchers have found that happiness is a fundamental aspect of positive mental well-being, and is highly correlated with desirable personality traits, success, and resilience (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Positive emotions are linked to better physical health as well as increased socialization and reduced stress (Cohen & Pressman, 2006). Conversely, negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and hostility lead to higher propensities for illness and early mortality (Cohen & Pressman, 2006).

Researchers have found supporting evidence that by understanding emotions and their implications, it is possible to help individuals facilitate a positive mental well-being. For instance, Smith et al. (2018) found that adolescents who learned about emotion theories increased their mental well-being and applied emotion regulation skills more effectively than students in control groups.

Creativity and Emotion

In recent years, researchers have recognized that emotion and creativity are related (Forgeard & Elstein, 2014). Positive moods often lead to increased cognitive flexibility (Vosburg, 1998) and improve problem solving abilities (Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999). Positive emotion, sometimes called positive affect, refers to pleasurable feelings and interactions in the environment (i.e., joy, happiness, excitement, contentment); (Clark, Watson, & Leeka, 1989). Positive emotions not only enhance creativity, they positively impact mental well-being through fostering resilience, enthusiasm, and stamina (Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, & Steward, 2000).

Fink et al. (2017) investigated the way creative problem solving can be used to foster emotion regulation. Researchers were interested in exploring the application of real-life creative problem solving as it pertains to emotion. Researchers monitored participants using an electroencephalogram (EEG) machine while they engaged in cognitive reappraisal tasks meant to evoke anger (Fink et al., 2017). Fink et al. found that engaging in cognitive reappraisals (i.e., deliberately choosing to re-interpret emotionally charged situations) led to variations in alpha waves represented on the EEG machines. The individuals involved in creative problem-solving regulated their emotions more effectively (Fink et al., 2017). When participants engaged in cognitive reappraisals, they perceived events from different perspectives, thereby altering their emotional states (Fink et al., 2017). These findings support the notion that creativity can be used to alter problematic thoughts and facilitate emotion regulation.

In addition to problem solving and emotion studies, researchers have also focused on emotion as it pertains to creative problem finding. Creative problem finding represents an important antecedent to the problem-solving process (Chen et al., 2016; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Prior to problem solving in which solutions are generated, problem finding involves identifying problems and conceptualizing them (i.e., recognizing what pieces are missing) (Reiter-Palmon, 2011). Thus, problem-finding represents a crucial, yet far less researched, step in the creative thinking process (Chen et al., 2016). Consistent with previous research findings (Batey & Furnham, 2006; Conner & Silvia, 2015; Feist, 1998; Furst et al., 2016; Karwowski et al., 2017), positive emotions enhanced creative performance and problem finding compared to neutral or negative emotions (Chen et al., 2016).

Similarly, creative performance was highest among participants in happiness-induced conditions, followed by neutral mood conditions, and fear-induced conditions (Chen et al., 2016). No differences in performance were found among participants in anger-induced conditions (Chen et al., 2016). Researchers also found that the type of instruction moderated the relationship between emotions and problem finding, such that emotions impacted problem finding more with open instructions than with closed instructions (Chen et al., 2016). The above findings add to the body of literature on creative cognition and emotion, as researchers identified two variables that elicit higher creative performance: emotion and type of instruction.

Throughout the process of studying creativity and emotion, researchers have identified some predictable patterns that frequently occur during the creative process (Gnezda, 2011). Jung (1923) described periods of increased energy as well as deep apathy

and inactivity during the creative process. Other scholars have written about moments of great insight (Ghiselin, 1952), enlightenment (Wallas, 1926), and increased productivity (Ghiselin, 1952; Gnezda, 2011). Csikszentmihalyi (1996, 2017) described periods of intense focus when individuals become completely immersed in their work which he called states of *flow*. When in flow, individuals become completely engrossed in activities, temporarily disengaging from their own self-awareness, time, and even the environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 2017).

However, while the creative process can be fraught with ideas and productive work, it can often be accompanied by periods of inactivity, lethargy, and intense frustration (Gnezda, 2011). Gnezda noted that feelings of self-doubt often accompany the implementation of new ideas, as novelty also demand new skills, products, or solutions to problems. Gnezda aptly described the creative process as one in which creators labor with ideas, begin again and again, continually reevaluate, exhaust their resources, and question themselves and their abilities. As projects are completed, individuals may find that their heightened emotions lessen temporarily, however, researchers have found that creators often become disappointed in their work. Gnezda posited that this decreased affect is likely a product of critiques, revisions, and feelings of imperfection (Gnezda-Smith, 1994). Finally, Gnezda-Smith described feelings of longing, creative people typically experience, to be re-immersed in the creative process once creative projects are complete, which inevitability repeats the cycle of emotions that accompany creative endeavors.

Creativity, Mental Well-Being, and Emotion

Positivity, mental well-being, and creativity are all related (Yuan, 2015). For instance, job satisfaction is a related facet of mental well-being that is enhanced by positive thinking, which can in turn facilitate inspiration (Yuan, 2015). Due to this relationship, Yuan determined that happier employees tend to be more creative, engage in more problem solving, and are more likely to tackle difficult problems. Yuan also noted that because enhanced well-being leads to higher productivity, happy employees are economically advantageous for employers.

Furthermore, both interpersonal and intrapersonal factors play a role in everyday creativity (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski et al., 2017). For example, internal factors such as emotion and personality can inspire or negatively impact creativity. Between-person factors, like events or relationships can also impact an individual's creativity (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski et al., 2017). Conner and Silvia found that personality traits, emotions, intelligence, and creative achievements are all predictors of everyday creativity. For instance, individuals with high intelligence or who have previous creative achievements engage in more creative activities than others (Karwowski et al., 2017). People high in openness tend to be the most creative on days when they feel positive, whereas worrisome people are less creative when anxious (Conner & Silvia, 2015). Positive emotions most consistently predict creativity, suggesting that people who feel positively are more likely to engage in creative activities (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski et al., 2017). Despite advances in this area of scholarship, researchers are left to question: (a) What is the directionality of the relationship between positive emotions and creativity?; (b) Do positive

emotions elicit higher creativity or do creative activities make individuals feel better? (Conner, DeYoung, & Silvia, 2018; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); and (c) What do creative days look like emotionally? (Conner & Silvia, 2015). These questions suggest that more scholarship is needed in this area of research.

Identity

Defining Identity

Researchers agree that identity is a complex concept that is difficult to operationalize and heavily influenced by cultural context (Galliher, McLean, & Syed, 2017; Hammer, Crethar, & Cannon, 2016). In fact, one of the primary difficulties within identity research has been defining “identity” (Galliher et al., 2017). Definitions of identity are frequently debated and conceptualized differently among researchers (Galliher et al., 2017). For instance, researchers have disagreed about whether identity is relatively stable or continually changing, conscious or unconscious, and personally or socially developed (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). Furthermore, traditional identity theories have emphasized identity development and focused less on identity’s content and unpacking the meaning of identity (Galliher et al., 2017). Despite conceptual and definitional disagreements about identity, many theorists agree that identity is a socially constructed concept that encompasses both the meaning of who individuals believe they are and who they believe others to be (Galliher et al., 2017; Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted a similar definition of identity, which states that identity is socially constructed, relatively fixed over one’s lifetime and thus encompasses the meaning of who individuals believe they are (Galliher et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2006).

There are many layers of identity that individuals must juggle simultaneously including the need to balance intersecting identities within oneself; goals, values, social roles, and aspirations that align with various identities; everyday experiences that confirm or disconfirm identities; and maintaining a sense of self that feels authentic (Hammer et al., 2016; Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007). Furthermore, researchers suggest that people exist within many intersecting and converging identities including their race, gender, social class, ability, nationality, and spirituality (Hammer et al., 2016). Individual identities can differ in terms of their outward recognizability, such that some identities are more outwardly visible than others (Hammer et al., 2016). Additionally, individual identities can be either privileged or marginalized within specific cultural contexts, meaning that individual identity experiences can lead to occurrences of oppression or privilege (Galliher et al., 2017).

Galliher et al. (2017) proposed a four-level inter-related analysis model for understanding identity that was coined the integrated developmental model (IDM) for studying identity. The IDM emphasizes four levels of identity: (1) systems of power and privilege that impact identity development; (2) social roles that determine behaviors and shape one's sense of self; (3) unique identity experiences; and (4) everyday interactions that influence identity.

For instance, at the first and broadest level of identity development, Galliher et al. (2017) contended that identity develops within the contexts of both history and culture, suggesting that status, power, and experiences of privilege and marginalization impact identity development (e.g., McIntosh, 2012). The second level of the IDM considers how one's various social roles (i.e., parent, partner, employee) can become part of identity

development as social roles become intertwined with one's sense of self (Galliher et al., 2017). Furthermore, these social roles relate back to the first level of identity development, such that culture lends meaning to social roles (Galliher et al., 2017).

Level 3 of the IDM suggests that individual identity experiences, such as those relating to gender, spirituality, and race, have the power to impact identity development (Galliher et al., 2017). Galliher et al. further noted that with respect to the third level of identity development, individuals can be at different stages of development with each respective identity; individuals may work vigorously to develop one area of identity, but also possess other less developed identities. This notion suggests that in order to understand identity development, researchers must consider individual identities and experiences. Finally, the fourth level of analysis of the IDM suggests that identities are enacted within the context of everyday interactions; therefore, Galliher et al. remind investigating the lived experiences of individuals in order to better understand their identity development.

Expanding on multilevel analyses of identity described within the IDM (Galliher et al., 2017) as well as creativity models (e.g. Conner & Silvia, 2015), this study primarily emphasized two types of identities: (1) *individual cultural identities*, which are personal identifications with, and sense of belonging to social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and (2) *creative identity*, which is defined as an individual's identity as a creative person. To summarize, identity research is quite broad and covers such topics as identity development, identity formation, cultural identity, as well as group and social identities. As a result, many of these pivotal areas of study within identity research lie outside the parameters of this study. Identity topics that were central to this study included the relationships between

identity and creativity, the associations between identity and mental well-being, as well as the relations between identity and emotion.

Identity and Culture Models

One example of a recent identity model is the dynamic systems model of role identity (DSMRI). According to the DSMRI, role identities are viewed as complex systems in which an individual's actions are determined by their beliefs, values, goals, self-perceptions, self-definitions, and perceived roles (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). The DSMRI framework provides a basis from which to conceptualize identity, its development, and the relationship between identity and mental well-being across various stages of maturity, functioning, and social contexts using both quantitative and qualitative methods (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). In accordance with the DSMRI model, role identities can be formal (e.g., doctor, lawyer, professor, pupil) or informal (e.g., acquaintance, neighbor, colleague) and can reference individuals or groups of people holding a role identity in a given cultural context (Burke & Stets, 2009). The DSMRI model assumes that these social positions provide individuals with the necessary framework to appraise and evaluate their experiences that will determine their behavior (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). Therefore, individual experiences either confirm or disconfirm individual identities, which can influence commitment to a given identity and whether individuals explore identities further (Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

Identity has also been studied within relational cultural theory (RCT; Hammer et al., 2016), which investigates the impact of intersecting identities as they relate to power, privilege, and social location. Broadly, RCT is a theoretical model that investigates how identity experiences and interpersonal relationships mutually influence each other (Hammer

et al., 2016; Jordan, 1986). The RCT framework assumes that privilege is derived by obtaining differential status based on societal value of a certain group, while also devaluing an opposing group (Hammer et al., 2016). People in positions of power knowingly or unknowingly use their privilege to maintain dominance over individuals in marginalized groups. However, very few people hold all marginalized or all privileged identities, suggesting most individuals will experience both oppression and privilege over a lifetime (Hammer et al., 2016). According to RCT, the salience of individual identities is based on the context of a given situation (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016). For example, people's identities as students might be most salient when they are currently enrolled in school and less salient once they have graduated. The RCT model of identity suggests that individuals should be viewed within various contexts, accounting for their intersecting identities rather than being viewed based on one identity alone (Hammer et al., 2016).

Third in this review of identity models, social identity models examine how social behavior is impacted by social identities and self-categorization (Haslam, 2014). In recent years, social identity research has investigated how understanding and incorporating individuals' identities can be used to better health and clinical outcomes (Haslam, 2014). Proponents of social identity models argue that social identities are important because of the roles that identities play in health outcomes and organizational success (Haslam, 2014). People's self-understandings in situations shape their mental well-being and behavior (Haslam, 2014). Furthermore, researchers have found that working with, supporting, and promoting social identities engenders greater comfort, satisfaction, and productivity among workers (Knight & Haslam, 2010), fosters greater resilience during times of organizational

change (e.g., Jetten & Hutchison, 2011), and enhances trust in the leadership process (e.g., Tyler & Blader, 2003). The two predominant social identity theories are social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). SIT research has largely focused on intergroup dynamics and social conflict, whereas SCT research has predominantly examined the role of group formation, structure, and action (Haslam, 2014). Social identity researchers such as Haslam are currently encouraging researchers to focus on the development of new tools and interventions to apply principles of social identity research to clinical, health, and organizational settings.

Mental Well-Being and Identity

People are unique and diverse. To promote and truly understand mental well-being, it is important to consider context, demographics, and social location, those experiences that inform identity (Brown, 2010), as they are key to understanding individuals' experiences that play a vital role in improving mental well-being. For instance, McKay and Cole (2017) examined the impact of gender, socioeconomic status, and location on mental well-being. Researchers found that compared to individuals of different genders or areas of residence, men living in rural areas reported the highest ratings of mental well-being (McKay & Cole, 2017).

In another gender-based study, researchers compared women who had experienced intimate partner violence and women who had not, finding that women who had experienced intimate partner violence were more likely to report poorer mental well-being (Loxton, Dolja-Gore, Anderson, & Townsend, 2017). Loxton et al. also determined that the

detrimental health impacts caused by intimate partner violence can last for many years resulting in prolonged deficits in mental well-being. Abused women are not only subject to mental and physical abuse, but also economic abuse. Economic abuse is often used to assert power alongside physical, sexual, or psychological abuse (Adams & Beeble, 2018).

Examples of economic abuse include tampering with employment, withholding access to money, concealing financial information, and accruing debt in someone else's name. Adams and Beeble found economic abuse diminishes mental well-being, especially regarding quality of life, as it increases stress and depletes financial resources.

Age can also impact mental well-being. Researchers found the mental well-being of adults over 50 is negatively impacted by high propensities for physical health issues, resource scarcity, and ageism (Lifshitz, Nimrod, & Bachner, 2016). Additionally, researchers found that adults over 60 years of age are more likely to indicate lower perceptions of mental well-being when compared to people ages 15–60 years old (Swift et al., 2014). However, researchers found that good health, supportive partnerships, spirituality, social support, and sufficient income predicted higher ratings of mental well-being among adults 60–105 years of age (Swift et al., 2014). These generational and age differences are reinforced when narrowed to one gender. For instance, researchers found generational differences in mental well-being among women who had experienced intimate partner violence. Women younger than 85 who have been abused by intimate partners have discernably poorer mental and physical health outcomes than do women over 85 with similar abuse histories (Loxton et al., 2017).

McCarthy, Hunt, and Milne-Skillman (2017) found that women with learning disabilities were vulnerable to similar systemic oppression and abuse, which greatly impacted mental well-being. In these situations, participants disclosed incidences of intimate partner violence, however participants reported they did not always receive consistent healthcare services. The lack of consistent healthcare services was attributed to unawareness of supportive services, or in some cases, participants made formal reports of abuse to healthcare providers, but their disabilities prevented them from being taken seriously (McCarthy et al., 2017). While situations of abuse are not unique to women with disabilities, McCarthy et al. noted that this population may be at greater risk for abuse and diminished well-being. Furthermore, Conder et al. (2015) found that women with intellectual disabilities are at risk for poor mental well-being due to factors such as social isolation, discrimination, and higher propensities for traumatic events. Exposure to traumatic events significantly increases the likelihood that individuals with intellectual disabilities will develop additional mental health concerns (Martorell et al., 2009).

Another subset of women at risk for poorer mental well-being are women who have received or been denied abortions. Biggs, Upadhyay, McCulloch, and Foster (2017) found women denied abortions initially experience anxiety, dissatisfaction with life, and poorer self-esteem compared to women who are granted abortions. However, longitudinal data determined that after approximately 6–12 months, the stress levels of women denied abortions resembled those of women who received abortions; these results remained consistent for up to 30 months (Biggs et al., 2017; Harris, Roberts, Biggs, Rocca, & Foster, 2014). Women denied abortions experienced deteriorated mental well-being due to the stress

of being refused services in addition to unwanted pregnancies. Moreover, researchers found women who were denied abortions reported higher stress than women having abortions close to gestational age limits (Harris et al., 2014). Similar to other findings, stress levels for both groups of women appeared to converge approximately 6 months after receiving an abortion (Harris et al., 2014).

Parental overinvolvement, sometimes known as *helicopter parenting*, can also impact mental well-being (Kouros, Pruitt, Ekas, Kiriaki, & Sunderland, 2017). Young adults working toward independence can be particularly affected by helicopter parenting as it can stunt autonomy and self-reliance (Kouros et al., 2017). Conversely, *autonomy supportive* parents provide circumscribed guidance and support while encouraging their children to make independent decisions (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). Kouros et al. found helicopter parenting predicted poorer mental well-being in young women, whereas autonomy support reduced social anxiety in young men. Chirkov and Ryan (2001) found individuals who had autonomy supportive parents were more well-adjusted and experienced easier transitions into adulthood. Reed, Duncan, Lucier-Greer, Fixelle, and Ferraro (2016) found that both autonomy supportive parenting and helicopter parenting affected anxiety, depression, and physical health. Autonomy support fostered self-efficacy and greater life-satisfaction, while helicopter parenting did not enhance mental well-being (Reed et al., 2016).

Examining student mental well-being can be useful to understand the degree to which they may be hindered from maintaining positive mental well-being while pursuing meaningful ambitions. For example, medical students reported the highest degree of stigma related to seeking mental health services, whereas undergraduate students were more likely

to seek help from friends rather than obtain formal psychological services (Laidlaw et al., 2016). Researchers theorized the discrepancy in help-seeking behaviors among students training to be healthcare providers may be due to various stigmas relating back to concerns about confidentiality, training repercussions (i.e., being deemed unfit to practice), or personal biases about seeking help (Chew-Graham, Rogers, & Yassin, 2003).

Among sexual minority (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer; LGBTQ) college students, poor mental well-being is typically impacted by discrimination, specifically institutional oppression (Woodford et al., 2018). Oppressive environments can have costly impacts on mental well-being (Rostosky, Cardom, Hammer, & Riggle, 2018). Woodford et al. found that institutions and policies that affirmed sexual minority identities through offering academic courses on queer studies or supportive student organizations, directly enhanced LGBTQ students' well-being. Factors such as positive social relations, self-acceptance, and environmental safety can contribute to an individual's sense of personal identity and positively affect mental well-being (Rostosky et al., 2018). In places where identities were affirmed, sexual minority students reported fewer incidences of discrimination, higher self-acceptance, and less distress than students attending campuses that did not offer these affirmations (Woodford et al., 2018).

Ethnic typicality, how closely individuals believe they fit the cultural scripts of their ethnic-racial groups, impacts mental well-being (Mitchell et al., 2018). For example, people might gauge ethnic typicality by identifying with a group based on physical appearance, values, traditions, or food (Mitchell et al., 2018). Researchers found perceived typicality differed by race/ethnicity (Mitchell et al., 2018). For instance, White individuals perceived

themselves as the most ethnically typical, while Latinx and multiracial individuals endorsed typicality less. Although perceptions of typicality can vary by race, researchers found most individuals believed they were typical of their ethnic/racial group (Mitchell et al., 2018).

Among White and multiracial participants, ethnic typicality and mental well-being were inversely related; as typicality rose, depressive symptoms, identity confusion, and low self-esteem decreased (Mitchell et al., 2018). This finding was not consistent among Asian, Black, or Latinx participants, or any participants who identified their race/ethnicity as “other” (Mitchell et al., 2018). Mitchell et al. explained that sociocultural contexts could play a role in moderating this relationship. For instance, individuals who appear typical for their group might be vulnerable to discrimination (i.e., phenotypical bias; Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins, 2002). Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination is related to poorer mental well-being, dissatisfaction with life (Tran & Sangalang, 2016), decreased academic achievement, and risk-taking behavior (Benner et al., 2018). Thus, varied experiences of discrimination can impact the relationship between typicality and minority participants (Mitchell et al., 2018).

Faith and spirituality identities can also affect mental well-being. Saleem (2017) examined how spirituality and mental well-being can influence quality of life. All participants regarded physical well-being, mental well-being, and social relationships as connected to their spirituality, regardless of religious orientation; among both religious and non-religious groups, spirituality was significantly positively related to quality of life (Saleem, 2017). Additionally, Dentale et al. (2018) examined the relationship between implicit religious thoughts, automatic faith associations, and mental well-being among practicing Catholics, non-practicing Catholics, atheists, and agnostics. The researchers found

significant correlations between implicit religious thoughts and measures of mental well-being. All participants, regardless of religion, implicitly endorsed Catholic faith items; however, this finding was not consistent for items that asked about religion explicitly (Dentale et al., 2018). Researchers theorized that automatic religious associations quell fears of death, suggesting that individuals might implicitly hold religious beliefs that God/gods exist to avoid existential anxiety or to cope with difficult life circumstances. Participants thereby enhance their mental well-being through implicit religious thoughts (Dentale et al., 2018).

Creativity and Identity

Historically, researchers have argued that creativity is socially constructed (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Morris Miller & Cohen, 2012; Rudowicz, 2003; Westmeyer, 1998; Yi et al., 2015), implying that time periods, social influences, and historical contexts must be considered when examining the impact of creative people or products (Schoon, 2006); thus, creativity is embedded within culture. Csikszentmihalyi's definition of creativity states that creativity is a multidimensional concept encompassing a culture containing rules and conventions, an individual who creates innovative works, and a field of experts who deem those works novel and practical. Furthermore, Rudowicz noted that creative individuals must also defy convention to create novel works, but to achieve acceptance and avoid being deemed too unusual or risky, innovations must abide by social conventions. Therefore, to be successful, creative individuals must navigate social conventionality and unconventionality very carefully (Rudowicz, 2003).

Since cultural experiences inform identity (Brown, 2010; Varga-Dobai, 2015), it is important to consider context, demographics, and social location when examining creativity. Furthermore, significant experiences involving identity impact mental well-being (McKay & Cole, 2017; Rostosky et al., 2018; Tran & Sangalang, 2016) and creativity positively impacts mental well-being (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti et al., 2017). Moreover, researchers reason that cultural differences likely impact assessments of creativity because if they did not, they would be one of the only types of cognitive measures that are not impacted by demographic and cultural differences (Plucker, 2017). Still, creative products differ cross culturally, suggesting that factors lying outside of cognition, such as gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and social class may impact creativity (Plucker, 2017). Therefore, understanding the relationship between creativity and identity is essential to determine how creativity can be used to enhance mental well-being. This study investigated how individual cultural identities, such as race, age, gender, and sexual orientation, impact creativity.

Differing approaches have been developed to study creativity. Puente-Diaz et al. (2016) noted two traditional approaches to creativity research: explicit and implicit approaches. Explicit approaches emphasize formal theories of creativity developed by investigators across disciplines, whereas implicit approaches emphasize understanding how non-experts define and conceptualize facets of creativity (Puente-Diaz et al., 2016). In support of implicit approaches, Lim and Plucker (2001) found that lay people do not typically look to formal theories to determine if someone or something is creative. Additionally, examining creativity implicitly allows researchers to investigate cross-cultural differences in the way in which individuals conceptualize creativity (Puente-Diaz et al.,

2016). Implicit theories of creativity are useful to determine the impact of cultural values upon what a population considers to be creative because these theories investigate belief systems (Puente-Diaz et al., 2016).

Researchers have found that individuals from both Eastern and Western cultures tend to describe creative people similarly; describing attributes such as perseverance, independence, confidence, and motivation (Lim & Plucker, 2001; Rudowicz & Yue, 2000). However, Rudowicz and Yue found some differences among Eastern and Western participants' descriptions of creative individuals, in regard to aesthetics and humor. Chinese individuals' descriptions of creative people did not include aesthetic appreciation or sense of humor, as American individuals' descriptions did (Rudowicz & Yue, 2000). Furthermore, people from Eastern and Western cultures agreed that creative products must be novel and appropriate (Rudowicz, 2003), but the value placed on each factor can differ cross culturally (Puente-Diaz et al., 2016). For instance, Paletz and Peng (2008) found Chinese participants prized novelty more than American participants who valued appropriateness in creativity more highly.

Finally, researchers have determined that cultural diversity can both positively and negatively influence group creativity (Leung & Wang, 2015). Biases and perceived cultural differences can lead to miscommunications and misinterpretations among group members (Gertsen & Soderberg, 2011); this in turn diminishes group cohesion and may lessen a group's ability to produce creative ideas or products (Leung & Wang, 2015). Alternatively, cultural diversity can benefit group creativity through broadening group perspectives (Leung

& Wang, 2015). Furthermore, groups working collaboratively with various perspectives and ideas can yield more creative outputs (Leung & Wang, 2015).

Creativity, Mental Well-Being, and Identity

Creative activities can benefit many individuals with diverse identities. Participation in creative activities positively impacts the mental well-being of those living with longstanding physical health issues (Sealy, 2012; Teti et al., 2017), battling systemic oppression (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2010), suffering from job loss (Mays & Cochran, 2001), or advanced aging (McHugh, 2016; Pearce, 2017). For example, Teti et al. found that photography allowed women living with HIV/AIDS to improve their mental well-being by engendering empowerment, self-expression, and coping skills, all of which allowed them to process their experiences.

Researchers have examined creative potential and mental well-being among older adults. Pearce (2017) found that older adults reported higher ratings of mental well-being and group cohesion when they attended educational classes that incorporated creativity into the curriculum. Pearce demonstrated that older adults could improve their mental well-being by enhancing peer support, group membership, and facilitating a creative outlet. McHugh (2016) conducted a literature review examining how creativity and meaningful tasks relate to the mental well-being and physical health of older adults, finding that among older adults, positive social interactions, self-acceptance, health, and agency were related to meaningful or creative experiences. McHugh regarded such positive occurrences as essential to positive aging and increased longevity.

Additionally, researchers found work settings to be places where creativity can be used to generate a sense of personal identity through which individuals can form relationships and develop social connections, thereby improving job and life satisfaction and contributing to mental well-being (Cornelissen, 2009; Fisher, 2010; Jahoda, 1981).

Individuals who were able to incorporate creativity into their daily routine reported higher ratings of life satisfaction, overall well-being, and purpose (Sherman & Shavit, 2017). These findings demonstrate that creativity serves to help individuals cope through the everyday difficulties of managing mental well-being, work, and social interaction.

Finally, Viswanath, Reddy, and Viswanath (2015) found that among adolescents, highly creative adolescents, regardless of gender, had greater mental well-being compared to their less creative peers. Highly creative adolescents endorsed more supportive relationships and interpersonal skills (i.e., loyalty, diplomacy) and less impatience and insecurity compared to low creative adolescents (Viswanath et al., 2015). These results demonstrate a need for continued investigation of creativity and mental well-being among diverse populations.

The Creative Individual

Creativity and personality. Creative people typically possess high levels of cognitive flexibility (Runco & Albert, 2005), which increases their ability to problem-solve and attain achievements in domains such as art, science, or music (Carson, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005; Furst et al., 2016; Jonason, Richardson, & Potter, 2015; Kaufman, 2012). Rojas and Tyler (2018) found that both determination and regular pursuit of creative goals were positively correlated with creative potential. The traditional research methods used to

investigate the relationship between creativity and personality have been self-reporting methods (Griffin & McDermott, 1998), creative writing samples of fictional stories (Wolfradt & Pretz, 2001), autobiographical compositions (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993), and cognitive tests that measure divergent thinking (McCrae, 1987).

Researchers often use the Big Five framework when studying creativity and personality (Furst et al., 2016). The Big Five factor personality model posits five personality domains: openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Costa and McCrae described openness as closely relating to artistic abilities and temperaments; it has been associated with personality traits such as flexibility, curiosity, and worldly interests. These attributes positively relate to creative activities and achievements (Batey & Furnham, 2006; Falavarjani, 2017; Feist, 1998; Furst et al., 2016; Lim & Plucker, 2001). Conscientiousness has been associated with creativity, suggesting that creative individuals tend to have increased energy, organization, and efficiency (Furst et al., 2016). Traits characterizing extroversion include positive affect, enthusiasm, assertiveness, and innovation which are linked to aspects of divergent thinking (Batey & Furnham, 2006; Feist, 1998; Furst et al., 2016). Creative individuals often report high levels of anxiety, emotionality, and sensitivity, which reflect the Big Five dimension of neuroticism (Falavarjani, 2017; Feist, 1998). Finally, creative individuals tend to score low on agreeableness, suggesting that they can have temperamental or hostile personalities (Batey & Furnham, 2006; Furst et al., 2016).

Among a group of Pakistani students, researchers studied personality, creativity, and mental well-being and found high levels of neuroticism negatively predicted mental well-

being, whereas facets of extraversion and conscientiousness positively predicted psychological well-being (Arshad & Rafique, 2016). Creativity alone did not significantly predict psychological well-being, nor did age, gender, family system, residential status, birth-order, or income (Arshad & Rafique, 2016). People who are pre-disposed to mood disorders and highly artistic individuals tend to report poorer ratings of psychological well-being (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Arshad and Rafique proposed that predispositions to mood disorders could be one reason for their findings.

It is also common for creative individuals to exhibit asocial, atypical, or hostile personality traits (Batey & Furnham, 2006; Feist, 1998; Furst et al., 2016). Jonason et al. (2015) found traits such as narcissism, impulsivity, and assertiveness associated with high levels of creativity. For example, individuals who are high in narcissism are impulsive, more likely to promote self-enhancement, and often feel they are more creative than others (Jonason et al., 2015). Moreover, the propensity to cheat correlated with high levels of creativity; cheaters and creative thinkers both engage in “out of the box,” free thinking which may contribute to small acts of dishonesty (Gino & Wiltermuth, 2014). Furthermore, Gino and Ariely (2012) found that creative thinking can also lead to justifications for immoral behavior, thereby perpetuating a cycle of dishonesty.

Creative thinking and problem solving. Most researchers view creativity and cognition as related (Kaufman, 2012; Kaufman & Baer, 2005; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Creativity involves populating new ideas and using those ideas to solve problems (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Creativity requires divergent thinking, whereas intelligence primarily requires convergent thinking (Guilford, 1956; Sternberg, 2017). Consequently, researchers

disagree about which facets of cognition invoke individual differences in creative thinking (i.e. cognitive abilities, motivation, or divergent thinking) which leads researchers to theorize it is not one factor alone that fosters creative thinking, but rather an assortment of factors (Kaufman & Baer, 2004, 2005; Lunke & Meier, 2016). This theory suggests that different motivations, abilities, and ways of thinking may elicit creativity in certain domains and not in others.

Since creativity is multidimensional and partially domain-specific, creative potential does not develop uniformly (Barbot et al., 2016). Creative performance involves many different factors including individual abilities, task-specific demands, and environmental influences (Barbot et al., 2016). Furthermore, various tasks require unique combinations of resources, meaning that individuals are unlikely to be creative across every domain (Barbot et al., 2016). Thus, creative resources are not stagnant, and they cannot be reduced to a well just waiting to be tapped if the right task comes along (Barbot et al., 2016). Rather, creative work is shaped by people's interests, motivations, and experiences and culminates in products that are unique to the individual (Barbot et al., 2016).

Sternberg (2018) developed the triangular theory of creativity which incorporates material from two of his earlier theories: the three-facet model of creativity (Sternberg, 1988) and the investment theory of creativity (Sternberg & Lubart, 1991). According to Sternberg (2018), divergence leads to creativity because creative people defy the crowd, themselves, and the general zeitgeist. Additionally, Sternberg (2018) proposed that creative individuals are divergent thinkers, which he noted is the primary facet of cognition involved in creativity. Thinking creatively involves generating novel, impactful, and sometimes atypical ideas,

which may set individuals apart from their peers (Sternberg, 2018). Finally, Sternberg (2018) posited that creativity is impacted by both cognitive and environmental factors including motivation, attention, memory, emotion, and social location.

The creative cognition approach is another popular theory of creative thinking. This theory posits that individuals access different knowledge systems to generate creative ideas (Finke, Ward, & Smith, 1992). According to scholars who endorse the creative cognition approach, the creative process involves combining existing sets of knowledge with different, seemingly unrelated, information to conduct creative activities (Rietzschel, Nijstad, & Stroebe, 2007). Investigating creative cognition, Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee (2008) compared the creative cognition approach to the social identities approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) which purports that knowledge systems are bundled according to individuals' social identities, aspects of identities and memberships within social groups. Cheng et al. found that individuals with more integrated social identities had an increased ability to think creatively, such that high identity integration led to greater access to knowledge domains, thereby increasing individuals' creativity.

Storme et al. (2017) examined the degree to which performance on verbal, divergent, and convergent creativity tasks were correlated with cultural identities among groups of Chinese and French children. Participants were grouped according to cultural identity. Children from monocultural backgrounds were defined as having two parents born in same country as they were, while children from multicultural backgrounds had at least one parent who was born in a different country. Storme et al. found cultural environments (i.e., monocultural or multicultural backgrounds) elicited differences in creative ability, such that

participants from multicultural backgrounds demonstrated greater cognitive flexibility on verbal and non-verbal dimensions of creativity, as opposed to children from monocultural backgrounds. Researchers posited that multicultural children learned to adapt behaviorally within cultural contexts, making them sensitive to cognitive tasks as opposed to monocultural children (Storme et al., 2017). Children's performance on task specific items differed across all cultural groups, suggesting that task specificity may be important to consider when examining culture and creativity (Storme et al., 2017).

Exploring connections between creative individuals and mental health. Creativity and mental health have often had a complex relationship (Bohm, 2004). Early philosophers like Plato (380 BC) associated creativity with madness. Additionally, literary playwrights and poets such as Shakespeare (1564-1616) and Lord Byron made statements like, “we of the craft are all crazy” (Gordon, 1788-1824, p. 1), suggesting that creative individuals may have unique, dynamic identities that set such individuals apart from others. Jung (1984) likened the creative mindset, or a *divine frenzy*, to psychosis. Gillam (2012) noted that these schemas have endured, as phrases such as *creative genius* and *artistic temperament* are still widely used today. Commonalities between these descriptions suggest that there might be a relationship worth further exploration between creativity and mental well-being.

Gostoli, Cerini, Piolanti, and Rafanelli (2017) investigated the relationship between bipolar disorder and creativity, finding significant positive correlations between creativity and susceptibility to bipolar disorder. Researchers demonstrated that creativity did not predict all types of mental well-being, but creativity was related to personal growth (Gostoli et al., 2017). Bipolar disorder vulnerability scales showed a significant relationship between bipolar

vulnerability and hyperthymia (Gostoli et al., 2017). Hyperthymia (i.e., increased energy or productivity) predicted all mental well-being scales, except for personal growth, suggesting that creativity, bipolar vulnerability, mental well-being are mutually associated (Gostoli et al., 2017).

McCraw, Parker, Fletcher, and Friend (2013) examined creativity as it relates to the subtypes of bipolar disorder (i.e., bipolar I and bipolar II), finding that bipolar individuals, between both subtypes, tended to engage in creative activities during manic or hypomanic episodes. Over 80% of participants endorsed being creative during manic/hypomanic episodes and conducted activities such as writing, painting, or generating business ideas (McCraw et al., 2013). However, participants in both groups reported that when they felt better, they tended to abandon creative projects. Although McCraw et al. identified some variances in creative activities among subgroups, they were not significant enough to warrant a phenotype.

Lipson, Zhou, Wagner, Beck, and Eisenberg (2016) examined creativity and mental well-being as it pertains to college major, finding a relationship between artistic types of creativity and depressed mood. Researchers found students pursuing degrees in arts and humanities reported higher rates of mental health problems than those in other areas of study. Lipson et al. proposed that the pressure to produce novel and original innovations while managing frequent critiques might contribute to higher propensities for mental health problems among creative individuals.

Lennartsson, Horwitz, Theorell, and Ullen (2017) examined alexithymia as it relates to creativity and mental well-being. Individuals with alexithymia have difficulty identifying

and describing their emotions, differentiating between emotions and other bodily sensations, and interpreting the emotions of others (Demers & Koven, 2015). Researchers found that both men and women diagnosed with alexithymia had significant achievements in writing and music. Additional relationships were found among visual arts achievements and men with alexithymia, as well as women with alexithymia and achievements in drama (Lennartsson et al., 2017). Researchers posited that individuals with this disorder might gravitate toward forms of creativity that do not involve identifying or describing emotions, as individuals with alexithymia struggle to do so (Lennartsson et al., 2017).

Self-perceptions of creativity. Recently, there has been an upsurge in studies investigating self-perceptions of creativity (Pretz & McCollum, 2014). Methodologies including self-report questionnaires, divergent thinking tasks, and creative achievement checklists have been developed to evaluate self-perceptions of creativity (Pretz & McCollum, 2014). However, like other aspects of creativity, self-perceptions can be multifaceted and complex. For instance, creative self-efficacy refers to the belief that one has the ability to succeed in a creative endeavor (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Additionally, people who possess creative personal identities maintain the conviction that it is essential to be creative (Pretz & McCollum, 2014). Finally, creative metacognition is the knowledge of the possession of creative abilities and how to utilize them (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2013).

Studies investigating self-perceptions of creativity have yielded mixed results; researchers have questioned whether individuals' perceptions of creativity truly reflect their abilities or whether there is more to uncover (Pretz & McCollum, 2014). Priest (2006) found that some individuals rated their own work more harshly than experts, while Silvia et al.

(2012) found self-reports of creativity to be more reliable than most experts believe. What is known about creativity and self-perception is that creative activities can foster positive perceptions of self-value (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016). Rose and Lonsdale found life satisfaction stemmed from feeling successful after creative activities, being positively challenged, and from sharing creative works with others. Researchers noted that sharing creative products facilitated support and validation for individuals, thereby improving mental well-being (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016). Mixed results surrounding this area of scholarship led the researcher to question if creativity can positively benefit mental well-being, why are many people adverse to believing they are creative?

One theory is that there are many biases about creative individuals (Plucker et al., 2004; Sawyer, 2012) that have the potential to impact people's perceptions of creative individuals. Proudfoot et al. (2015) examined gender biases associated with creativity and found that men were typically deemed more creative than women. Moreover, agency (i.e. self-governed behavior), which is correlated with creativity, is generally categorized as a masculine trait; women are stereotypically regarded as community-oriented and more focused on interpersonal connections rather than to self-direction (Abele, 2003; Proudfoot et al., 2015). Researchers noted that stereotypically masculine attributes such as taking risks, being daring, or self-reliance may further gendered biases about creativity (Proudfoot et al., 2015).

Furthermore, creative attributes such as thinking outside the box, assertiveness, and innovation are traditionally ascribed to men, which may lead to the misguided assertion that men are more creative than women (Proudfoot et al., 2015). Plucker et al. (2004) noted that

erroneous assumptions can tend to perpetuate stereotypes of creative people, such as creative people being described as loners, hippies, or starving artists. However, creative individuals have not always been viewed this way. In fact, who or what is deemed creative varies across cultural contexts and time periods (Sass, 2000).

Identity and Emotion

Throughout the study of emotion, researchers have recognized the relationship between emotion and culture (Rogers et al., 2014). Emotions can be influenced by cultural events and interpersonal relationships just as easily as they can by biology (Rogers et al., 2014). Cultures are defined as common structures, values, and ecologies that influence individuals' mentality and behavior (Hampton & Varnum, 2018). Emotion regulation is the processes that helps accomplish emotional experiences that are more culturally appropriate or functional (Gross, Richards, & John, 2006; Thompson, 1991). Emotion regulation is considered an important aspect of cross-cultural differences in emotions (e.g., Ekman, 1992). Most theories surrounding culture and emotion regulation share three underlying assumptions: (1) that emotions are a necessary aspect of interpersonal relationships; (2) that emotional experiences tend to align with one's cultural values, standards, ambitions, and apprehensions; and (3) that the successful regulation of an emotional experience is oriented toward congruence with cultural norms (De Leersnyder, Boiger, & Mesquita, 2013; Hampton & Varnum, 2018).

Tsai, Miao, Seppala, Fung, and Yeung (2007) posited that individuals from various cultures differ in terms of their ideal affect, or how they wish to feel. While all people prefer to experience positive emotions rather than experience negative emotions, researchers have

found that individuals from Eastern cultures tend to value low arousal states, such as calmness and tranquility, while individuals from Western cultures tend to prefer high arousal states like excitement more (Tsai et al., 2007). Moreover, researchers have found that individuals from different cultures can diverge in terms of hedonic emotion regulation (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011), which are the behaviors individuals engage in to savor pleasant emotions (Larsen, 2000) and lessen unpleasant emotional experiences (Hirt & McCrea, 2000). Miyamoto and Ma found that individuals from Eastern cultures used hedonic emotion regulation strategies less and made fewer attempts to savor positive experiences than individuals from Western cultures. Furthermore, researchers have found that individuals from different cultures vary in terms of emotion regulation, specifically regarding the suppression of outward emotions (Matsumoto, Yoo, & Fontaine, 2008; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008). For example, individuals from collectivists cultures tended to regulate their outward emotions more, which may reflect societal values and standards.

To further examine the relationship between culture and emotion, researchers have also turned to neuroscience (Hampton & Varnum, 2018). Investigators have utilized techniques such as measuring skin conductance responses (SCR) to measure the electrical conductance of skin to assess emotional arousal (e.g., Bradley, Codispoti, Cuthbert, & Lang, 2001), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans to identify neural structures associated with emotion regulation (For a review see Phelps & LeDoux, 2005), and EEGs to better understand emotion regulation.

Identity and Emotion Model

Affect control theory (ACT) is one example of a model that examines both identity and emotion within the same theoretical model. ACT considers the multifaceted nature of sociality, including social institutions, such as family and the educational system, as well as the multitude of roles and identities that individuals play in these institutions (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010). The order of these institutions is maintained by shared affective meanings of shared roles and identities (e.g., parents, educators, employees). Affective meaning is defined as a foundational psychological meaning (Barrett & Bliss-Moreau, 2009). According to ACT, culture is founded on the principle of shared meaning-making among various groups and social institutions (Rogers et al., 2014). Affective experiences are formed when social situations either confirm or disconfirm affective meanings (Heise, 2007). The underlying principles of ACT are that people use shared meanings to interpret social circumstances, those interpretations lead to affective meanings, and people sustain those meanings during future social interactions (Heise, 2007; MacKinnon, 1994; Smith-Lovin & Heise, 1988).

In accordance with ACT, emotions are garnered from the affective meanings of individual cultural identities, which are impacted by social and cultural experiences (Heise, 2007). For example, if an individual identifies as a teacher, most societies have expectations for individuals in that role. When individuals have their identities confirmed during social situations, characteristic emotions follow, such as affirmation, joy, or pride. Therefore, these emotions contribute to identity meanings (Heise, 2007). Conversely, if individuals do not have their identities affirmed by behaving in ways that counter identity meanings, such as teachers acting in ways that counter popular schemas of teachers, then individuals are more

likely to experience unpleasant emotions. Heise contended that emotions align individuals with their perceptions of who they believe they should be according to their identity and who they seem to be in social situations. In essence, the affect control theory assumes that emotions are the result of evaluations of social situations which cause fluctuations in identity meanings (Rogers et al., 2014). Thus, emotions are not only influenced by the outcomes of social interactions, but also how those outcomes fit with societal expectations and context (Rogers et al., 2014).

Creativity and Mental Well-Being

Creativity affects mental well-being in a variety of ways (Pearce, 2017). For instance, Gladding (2008) contended that creativity provides a platform for deep thought and reflection while fostering emotion regulation, thereby increasing individuals' general well-being. Sealy (2012) suggested that journaling about negative experiences can help individuals process their experiences leading to a deeper understanding and awareness of their circumstances. Additionally, Sealy suggested that by combining the practices of expressive writing and meditation, people can reconstruct past experiences, reduce symptoms of distress, and increase feelings of self-worth. Stebbins (2018) found that creative leisure activities generate many of the same positive emotional responses as interpersonal relationships including love, appreciation, and acceptance. This finding supports the theory that leisure activities and positive mental states are related, suggesting that creative activities and play lead to positive emotional experiences (Stebbins, 2018).

Partaking in creative writing tasks increases ratings of mental well-being (Sealy, 2012). Griffiths (2005) found that engaging in creative tasks can positively benefit people's

mental well-being by increasing coping skills such as emotional expression, self-efficacy, and esteem; fostering new skills; and engendering emotion regulation. Creative outlets also serve as sources of social support that can help individuals overcome adversity, obtain access to resources, and create opportunities for networking and friendships (Griffiths, 2005). Together these opportunities improve mental well-being.

Other studies have confirmed that factors such as environment (Lubart, 2016), familial influence (Munt & Hargreaves, 2009; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011) and educational setting (Mellou, 1996; Shankland, Riou Franca, Genolini, Guelfi, & Ionescu, 2009; Sternberg, 2017) impact children and adolescents' creativity. For example, Runco and Albert (2005) found that families influenced the development of children's cognitive abilities, motivations, and attitudes toward creative thinking and activities. Mellou argued that creativity is cultivated in educational settings in three ways: by fostering creative environments, developing creative programs, and engendering creativity through staff and teaching methods.

Sternberg (2017) added that standardized testing may negatively impact the creative potential of many children and adolescents. He noted that divergent thinking may be squelched by exams that limit questions to having only one answer. To combat the negative impact, Sternberg suggested educators focus less on testing and convergent thinking and instead incorporate more creativity and divergent thinking into lesson plans. Ideally, this practice would foster creative thinking while also promoting general knowledge information.

To investigate the impact of creativity in education, Beauregard (2014) reviewed creative expression programs, finding that some programs yielded significant improvement

in students' coping, resiliency, emotion regulation, and prosocial behavior, while other programs reported no significant changes. Beauregard speculated that factors such as populational differences, culture, and interventions might account for some of the variability in program outcomes, such that individuals may respond differently to program curricula based on individual cultural identities or types of interventions used.

Everyday Creativity and Mental Well-Being

Everyday creativity, little c creativity, can be used to enhance mental well-being, while also cultivating enjoyment. Everyday creativity involves individual expressions of creativity (Sawyer, 2006), which are achieved by participating in self-care activities, leisure activities, or hobbies. Self-care activities strive to foster and maintain overall well-being (Habib & Durrani, 2015). Some examples of creative self-care activities include dancing, writing, or enrolling in art classes. Participating in self-care activities can promote healing (Sealy, 2012), self-expression, and reduce stress (Teti et al., 2017). Engaging in self-care activities can also have a spillover effect, such that positively attending to one area of well-being can enhance satisfaction in another (Sealy, 2012). Additionally, Stebbins (2018) found that leisure activities can increase happiness, which positively impacts mental well-being. Creative leisure activities such as composing music (Baker, 2017) or meditation using guided imagery (Sealy, 2012) can foster both relaxation and improve affect. Moreover, researchers found participating in artistic hobbies can reduce negative emotion and stress (Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner, & Reynolds, 1996; Reynolds, 2003, 2004; Reynolds, Lim, & Prior, 2008).

Joining groups is another way people can participate in everyday creativity while enhancing mental well-being. Rose and Lonsdale (2016) examined the impact of painting

workshops on mental well-being of older adults, finding that painting landscapes of sentimental places evoked positive emotions and helped individuals reconnect with past memories. Teti et al. (2017) found women diagnosed with HIV/AIDS who participated in photography groups were able to improve their affect by focusing on tasks unrelated to illness, thereby revealing positivity in their lives. Actively engaging in photography groups also fostered empowerment and provided and provided a space to process feelings with other group members (Teti et al., 2017). Dingle, Williams, Jetten, and Welch (2017) found participation in choir and expressive writing groups significantly increased positive emotions and decreased negative emotions in adults.

Pursuits of Creativity within Helping Professions

Creativity in Psychotherapy

Creative approaches in psychotherapy often involve activities or interventions that deviate from the norm. Morse et al. (2015) examined the impact of museum outreach sessions on the mental well-being of individuals recovering from addiction. Participants attended weekly group therapy sessions at a museum where participants engaged socially with others, participated in crafting activities, and learned new skills (Morse et al., 2015). Researchers found these activities effectively enhanced mental well-being, encouraged independence, and instilled confidence (Morse et al., 2015). This illustrates a prime example of how mental health professionals can promote new ways of healing through experiments with new types of interventions and practices.

Another way to incorporate creative interventions while providing psychoeducation and promoting well-being are creative arts therapy groups (Cole et al., 2018). Telehealth-

based creative arts groups provide therapy services for individuals living in rural or underserved areas (Levy et al., 2018). In such cases, therapists provide clients with art materials at the onset of therapy, enabling clients to engage in art-making activities during a virtual therapy session (Levy et al., 2018). Organizations such as the Department of Veterans Affairs utilize telehealth-based creative arts groups to provide services for disabled veterans (Levy et al., 2018).

Similarly, in-person creative arts therapy groups can provide therapy services while incorporating creative activities such as drawing, sculpting, poetry, and music (Cole et al., 2018). For example, to encourage mental health and mental well-being, Cole et al. developed brief arts-based interventions designed to cater to young adults in therapy. Researchers found creative arts groups facilitated interpersonal connections, enhanced coping skills, and provided a positive outlet for processing feelings such as grief and loss (Colet et al., 2018).

Humor also provides an avenue for mental health professionals to integrate creativity into professional practice by using immediate innovative interventions (Gibson & Tantum, 2017; Gladding & Drake Wallace, 2016). Alongside spirituality, exercise, and emotion regulation, humor is considered an essential element of mental well-being (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Gladding and Drake Wallace posited that humor in therapy can promote client mental well-being through laughter. Gibson and Tantom urged mental health professionals to incorporate humor into the therapy room, suggesting that humor makes the environment feel less rigid and helps clients shift into positive emotion states. Paramount among reasons to use humor in psychotherapy is that it reminds clients of their shared humanity with their therapists, which reduces power differentials (Gibson & Tantum, 2017).

Kopytin and Lebedev (2015) explored using humor during art therapy groups with veterans, finding humor reduced anxiety, allowed clients to express resistances to therapy in non-threatening ways, and facilitated group cohesion. Gladding and Drake Wallace discussed appropriate ways to use humor in therapy, recommending therapists stay within the bounds of self-enhancing humor, while taking the opportunity to use laughter as a form of healing. Gibson and Tantum also suggested that use of puns, anecdotes, or jokes might bring forth deeper connections or insight.

Although creativity is not among the formal professional competencies necessary for counselor education, creativity has a rich history of being mentioned within formal therapy models. For instance, Rogers (1961) posited that counselors have a responsibility to create safe, accepting therapeutic environments that foster clients' creativity. Maslow (1963) described creativity as an aspect of healthy self-actualization. Frey (1975) regarded therapy as a "creative enterprise" (p. 23). Despite this emphasis regarding creativity as a topic of importance within formal theory, Gladding (2011) noted that many therapists struggle to incorporate creative interventions into their daily practices. Furthermore, Reid and West (2016) argued that many therapists may struggle with manualization, which is the tendency to rigidly adhere to formal theoretical models, rather than utilizing creative approaches and interventions. This adherence can be derived from anxiety about using the "wrong" interventions with clients, lack of experience engaging in creative activities, or time limited sessions (Reid & West, 2016). While creativity is not necessary for effective therapy to occur (Gladding, 2008), clients are apt to develop their own creative abilities when therapists employ playful, appropriate, innovative approaches (Rosenthal, 2002). Furthermore, Duffey,

Haberstroh, and Trepal (2009) noted that using creative interventions in therapy has the power to deepen connections, increase rapport, and engender new ways of thinking about therapy goals.

As Reid and West (2016) aptly noted, experimenting with new or different approaches can be intimidating and can raise questions about training, expertise, and competency. After all, due to the lack of formal training courses on creativity (McCarthy, 2017; Smith, 2011), it is likely that many professionals have not received adequate training or supervision regarding the application of creativity in psychotherapy (Lawrence, Foster, & Tieso, 2015; Reid & West, 2016). Strong therapists should be able to utilize many therapeutic interventions and be able to move beyond a checklist of professional competencies (Reid & West, 2016). However, this is difficult to do if the training opportunities are not regularly afforded to therapists as a part of foundational education models (Carson & Becker, 2004; Davis, 2008; Smith, 2011; Waliski, 2009).

Ziff and Beamish (2004) noted that although some counselor education programs have begun offering classes and workshops on the use of art in therapy, overall these efforts have been minimal. Very few formal courses on creativity are currently offered within the field of psychology. Of the few Master's-level courses available, many courses are housed within specialty programs outside of the traditional psychology curricula, are blended into the modules of existing courses (Waliski, 2009), or are developed as short training workshops (Davis, 2008) rather than entire classes. While, formal courses focusing on creativity are difficult to find within the US, creativity training courses have been established in regions of East Asia (Cheung, Roskams, & Fisher, 2006; Lim, 2012) and Australia (Wood

& Bilsborow, 2014). Since this knowledge is paramount in fostering creative thinking and problem-solving in clients (McCarthy, 2017) and has the potential to enhance mental well-being (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti et al., 2017), mental health professionals could benefit from a broader understanding of creativity and creative interventions that can be applied in therapy (Gladding, 2011; Lawrence et al., 2015; McCarthy, 2017; Smith, 2011).

In today's fast-moving world, many researchers have argued that due to more complex client presentations and societal demands, creativity and flexibility in therapy are becoming more important (Lawrence et al., 2015; McCarthy, 2017; Reid & West, 2016; Runco, 2004). Given creativity's important, yet under researched, place in psychotherapy, it is essential that professionals continue to investigate creativity in order to develop new therapeutic interventions and creativity models. Although some models of creativity have been developed, few intervention models have actually been implemented (Plucker, 2017). Furthermore, of the few models that have been implemented, only a fraction of these models have been studied experimentally and replicated by other researchers (Makel & Plucker, 2014; Plucker, 2017). Plucker argues that this deficit makes it difficult for practitioners to apply creative interventions within their practices and for researchers to sell creative approaches to educational policymakers. It is simply not enough to know that creativity is useful in therapy (Duffey et al., 2009; Gladding, 2008, 2011; Gladding & Drake Wallace, 2016), or that creativity can enhance mental well-being (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti et al., 2017). We need to know how creativity is beneficial and under what circumstances in order to utilize these useful practices to help others.

Art, Music, and Dance Therapies

As early as the 19th century, the arts have been used as creative sources of healing. Creative arts therapies (CAT) first appeared in the US in the 1940s and 1950s (Winerman, 2005). Today, the arts are present in many areas of public healthcare and are used in the treatment of mental and physical health conditions to improve mental well-being (Daykin, Gray, McCree, & Willis, 2017; Samaritter, 2018). CAT serve as an alternative form of therapy that uses activities such as dance, drama, visual arts, music, and crafting to help individuals cope with difficult life circumstances (Malchiodi, 2018). The predominant goals among creative arts therapists include facilitating client expression, building esteem, and fostering empowerment (Papagiannaki & Shinebourne, 2016). CAT can be incorporated in a variety of settings including mental health facilities, schools, and rehabilitation centers (Potash, Mann, Martinez, Roach, & Wallace, 2016; Samaritter, 2018).

One key difference between art activities and CAT (Griffiths, 2005) is that practicing art therapy requires professional certification (Art Therapy Credentialing Board [ATCB], 2018), whereas simply incorporating art activities within a healthcare setting is not considered art therapy. Registered art therapists obtain a Master's degree, as well as undergo practicum and supervisory experiences prior to licensure (Art Therapy Credentialing Board, 2018). Participation in the arts can enhance mental well-being by increasing self-esteem (Gillam, 2012), promoting sensory function (Holmes & Spence, 2006), and regulating emotion (Samaritter, 2018). The overarching goal of art therapy is to promote positive mental well-being rather than focusing on pathology (Samaritter, 2018).

Music therapy is an alternative type of health treatment intended to improve client mental well-being through listening to or composing music, writing songs (Baker, 2017), and interpreting lyrics to help individuals build coping skills and express emotion (Lee, Davidson, & McFerran, 2016). Lee et al. suggested that music can be used to create stories, thereby allowing clients to work on themselves and process experiences. Music therapists may differ regarding style or facilitation depending on their work setting and clients (Lee et al., 2016), but their overarching goal is to improve clients' quality of life by addressing emotional, social, or physical health concerns (World Federation of Music Therapy, 2011). Researchers have found that music therapists can positively treat mental health disorders including posttraumatic stress disorder (Carr et al., 2012) and personality disorders (Haeyen, van Hooren, & Hutschemaeker, 2015).

Dance/Movement therapies (DMT) are alternative therapy practices that use improvised movements as forms of healing (Wiedenhofer, Hofinger, Wagner, & Koch, 2017). Many varieties of dance can be incorporated in DMT and its practices can be facilitated in mental health settings, rehabilitation centers, medical facilities, and schools (Baron, 2016). People of all ages and abilities can participate in DMT (American Dance Therapy Association, 2018). Unlike other types of movement, non-goal directed movement can reduce stress, improve well-being, and increase self-efficacy (Wiedenhofer et al., 2017). In addition to stress relief, dancing can improve affect and support socialization (Baron, 2016). Dance also improves many physical health conditions including cardiovascular disease (Merom, Ding, & Stamatakis, 2016), neurological disorders (Batson, Migiliarese,

Soriano, Burdette, & Laurienti, 2014), poor bone density (Keogh, Kilding, Pidgeon, Ashley & Gillis, 2009), and can boost immune system function (Melkekoglu, Baydil, & Ocal, 2010).

Creativity among Other Helping Professionals

Many creative practices promote mental well-being and healing. In recent years, helping professionals have sought ways to integrate creativity into professions such as nursing, hospice care, and education to achieve similar gains. Schuessler et al. (2012) described the practice of using reflective journaling within the nursing field to help practitioners process their experiences and enhance client-care by developing self-reflection skills and broadening cultural humility. Sealy (2012) noted that reflective journaling about significant patient losses can assist nurses in processing their own feelings and encourage more empathy for their patients. Huet (2017) examined the impact of creative art therapy interventions on reducing the work-related stress of hospice care providers, finding that creative arts therapies helped hospice staff reduce stress, increase workplace communication, and empathize more deeply with patients.

In academia, creative interventions are sometimes used to increase interprofessional collaboration between students training to work in helping professions (Johnson, Haney, & Rutledge, 2015). For example, within these interventions, students in nursing, medicine, and allied health programs participate in new learning models that focus on patient care and collaborative practice (Johnson et al., 2015). In this model, students engage in shared learning experiences that examine patient care across different perspectives and training models (Johnson et al., 2015). Johnson et al. found this creative approach to education enhanced professional respect and created new avenues for interprofessional collaboration.

Need for Ongoing Creativity Research

While research on creativity is not a new phenomenon, researchers have consistently agreed that, until recently, psychologists did not often study creativity (Gillam, 2012, 2018; Gladding, 2011; Long, Plucker, Yu, Ding, & Kaufman, 2014; Plucker et al., 2004; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Some of the pioneers at the forefront of creativity research include J. P. Guilford, Robert Sternberg, Jonathan Plucker, Mark Runco, and Todd Lubart, James Kaufman, Arthur Cropley, and Paul Torrance. Despite these individuals' hard work, creativity research has been deemed a "fuzzy, soft construct" (Plucker et al., 2004, p. 86), been scarcely covered in textbooks, and minimally covered in formal courses (Plucker et al., 2004; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). This finding was so pervasive that Sternberg and Lubart (1999) regarded creativity research "psychology's orphan" (p. 4).

Although creativity has gained popularity as a subject of research, it remains a marginalized topic in psychology (Gillam, 2018). Sawyer (2012) posited that because creativity is a historically difficult topic to define and highly complex, many psychologists have opted to study more central aspects of cognition such as memory, attention, and perception. Despite the aversion to researching creativity, Plucker et al. (2004) noted that many researchers studying concepts such as problem solving and functional fixedness are indeed examining aspects of creativity, though not overtly.

Historically, researchers have drawn attention to the scarcity of creativity investigation (Beghetto, Plucker, & MaKinster, 2001; Feist & Runco, 1993; Long et al., 2014; Nemeth & Goncalo, 2005; Plucker, 2017; Plucker et al., 2004; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Sternberg and Lubart noted that creativity studies from 1975-1994 encompassed only

5% of psychology research articles. Moreover, of the four predominant creativity research journals, fewer than 2,000 articles on creativity were published between 1965 and 2012 (Long et al., 2014). Researchers used the search terms *creativity*, *innovation*, and *imagination* to generate these results, suggesting that predominant creativity journals may be publishing articles on topics other than creativity, such as gifted education. Additionally, while books on creativity are abundant, only a minority include scientific research (Sawyer, 2012).

A contributing factor to this research disparity is the absence of academic positions pertaining to studying creativity (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Sternberg and Lubart reasoned that the discrepancy exists because psychology departments do not recognize creativity as its own specialty as they do with other areas of study (i.e., cognitive, clinical, and social) in psychology. Additionally, researchers theorize that the pervasive myths about creativity research and creativity's broad definition have stunted creativity research (Gillam, 2012, 2018; Plucker et al., 2004; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999).

The myths and roadblocks around creativity research date back to the early decades of the last century when psychology's principal theories were Freudian psychoanalysis and behaviorism (Sawyer, 2012). The myth around creativity is founded in complex, subjective issues, (i.e., whether individuals are born creative or uncreative; the stereotypes about creative people; Plucker et al., 2004); whether children are more creative than adults; and what types of art is considered most creative (Sawyer, 2012). Sternberg and Lubart (1999) identified six major roadblocks that have stunted creativity research: a) creativity's roots historically lying within mysticism and spirituality; b) pseudo psychology research published without empirical evidence; c) early research differing from mainstream psychology theories,

resulting in creativity research being seen as peripheral to other psychology disciplines; d) ambiguous or superficial definitions of creativity; e) individuals viewing creativity as a rare phenomenon; and f) undisciplined research methods. Collectively, each of these roadblocks has impeded creativity from garnering greater recognition from the scientific community.

More recently, the focus on creativity research has begun to blossom. For example, an Ebscohost database search for peer-reviewed journal articles on creativity spanning the last 5 years (2013–2018) found 4,720 titles. Combining search terms “creativity” with “psychology” revealed 2,423 titles. However, challenges and gaps in the creativity scholarship remain.

Plucker (2017) proposed four ideas that might continue to assist in expanding the field of study. First, he suggested psychologists collaborate with professionals from other fields, suggesting that this might offer new perspectives on how creativity is conducted within other specialties. Second, Plucker discussed the tendency for modern creativity research to emphasize predominantly Western perspectives. Plucker surmised that by doing this, the field loses valuable cross-cultural perspectives on creativity. Therefore, Plucker encouraged more creativity research be derived from non-Western perspectives. Next, Plucker argued that while many solid assessments of creativity have been established, he noted that there is still room for improvement in this area. Plucker advocated for the development of new creativity assessments that can be widely distributed and scored more efficiently. Finally, Plucker proposed that creativity research attend more carefully to demographic differences among creative individuals. Plucker contended that much of

creativity research in this area has focused on differences of intelligence and cognition, while neglecting demographics and sociocultural factors that might yield new explanations of creative differences. For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused primarily on Plucker's final recommendation, of examining creativity as it relates to demographics and cultural identities. These considerations not only added to the existing body of literature on creativity but also combatted existing myths within creativity research.

Despite these obstructions, creativity researchers have made several strides over the years and it seems likely this work will continue to hold a place in psychology's future. For example, there are four predominant scholarly journals which publish articles about creativity research including *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, *The Creativity Research Journal*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, and *The Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* (Long et al., 2014). Additionally, the APA began sponsoring conferences on creativity and including creativity research in the *APA Monitor* in 1995 (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999; Plucker, 2017). Creativity is a cogent topic for psychologists to study, as it plays a fundamental role in understanding cognition, problem solving, and mental well-being (Plucker, 2017; Plucker et al., 2004).

Summary and Rationale for the Current Study

Unfortunately, creativity research continues to lag somewhat behind other areas of psychology scholarship (Plucker, 2017; Plucker et al., 2004; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). While this research scarcity is improving, more scholarship is needed within this important research area, because creativity is linked to several fundamental areas of functioning, including cognition (Sternberg, 2018), personality (Furst et al., 2016), and mental well-being

(Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti et al., 2017). Creativity is a multidimensional, partially domain-specific construct (Barbot et al., 2016) that involves divergent thinking (Guilford, 1956; Sternberg, 2017). Additionally, creative performance is determined by many different resources (Barbot et al., 2016) and creativity has been linked to many personality traits including openness, enthusiasm, assertiveness, curiosity, and flexibility (Batey & Furnham, 2006; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Feist, 1998; Furst et al., 2016). Similarly, creativity is not exclusive to certain individuals and it is not born from elaborate insights (Barbot et al., 2016; Sawyer, 2012). Creativity is, however, the result of personal endeavors and many small, meaningful insights (Barbot et al., 2016; Sawyer, 2012). Veritably, creative achievement is forged by individual interests and unique experiences that coalesce to formulate a product that is personal for the individual (Barbot et al., 2016). These interpersonal passions and observations are what makes creativity valuable not only for research, but also for personal mental well-being.

Creativity has been incorporated within helping professions to help people develop coping skills, increase emotion regulation, and process experiences (Gladding, 2011; Morse et al., 2015). For instance, creative activities such as drawing, sculpting, poetry, and music can be incorporated in tandem with therapy services in creative arts therapy groups (Cole et al., 2018). Despite the immense value of creative activities, researchers have found many therapists experience difficulties when incorporating creativity into their daily practices (Gladding, 2011). The application difficulties are exasperated by the limited number of formal courses (McCarthy, 2017; Smith, 2011), training opportunities, and academic positions (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999) that are currently available to formally study creativity.

Therefore, a more thorough understanding of creativity is necessary to determine how it can be used to improve clients' mental well-being in therapeutic settings. This study has added to the literature surrounding creativity and helped us gain a more thorough understanding of how creativity impacts mental well-being.

According to many researchers, it is imperative to dispel the myths surrounding creativity research and to debunk stereotypes about creative individuals to better comprehend creativity (Diedrich et al., 2017; Gillam, 2012, 2018; Plucker, 2017; Plucker et al., 2004; Sawyer, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Since stereotypes can negatively impact how individuals feel about their creativity, which can lead people to downplay or deny their creativity (Plucker et al., 2004; Proudfoot et al., 2015), researchers noted the importance of understanding creative experiences and the emotions that facilitate such experiences.

In summation, creativity can help foster individual talents, assist in emotion regulation, bolster educational methods, and increase mental well-being (Sawyer, 2012). Though creativity research has not yet fulfilled its potential (Guilford, 1950; Plucker et al., 2004; Plucker, 2017; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999), dispelling myths about creativity can help increase the volume of creativity research. To demystify and better understand creative individuals, this study examined how individual cultural identities, such as race, age, gender, and sexual orientation impacted creativity. Furthermore, there is a significant gap within creativity research, because studies have attended to creative cognition and personality, while creativity and emotion are far less emphasized. The present study examined the emotions that facilitate creative experiences to better understand how emotion impacts creativity, and ultimately, mental well-being. Understanding how individuals use everyday creativity is vital

in deciphering how creativity can be used to enhance mental well-being. Finally, the researcher used participant responses from semi-structured interviews to generate a model of creativity that can be used to enhance the mental well-being of outpatient psychotherapy clients.

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How does regularly engaging in creative activities impact people's mental well-being?
2. How does cultural identity impact individuals' creativity?
3. What role does emotion play in individuals' creative process?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe the methodologies for the current study. Qualitative methods were used; therefore, I presented the researcher's qualifications and biases section first as is recommended by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Subsequent sections will describe the study's participants, instruments, and procedure, as well as confidentiality and potential risks. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the study's analysis approach.

Researcher's Qualifications and Biases

Because potential biases can affect data collection in qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014), it is common practice to disclose researcher qualifications and biases when conducting a qualitative study. As the primary researcher in this study, I am a graduate student at Texas Woman's University working to earn my doctoral degree in Counseling Psychology. At the University of Oklahoma, I minored in Sociology and earned both a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master's degree in Psychology and Community Counseling, respectively. In addition to being a student, I am also a Licensed Professional Counselor and have been a practicum therapist and a graduate teaching assistant.

While pursuing my education, I have taken courses in advanced statistics, research design, and both quantitative and qualitative research methods. I served as a research assistant, an instructor of two research-based courses, a research team member, and an independent researcher on my own thesis work. As a researcher, I oversaw several student research projects and presented with research teams at various conferences. My primary

research interests include research on the impacts self-care, expressive writing, resilience, mental well-being, and creativity.

The current line of research resonates with me because I consider myself to be a creative person. I enjoy thinking creatively and spending time engaging in hobbies such as writing, sewing, and cross-stitching. I am interested in the benefits of creative activities and how such pursuits affect self-care and mental well-being. Given that creativity is one of the seven domains of wellness (Granello, 2013), I am captivated by the positive impact creativity has on well-being and functionality. Finding joy and excitement within my research is important; however, I do hope that through my research, I am able to obtain a greater self-awareness. My hope is that the current study is used to educate others about the positive effects of creativity.

I conducted a grounded theory study that considered how people use creativity in their everyday and professional lives. I inquired about the lived experiences of individuals who engage in creativity or creative thinking, as well as captured how individuals utilize these experiences to foster mental well-being. I created a model deconstructing the variable of creativity in an effort to create a new therapeutic tool that can be used to promote mental well-being.

My potential biases that may have impacted the neutrality of my reporting were based in strong beliefs about mental well-being practices and self-care activities. I enjoy working with individuals who are different than myself on various dimensions of social location. I have a special affinity for people who are identity affirming and I am captivated when

working with people who support various cultural identities. Throughout the process of data collection, I continuously monitored the impacts of my personal biases.

During my fieldwork, I applied field notes to document my observations, personal reactions, and reflections. I also incorporated memos, which served as sources for my ongoing reflections about the data collection process (Miles et al., 2014). This progression not only helped me track personal responses to this fieldwork but also held me accountable to the impact of my potential biases.

Data Collection

Participants

A minimum sample of 20 individuals were required for this study and included undergraduate students enrolled in a mid-sized public university primarily for women in the Southwest and adult participants recruited using social media. Undergraduate student participants were recruited to participate in this study in exchange for course credit. In exchange for participation, non-student participants were entered into a drawing where they had the opportunity to win a \$50 gift card to Amazon. A criterion sample was used to recruit participants, such that they were specifically selected to participate in this study based on the qualification of engaging in some sort of creative activity at least 1 time per week.

Participants were pre-screened for participation, using a pre-screening questionnaire.

Adapted from methodologies by Conner and Silvia (2015), creative activities were defined as actions that include generating novel ideas, expressing oneself in original ways, and engaging in artistic activities, such as writing, painting, music, or art. Creative activities also encompassed individual expressions of everyday creativity, including creative endeavors that

foster enjoyment, leisure, and self-care. Participants were provided with examples of creative activities to ensure they met the criterion sampling requirements.

In addition to meeting the creativity criterion, a maximum variation sample was sought. According to Patton (2015), maximum variation samples are used to purposefully select a wide range of participants in order to both highlight differences between diverse individuals, as well as identify commonalities between participants. This process involves selecting the most diverse sample of participants as possible (Suri, 2011). Therefore, participants provided demographic information in addition to the pre-screening questionnaire that was used to determine if individuals meet the criterion sampling requirements. In order to achieve a maximally diverse sample, individuals were selected based on the demographics of age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, years of education, and type of creative activities performed from those participants who met the criterion sample for creativity. The goal of using maximum diversity sampling was to select participants who possess the most diverse array diversity variables. Thus, within this study, a maximum variation sample yielded data from 20 unique individuals engaging in different types of creativity with different identity characteristics.

Instruments

Pre-screening and demographics questionnaire. The researcher generated a pre-screening questionnaire (see Appendix A) to ensure that participants engaged in a creative activity at least one time per week. This information determined if participants met the requirements for the criterion sample. The brief questionnaire contains questions related to the frequency of participants engagement in creative tasks, their preference of interview

method (i.e., face-to-face, phone, or Skype), and contact information. In addition, questions related to participants' age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and the number of years of education completed were gathered in order to select the desired maximum diversity sample.

Semi-structured interview guide. The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide to facilitate individual interviews (see Appendix B). This guide features 11 questions and 1 additional sub-question inquiring about the types of creative activities in which individuals partake, the impacts of these practices, and how creativity relates to individual cultural identities.

Procedure

Recruitment. Undergraduate student participants were formally recruited by way of the university's system for research involvement, SONA. The study description and instructions were posted on the SONA system. Students signed up for the study in the SONA system and were given a SONA study ID number and a link to a PsychData survey, which contained the study's Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C), as well as the Pre-screening and Demographics Questionnaire. Students in these university courses had SONA accounts that they could access throughout the semester as a means to complete and receive credit for participating and completing research. In a separate survey on the PsychData system, the SONA ID number was collected. This SONA ID number was not linked to the actual responses of the student. Therefore, professors did not know in which study their students participated, only the number of research credits earned. Participants were also recruited by

way of social media. Interested parties were invited to participate in this study via a social media recruitment announcement detailing participant involvement (see Appendix D).

This study was open to all participants during a 2–3-week period in the first half of the university’s semester, interviews subsequently followed. Participants signed-up for the study and completed both the Informed Consent Form and the Pre-Screening and Demographics Questionnaire. For student participants, access to the study’s documents and information were located on SONA, the university’s system for research involvement, during the recruitment period. For non-student participants, access to the study’s documents and information could be obtained through the link provided within the recruitment announcement. Within the study’s description and the Informed Consent Form, individuals were notified that they may or may not be chosen for an interview. Participants were informed that in order to be contacted for an interview, an email address and phone number was required.

Next, information was downloaded from Psychdata pertaining to consent forms and the pre-screening and demographics questionnaires. Information gleaned from the pre-screening and demographics questionnaire was used to determine if participants met sampling criteria. Interested parties needed to meet the criteria prior to being considered further. Additionally, the diversity variables of age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, years of education, and types of creative engagement were considered in order to achieve a maximum variation sample. Participants were chosen in order to create the most diverse sample possible, meaning not all interested parties were chosen. Individuals who were not selected for this study were thanked for their time and no further involvement was required.

Participants were informed that there may have been lag time of 7–10 days before they were contacted for an interview. Selected participants were contacted via email based on the contact information provided within the pre-screening and demographics questionnaires. During this time, a mutually suitable interview time and date was arranged.

Interviews. All interviews took place during the summer of 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic began. Therefore, interviews were not impacted by social distancing in any way. Interview times were scheduled at mutually convenient times for each participant and the researcher. Participants were given the choice of a face-to-face, phone, or Skype interview method to ensure that an ample number of participants could participate in the study. However, participants were informed that face-to-face and Skype interviews were preferred over phone interviews. Interviews lasted between 12 minutes and one hour. Interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that transcriptions could be made following interviews. Prior to the beginning of each interview, the researcher ensured that participants could ask questions regarding the study, including the consent form and potential risks. The researcher orally reviewed consent forms and policies regarding confidentiality. The semi-structured interview guide was utilized to ensure that all participants received similar interview questions. Upon finishing interviews, participants were thanked for their time.

After all interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed and reviewed all individual transcripts. Following each interview, the researcher maintained a written record to reflect and manage personal reactions and responses. Detailed notes were also kept throughout the research process to monitor shifts in the study's trajectory from the initial study design.

Security, Confidentiality, and Potential Risks

Each interview was audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcriptions could be made after interviews. Following interviews, audio recordings were transferred from a digital audio recorder to the researcher's personal computer. All files were password protected and interview transcriptions were de-identified. Participants used pseudonyms to de-identify themselves and to protect confidentiality. The primary researcher was the only person who had access to audio recordings. After interview transcripts were made, audio recordings were deleted. Interview transcripts were reviewed by an unaffiliated graduate student researcher to perform a second round of data analysis coding.

Within this study, there was a potential risk of loss of confidentiality, due to email exchanges, telephone calls, downloading, and internet transactions. Participants had a choice of face-to-face, phone, or Skype interviews. Therefore, this researcher had access to personal phone numbers, email addresses, or Skype usernames. Additionally, participants who decided to engage in face-to-face or Skype interviews may have been identified through facial recognition. The current researcher kept confidential information password protected within her personal computer. Information was de-identified and stored under participants' pseudonyms. Participants were notified about the potential loss of confidentiality prior to the study.

Additionally, participants within this study may have been at risk for emotional discomfort or fatigue. To address any potential discomfort, participants had the option to not answer any questions, request short breaks, or quit the study at any time without penalty. Student participants who chose to withdraw from this study received SONA credit for their

participation, regardless of withdrawal and were not be penalized even if the interview was incomplete. To address any emotional discomfort that might have occurred at any point during the study, resources were provided following the informed consent (see Appendix E). Informed consent and potential risks were reviewed verbally prior to each interview.

Data Analysis

Approach

Qualitative research methods utilize observations, documents, and words to describe and interpret data allowing researchers to capture stories, investigate processes, and understand individuals' experiences (Patton, 2015). Qualitative studies of creativity allow researchers to examine personal perspectives and obtain information unique to the creative experience (Reynolds, 2003). The current study's approach used qualitative research methods to examine the lived experiences of individuals to understand how creativity impacts mental well-being and to investigate how emotion and cultural identity influence everyday creativity.

Qualitative inquiry tends to emphasize theories grounded in data gleaned from observations and interviews collected through fieldwork rather than in laboratory settings (Patton, 2015). As that was the goal for this particular study, the most appropriate methodology was a grounded theory approach. Ground theory methodology was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and was later refined by Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998, 2001). This methodology was used to guide procedure and to extract meaning from the data.

Rather than working from an existing theory (Patton, 2015), grounded theory methodologies utilize inductive analyses in order to create theories. This analytical process

involves discovering emerging data and patterns, as analysts derive concepts from the data and make hypotheses about the relationships between these concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Within grounded theory, researchers aim to be open to any patterns that may emerge from the data. Throughout the fieldwork process, patterns are continually compared to each other to determine fitness. Fitness refers to the idea that no findings can be forced to be applicable, but each finding should be meaningfully relevant to explain the behavior under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, in grounded theory research, analysis begins when data are collected and continues throughout the course of the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Grounded theory approaches seek to answer the fundamental questions: What is happening in the data? What theory can explain what is observed?

Grounded theory methodologies were chosen for this study above other qualitative designs because grounded theory emphasizes the creative process of theory construction rather than applying existing theories. Moreover, grounded theory approaches emphasize building a theory rather than testing a theory (Patton, 2015). Since the current study aimed to create a therapeutic model of creativity that could be used to enhance mental well-being, grounded theory approaches were an appropriate fit.

Analytic coding within grounded theory typically involves three stages: *open coding*, *selective coding*, and *theoretical coding* (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Giske & Artinian, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Hernandez, 2009). Multiple stages of coding aid researchers in bridging the gap between collecting data and developing theory (Chun Tie et al., 2019). Each of these three stages is described below as a general process;

following these descriptions, the ways in which each of the three were operationalized in the present study are noted.

Open coding, sometimes referred to as *initial coding*, encompasses the first stage of the coding process where data derived from interviews and fieldnotes are broken down line by line into smaller substantive codes (Glaser, 1978). Substantive codes can be comprised of in vivo codes, which are typically words taken verbatim from participants, or can represent actions, or important words that represent broad concepts within the data (Birks & Mills, 2015; Chun Tie et al., 2019; Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2014). To sum up, initial coding ascribes meaning to the data by assigning relevant labels, which then aid the researcher in comparing data case-by-case (Chun Tie et al., 2019). During this phase of coding, Glaser (1978) suggests that researchers ask themselves “what does the data suggest?” or consider “what is this data the study of?” (p. 55).

Selective coding, sometimes called *intermediate, axial, or focused coding*, encompasses the second stage of the coding process. *Selective coding* works to build off of the first stage of open coding, as initial codes are reviewed and then grouped into categories. During selective coding, core categories begin to develop and become more apparent (Chun Tie et al., 2019). Throughout the process of selective coding researchers work very closely with data comparatively analyzing it and working to assess and reassess its meaning (Glaser, 1998). This ongoing analysis is carried out in order to glean an understanding of what is “really going on” in the data (Glaser, 1978, p. 57) and to achieve theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation occurs when new data do not add any additional material to existing categories, meaning that the developed core categories adequately explain any new data that

arises (Birks & Mills, 2015; Glaser, 1978; Hernandez, 2009). As the analysis becomes more complex and relationships between categories become more evident, concept mapping and diagramming can be useful to researchers (Birks & Mills, 2015).

Theoretical coding, sometimes called *advanced coding*, encompasses the third and final stage of the coding process. At this stage, developed categories have matured and are representative of a set of interrelated concepts that describe the stories of many individuals (Chun Tie et al., 2019; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The primary reason for theoretical coding is to integrate categories into a proposed theory (Glaser, 2005) which adds additional illustrative power to the findings (Birks & Mills, 2015). Throughout the process of theoretical coding, multiple theoretical codes may arise, however, continued coding and memoing eventually give way to a coherent model. To sum up, substantive coding is said to deconstruct data, while theoretical coding “weave(s) the fractured story back together again” (Glaser, 1978, p. 72) into “an organized whole theory” (Glaser, 1998, p. 163).

In the current investigation, open coding took place after each transcription was read once through. A list of theoretical memos was also kept throughout the study to track and emerging inquiries. In addition, codes were recorded in a code book that served to keep track of all codes over time. Analytic memos were also used to elaborate on codes and to compare data with existing codes (Charmaz & Bryant, 2008). Within the process of open coding (level one in Grounded Theory), I used an eclectic coding style that featured a mixture of descriptive, process, and simultaneous coding methods. Descriptive codes were generated to label and summarize data using short, descriptive words. Process and simultaneous codes were derived based on action words and observable behaviors described within the data. At

times, simultaneous codes were utilized to code passages of text that met more than one code description. Transcriptions were coded line by line to ensure that the data are optimally analyzed.

Selective coding, the second step in grounded theory involved this researcher working closely with the data to narrow down codes that were generated during the open coding stage of the analysis into more defined clusters of codes. During this step of the analysis, this researcher narrowed 134 codes generated during open coding into 98 codes. During this process, some codes were broken up into separate codes, some were merged together, and others were eliminated. For example, some codes that were eliminated during the selective coding stage were “chronical life” and “remembering hard times.” These labels did not substantiate codes of their own and thus were eliminated. Other types of codes were broken up or merged together. For instance, “the benefits of creativity” and “impact on life” codes were separated after originally being merged together, while “non-profit creativity work” and “other types of creative contribution” were merged together to form one code called “contribution.”

Groupings began to form during the selective coding process, which broke down integral parts of the creative process. For example, when participants described their decisions to begin creative activities, codes began to form outlining their decisions (i.e., academic requirements, occupations, etc.). Anytime that participants mentioned emotions they experienced during their creative activities, the emotions were grouped by the type of emotion described. Similarly, any identities that were mentioned by participants were grouped by identity. Early groupings also reflected the types of creativity participants

engaged in and the various ways they were sharing about their work. Code lists from this stage of the analysis reflected many independent codes that were slowly being grouped into larger categories, as well as many independent codes that had yet to be grouped.

In the latter part of the selective coding process, the 98 codes were sorted into 11 categories. During this stage of the analysis, the benefits of creativity codes were moved to the well-being category. The category entitled “defining creativity” began to form with the three sub-codes grouped together. The time, frequency, and duration groupings were formulated to reflect the time participants were putting into their creative activities. Codes about stigma pertaining to the creative identity were added to the category pertaining to sharing creativity with others. Early codes related to mental and emotional preparations were merged into the “before creative activities” code. Participant demographics were listed in Table 1 (see Results, p. 99). The resultant codes are shown in Table 2 (see Results, p. 101).

In the third stage of theoretical coding, after themes were created, this researcher produced a concept map illustrating how the key concepts generated in selective coding relate to each other (see Figure 1, p. 191). The researcher discusses this model in more detail in the Results section.

Triangulation

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness within research, it is important for researchers to employ triangulation methods (Patton, 2015). Triangulation methods are consistent with grounded theory ideologies, as these methodologies are put in place to ensure that participants, researchers, and readers’ experiences are reflected in a credible manner

(Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The methods of triangulation that were used in this study are analyst triangulation and a member check.

Analyst Triangulation

The first method of triangulation used within this study was an analyst triangulation. Analyst triangulations involve a second analyst to assist in data examination (Patton, 2015). Using multiple analysts reduces biases and helps ensure that the data produce credible themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Patton, 2015). To ensure that data were coded thoroughly and accurately, interview transcripts were coded twice; once by this researcher and a second time by an unaffiliated independent researcher. To achieve this goal, I employed the help of a fellow counseling psychology graduate student. This individual did not have any experience with creativity research but took a course on qualitative research methods. We met once prior to beginning coding to discuss coding strategies and formulate ideas about important areas of focus for the current study. The other analyst's data summaries were considered alongside my own in order to reduce potential biases. Detailed records of ways in which my own coding shifted based upon cross-coding analysis were maintained.

Member Check

Finally, I conducted a member check to allow study participants to review the findings. Member checks aimed to ensure credibility and improve accuracy, completeness, and validity of analyses (Patton, 2015). To conduct this member check, participants were contacted via email after a conceptual model was generated and de-identified. During this time, participants were provided a copy of the conceptual model and were asked to provide feedback and personal reflections. This process allowed participants to verify their words and

confirm the validity of the analyses, as well as provided them an opportunity to add information, if necessary (Patton, 2015).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Participant Information

The final analysis of qualitative interviews included data from 20 participants. Fourteen participants identified as women, five participants identified as men, and one participant identified as a transgender woman, assigned male at birth. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 74 years old. The majority of participants identified as White ($n = 16$), while one participant identified as Asian American, one participant identified as Latinx, one participant identified as Native American, and one participant identified as African/African American. The majority of participants identified as heterosexual ($n = 18$), whereas two participants identified as Gay/Lesbian. Twelve participants identified as being nonstudents and eight identified as university students. Of the student participants, two identified as being in their second-year, two identified as being in their third-year, two identified as having completed more than 4 years of college, and two identified as graduate students. All participants disclosed that they participated in creative tasks at least once per week, meeting criteria to participate in the study.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	College Standing	Preferred Creative Activities
Paul	58	White	Gay	Man	Not a student	Composing/Conducting music, building furniture
Sai	22	White	Heterosexual	Woman	2 nd year student	Crafts creativities coordinator/ Manage social media music group -creates events
Pam	51	White	Heterosexual	Woman	Not a student	Sketching, painting
Emily	24	White	Heterosexual	Woman	Not a student	Theatrical lighting design, cooking, baking
Chloe	32	Asian	Lesbian	Woman	More than 4 years of college	Stand-up comedy performance/writing/illustration
Micha	29	White	Heterosexual	Woman	Not a student	Sewing/Garment Construction
Lee	29	White	Heterosexual	Man	Not a student	Composing music/songwriting/performance
Alison	28	Latinx	Heterosexual	Woman	3 rd year student	Creative thinking/planning, creative movement/exercise
Beth	68	White	Heterosexual	Woman	Not a student	Drawing, painting, weaving, sculpture, mixed media
Chuck	32	White	Heterosexual	Man	Not a student	Music composition/performance, painting, photography, videography
Claude	32	White	Heterosexual	Man	Not a student	Music composition/performance, drawing, band leading, computer design, creative writing, painting, sound design
Irish Girl	74	White	Heterosexual	Woman	Not a student	Fused glass, jewelry making, crochet
Lexi	19	White	Heterosexual	Woman	2 nd year student	Painting, art, cross-stitch
Tulip Proudfoot	63	White	Heterosexual	Woman	Not a student	Stained glass, art, journal writing, composing/performing music, collage
Hope	20	White	Heterosexual	Woman	3 rd year student	Songwriting, playing guitar

CoCo	23	African/ African American	Heterosexual	Woman	Graduate student	Cooking, collage, gardening, creative writing, poetry
Dawn	45	Native American	Heterosexual	Woman	More than 4 years of college	Creative writing, drawing, painting, crafting, home remodeling, cake decorating
Erdnase	31	White	Heterosexual	Man	Not a student	Magician, performer, creative writing, design
Elizabeth	45	White	Heterosexual	Woman	Not a student	Musical theatre performer, radio producer, creative writing
Abby	26	White	Heterosexual	Transgender Woman	Graduate student	Theatre/acting, Improv, Drawing/Coloring, Cooking, Creative movement/exercise, Journaling/Blogging, Photography

Major Themes

Themes are listed in Table 2, which shows the relationship between open codes and themes that were then derived during selective coding. Following Table 2, themes are illustrated in detail using verbatim quotes. The results section concludes with a concept map illustrating the emergent relationships between themes, representing the third step in grounded theory, theoretical coding.

Table 2

List of Themes

Theme	Open Codes	Frequency
Theme 1	Defining Creativity	Typical
	1.1 Complexity of creativity	Variant
	1.2 “Creativity is my life.”	Variant
	1.3 “Thinking outside the box.”	Variant
Theme 2	Types of creativity discussed	General
	2.1 Acting, comedy, magic, and stage performance	Variant
	2.2 Art	Variant
	2.3 Baking and cooking	Variant
	2.4 Collaging, crafting, and jewelry making	Rare
	2.5 Coloring, drawing, sketching, and illustration	Typical
	2.6 Creative thinking and planning	Variant
	2.7 Creative writing, blogging, comics, journaling, & poetry	Typical
	2.8 Crocheting, cross-stitching, and weaving	Variant
	2.9 Dancing, exercise, and creative movement	Variant
	2.10 Fused Glass, stained-glass, and furniture building	Rare
	2.11 Graphic design, photography, and videography	Rare
	2.12 Lighting and stage management	Rare
	2.13 Music and singing	Typical
	2.14 Painting	Variant
	2.15 Garment construction and sewing	No theme
Theme 3	Decision to Begin Creative Tasks	General
	3.1 Academic requirements	Variant
	3.2 Family history of creativity	Typical
	3.3 Hobbies and interests	Typical
	3.4 “I didn’t choose creativity it chose me.”	Variant
	3.5 “I’ve always been creative.”	Variant
	3.6 Mentor or friend encouragement	Variant
	3.7 New experiences	Variant
	3.8 Creative occupations	Typical
Theme 4	Function of Creativity	General
	4.1 Administration of a creative job	Variant
	4.2 Escapism and hiding	Variant
	4.3 Practice and performance	Variant
	4.4 Translating ideas into product	Variant
Theme 5	Routine for Creative Activities	General

(continued)

	5.1 Before creative activities	General
	5.12 Gathering materials	Typical
	5.13 Noting inspirations	Typical
	5.14 Rituals and motivations to create	Typical
	5.15 Emotional and mental preparations	Typical
	5.16 Scheduling, planning, and visualizing	Typical
	5.2 During Creative Activities	General
	5.21 Experimenting with new ideas	Variant
	5.22 Flow	Typical
	5.23 Creating a comfortable space	Typical
	5.3 After Creative Activities	Typical
	5.31 Emotional responses and sharing works	Typical
	5.32 Completing projects	Variant
Theme 6	Emotions Associated with Everyday Creativity	General
	6.1 Experiences of emotion during creativity	Typical
	6.2 Accomplishment, pride, and success	General
	6.3 Anger and frustration	Rare
	6.4 Anxiety, stress, and worry	Typical
	6.5 Boredom, daydreaming, and inactivity	Typical
	6.6 Calming, soothing, and meditative	Typical
	6.7 Confidence and comfort	Typical
	6.8 Energy, excitement, and stimulation	Typical
	6.9 Fatigue	Variant
	6.10 Humility	Variant
	6.11 Joy, happiness, and positivity	General
	6.12 Sadness, grief, and isolation	Typical
	6.13 Vulnerability	Variant
Theme 7	Duration, Frequency, and Timing of Creativity	General
	7.1 Duration of creative tasks	Typical
	7.2 Frequency of creative tasks	General
	7.21 Forced productivity and expectation	Variant
	7.3 When is one the least creative?	Variant
	7.4 When is one the most creative?	General
Theme 8	Mental Well-being	General
	8.1 Benefits of creativity	General
	8.12 Active problem solving	Typical
	8.13 Admiration of work	Variant
	8.14 Awareness and perspective	Typical
	8.15 Expression	Typical
	8.16 Freedom to create anything and be oneself	Variant

(continued)

	8.17 Something that is all mine	Typical
	8.18 Therapeutic outlet	General
	8.2 Impact of creativity on life	General
Theme 9	Identities That Impact Creativity	General
	9.1 Ability status	Rare
	9.2 Age	Variant
	9.3 Body shape and size	Rare
	9.4 Education	Typical
	9.5 Gender	Variant
	9.6 Nationality and region	Typical
	9.7 Parent and partner identities	Variant
	9.8 Political affiliation	Rare
	9.9 Race and ethnicity	Typical
	9.10 Religion and spirituality	Variant
	9.11 Sexuality and sexual orientation	Variant
	9.12 Social class and socioeconomic status	Variant
	9.13 Creative identity	General
Theme 10	Patterns of Identity Impact	General
	10.1 Affirming and disaffirming identities	Variant
	10.2 Intersecting and overlapping identities	Typical
	10.3 No connection, “I don’t think about it,” & “I don’t know.”	Variant
	10.4 Ties between creative and cultural identities	General
Theme 11	Sharing creative identity and creative products with others	General
	11.1 Contribution	Typical
	11.2 Entertaining others	Variant
	11.3 Group of enthusiasts	Variant
	11.4 Humanity, connection, and shared understanding	Typical
	11.5 Stigma and stereotypes of creative people and identities	General
	11.6 When and with whom things are shared	Typical

Additionally, themes and codes were quantified using guidelines from Hill et al. (2005). Based on the present sample size, General themes and codes are defined as findings that were discussed by at least 19 participants. Typical themes and codes refer to findings that were discussed by 11 to 18 participants. Variant themes and codes apply to findings that were discussed 4 to 10 participants. Rare themes and codes refer to findings that were

discussed by 2 to 3 participants and findings that were discussed by only one participant generated no theme. These categories are noted throughout the Results section, as well as in Table 2.

Theme 1: Defining Creativity

This theme refers to participants' experiences of defining creativity. Seven participants discussed their experiences with defining creativity and the complexities associated with explaining the construct. All participants discussed their definitions of creativity. Three codes emerged that were included in this theme: the complexity of creativity, "creativity is my life," and "thinking outside the box."

Emily, Elizabeth, and Beth discussed how creativity represents a fundamental aspect of peoples' lives. Emily stated, "[Creativity] it's the core of the learning, and the life, and joy... who we are as humans." Beth said, "It's almost like oxygen to me." Elizabeth said that creativity is representative of "the human spirit." Elizabeth focused on the positive influence that creativity has had on her life. She stated "I love creativity! It's the best thing." Later she described creativity in terms of its splendor. She stated "It is just such a beautiful thing. It really is."

A few participants described creativity as being motivating and growth-inducing. For example, Emily said: "It really is a driving force that I forget about even though it's...it's always there." Elizabeth stated that creativity is "the fire that is behind all the arts." Sai and Emily noted the relationship between learning and creativity. Emily stated:

Like, failure for me is hard. I've always kind of been able to master things, but it is still an important part of the process. And, so... Yeah, it's learning and asking

questions. Like, even asking questions is a part of the creative process, because if you're not asking the questions, you're not gonna' get any further or learn anything else that could take you to the next...the next step, the next point.

Sai said "Creativity to me isn't just one like block. It's something that continues to grow with you."

Many participants described the universality of creativity. For example, Irish Girl said, "Art and music are both universal, I think." Emily stated "So, [universality is] probably a big part of it too, of like...It's this thing that we can all share." Abby described human being as being inherently creative, while Emily added:

Whether that be creating your own home that you can live in versus the type of like art that we associate with creativity. But humans are creative every day. So, what...where does that definition really lie? I think is the thing...

Tulip and Elizabeth discussed the theme of transcendence in creativity. For example, Tulip noted that artwork, literature, and music tend to be passed down through generations and cultures. She stated, "So, it's the philosophies, the poetry, the film...It's the creative arts which have value...Which transcend a lifetime." She described valuing her own creative works, as she believes they are items that people will hand down over the years and be treasured long after her death. Elizabeth described the ability of creative works to communicate in ways that transcend language and culture. This can be likened to understanding the plot of an operatic performance despite not understanding the language in which it is sung. She said, "It transcends language. It transcends culture...Because it does transcend what we do here... In... Just in life, in general."

Overall, these participants discussed various ways to define creativity. Some described ways in which creativity has impacted their lives, whereas other participants described the aspects of creativity that are related to personal growth and innovation. Finally, participants outlined the universal nature of creativity describing it has transcendent. Data from this code is represented in the form of a Word Cloud (see Appendix F).

1.1. Complexity of creativity. Eleven participants described the complexity of creativity. Micha, Emily, and Beth, and Elizabeth concentrated on the difficulty of explaining creativity to others. Beth stated, “Sometimes, you really just find it’s so internalized. It’s hard for me to explain it.” Others viewed creativity as difficult to explain because of its individualism. For example, Emily said, “Creativity is so...simultaneously so personal and so um, so broad that it...when you’re asked about the personal it’s...it’s hard to define.” Irish Girl added, “It’s a very individual thing. It’s hard to make generalizations.” Micha reflected about how there is an emotional component to creativity, which also makes the concept difficult to unpack.

Tulip and Sai highlighted the fact that individuals can be creative in various ways. For example, Tulip stated, “You can be creative driving a taxi. You can be creative balancing a checkbook. Oh my gosh, you know, there’s all kinds of ways to be creative.” Sai added:

It’s not just maybe creating art. It’s building ideas. That’s also being very creative, and you have to or for me, I have to do that in my everyday life, and I enjoy doing that in my everyday life.

Other participants focused on the multifaceted nature of creativity. For instance, Elizabeth and Chuck described the “multiple layers” and “many facets” of creativity. Paul

described creativity as having “a lot of moving pieces.” Lee said, “It’s like there’s so many people out there that are different in creative ways, um, that...It’s easy to have your own voice.”

1.2. “Creativity is my life.” Nine participants discussed how creativity is a foundational part of their lives and how they view themselves. Some participants described their creative endeavors as an influential part of who they are as people. For example, Paul stated, “Um, doing music isn’t something I do. It’s something that I am.” Sai said, “That’s just who I am, and a lot of people know that about me.” Tulip added “So, I just...I can’t not be creative. Um, it’s just inherent in me.” Emily stated:

And, maybe that’s just my interpretation of it...and people may see that as completely different, but I think it is the root of who I am as a person and something that I can share with humanity.

Other participants described creativity as a large factor in their lives. Irish Girl said about creativity, “It was my lifeline.” Coco stated, “[Creativity] seems to permeate most areas of my life.” Sai and Chuck discussed some of the ups and downs of the creative process. Sai noted:

So, for me creativity is just kind of a way of life. It’s what you go through, and you learn from it, and you build from it...and you continue to...You can either build it up and make it great and really come up with amazing ideas or you can go on an even level and just keep going with the flow. Um, but creativity, to me, is just a way of life.

Chuck said, “It’s the thing that I live for but also makes living a bit harder.”

Some participants regarded creativity as something they can't imagine living without. Claude stated, "I've done it for a long time. So, I don't know really what it would be like without it." He added later, "But I don't know. You know, who knows what it would be like without it? Probably lame." Beth said, "For me, I—I think it's massively important. I mean, I can't—I can't imagine not having my creativity." Emily noted "It's how I like to share. It's how I like to give. Um, and without it...I don't know who I'd be...ultimately. Irish Girl added that one of her sons said about her that she "can't *not* make things" inferring that creativity is such a large part of her life that she cannot help but engage in creative activities.

1.3. "Thinking outside the box." Six participants described creativity using the terms "Thinking outside the box." Paul discussed his identity as a creative professional stating, "You never stop looking outside of the box." Hope described her own creative style saying, "Um, and, so, I also do like funky chords sometimes and try to be as uh like out-of-the box, as possible." Lee discussed the benefits of his creative efforts noting, that they help him with "Thinking a little more outside the box." Participants also utilized other words to describe the phenomena of out-of-the box thinking using words like "outside of comfort zone," "non-cookie cutter," "off script," and "original."

Theme 2: Types of Creativity Discussed

This theme reflects the types of creativity participants engage in as sources of everyday creativity. Participants were asked about the types of creativity they engage in regularly and what current projects they were working on at the time of the study. The first fourteen codes incorporated in this theme are: acting, comedy, magic, and stage performance; art; baking and cooking; collaging crafting, and jewelry making; coloring drawing, sketching,

and illustration; creative thinking and planning; creative writing, blogging, comics, journaling, and poetry; crocheting, cross-stitching, and weaving; dancing, exercise, and creative movement; fused glass, stained glass, and furniture building; graphic design, photography, and videography; lighting and stage management; music and singing; and painting and watercolor. The final type of creativity discussed, garment construction and sewing, was not representative of a formal theme but was a type of creativity examined within the study.

2.1. Acting, comedy, magic, and stage performance. Five participants discussed their participation in these types of creativity. Elizabeth noted that some of her main creative activities are acting and stage performance. She stated, “But, um, so I perform. Um, musical theatre. So, I sing, dance, act...” Abby described acting as part of their creative activities, as well stating, “Um, the past year, I took a bunch of acting classes like just regular acting workshops and that was very much a creative process for me, as well.” Chloe, Beth, and Erdnase discussed writing and performing their own creative material. Chloe noted that she engages in comedy writing and performance as her source of everyday creativity. She said, “I write jokes. Like stand-up comedy.” Beth shared that she has experience writing and performing her own one-woman shows. Erdnase identified himself as a magician. He stated:

I’m always in the process of fiddling with something as a magician. And, right now I am in the process of uh scripting a lot of stuff. So, taking uh... Taking some stuff I’ve been doing for a while from my sets and customizing some stuff for some clients and things like that and workshopping a lot with other magicians.

Each of these performers utilized time during interviews to discuss their creative activities and their daily experiences of engaging with them.

2.2. Art. Five participants discussed their participation in artistic activities as a source of everyday creativity. Chuck stated, “I draw and do art for pleasure.” Dawn said she engages in “writing and art.” Sai noted that despite her working in a creative job, she stated, “Like even though I do it at work...I love doing creative things anyway. I love art, I love dance.” Lexi described taking art classes from elementary school through high school, sharing that art classes are where she “fell in love with art.” Finally, Erdnase discussed the concept of magic and whether or not it can be considered an art. He stated:

Um... And, I think what I’ve come to is that I think it is a craft that can be elevated to the level of art. I don’t think its inherently art in itself.

2.3. Baking and cooking. Four participants discussed the everyday activity of baking and cooking. Emily described baking at home as “a fun kind of outlet to try new things.” Tulip also identified baking as a form of everyday creativity she engages in. Abby and Coco described cooking as one of their pastimes, especially with regard to their identities. Abby disclosed that they learned to engage in cooking as a way to combat an eating disorder relating to their transgender identity. Coco described her Nigerian and African American identities and how she uses cooking as a way to connect with others.

2.4. Collaging, crafting, and jewelry making. Three participants discussed experiences with collaging, crafting, and jewelry making. Coco described collaging as one of her main sources of creative expression. She said, “Collaging represents like the way I feel like my brain works.” She described using collaging as a means to process difficult emotion

and find enjoyment. Sai discussed the use of arts and crafts or “crafting,” as means to bring like-minded individuals together during creative events. She described organizing “craft nights” as a way to bring people together for the purposes of enjoyment. Both Coco and Irish Girl described experiences of jewelry making as forms of everyday creativity.

2.5. Coloring, drawing, sketching, and illustration. Twelve participants discussed coloring, drawing, sketching, and illustration as forms of everyday creativity. Many participants discussed how they each began drawing as children. Irish Girl said, “Well, from the time I was like 2, I always had a pencil in my hand.” She described her preference for drawing and sketching as a child compared to utilizing coloring books. Many participants preferred drawing to coloring, including Lexi and Beth. Lexi stated, “I did um graphite drawings and everything and currently now that’s what I use as um like a stress-relief.” Beth described “drawing all the time.” Conversely, Abby shared a preference for coloring, including the use of “adult coloring books.” Chloe shared that she illustrates homemade comic books, whereas other participants like Tulip and Lexi described a preference for doodling. Pam, Micha, and Beth noted they incorporate sketching in their creative processes, such that Pam sketches her inspirations prior to adding ink and watercolor to her designs, while Micha described sketching her garments prior to constructing them, and Beth shared that she sketches on canvas prior to painting.

2.6. Creative thinking and planning. Four participants discussed their preference to engage in creative thinking and planning rather than constructing creative works. For example, Beth stated, “Even if I’m not putting a brush to canvas, um the way I see the world, or I’m absorbing ideas, or I’m drawing in a sketch book or something, and I think about

things. That's— That's huge for me.” She described fostering ideas and pondering her worldview, as aspects of her creativity. Similarly, Abby described creative ideas as being pivotal part of their experience. They stated, “Um, and, so I really seek-out outlets that allow me to fulfill that, where I'm able to express ideas and kinda' work towards ideas.” Sai described the process of “building ideas” as part of her definition of creativity. Alison shared that she utilizes her downtime to plan creative workouts for herself. She shared that this process feels creative for her, because she is able to incorporate different methods of exercise and combine them in such a way to maximize her efforts. Overall, participants discussed creative thinking and planning as a form of everyday creativity.

2.7. Creative writing, blogging, comics, journaling, and poetry. Eleven participants discussed various forms of creative writing as sources of everyday creativity. Coco described writing humorous and satirical pieces for magazine publications. Dawn shared that she writes “Native American tales” for personal enjoyment. Elizabeth shared that she writes fiction novels for publication and also writes for her career as a radio producer. Erdnase shared that writing is also part of his everyday creative activities, as he creates scripts for his magic shows. Claude, Hope, and Lee discussed their experiences with songwriting. Abby shared that they are in the midst of creating a personal blog, which will incorporate creative writing. Chloe shared that she is writing a graphic novel and a comic series. Coco described creative writing in the form of writing “poetry” and “haikus.” Other participants reported utilizing daily journaling as a form of creative writing. Overall, despite their differences in style and medium, more than half of all participants described creative writing as a means of everyday creativity.

2.8. Crocheting, cross-stitching, and weaving. Four participants described crocheting, cross-stitching, knitting, and weaving as facets of their everyday creativity. Irish Girl and Lexi shared that they crochet. Irish Girl noted that she typically makes hats for the homeless, while Lexi prefers to crotchet blankets. Lexi reported that she also regularly engages in cross-stitching. Beth and Dawn described their experiences with different types of weaving. For instance, Beth shared that she “went to [Participant named specific city] and (she) learned how weave Navaho rugs,” using a “Navaho rug loom.” Dawn shared that she engages in “basket weaving,” which she reflected is similar to those of her Native American ancestors.

2.9. Dancing, exercise, and creative movement. Six participants described experiences of using dancing, exercise, and creative movement as sources of everyday creativity. Many participants described the experience of dancing while discussing everyday creativity. For example, Sai who runs a social media group for lovers of Korean pop (K-Pop) music, shared that she organizes dance events where group members can gather together and learn popular K-Pop dance routines. She said, “People love the dancing. So, I try and (plan) like one dance um a month.” Elizabeth described dancing as part of her musical theatre performances. Dawn added that she sometimes dances as a part of performances related to Native American ceremonies. Alison and Emily described dancing in their homes as a form of creative expression. Alison shared that she enjoys “Spanish music,” and dancing with her children, whereas Emily described dancing in her kitchen while cooking. Emily also discussed dancing as a form of self-care in college.

In addition to dancing, Abby and Alison discussed the use of exercise as a form of creative movement. Abby stated, “In some ways, I run a lot. The place that feels creative for me in the sense of... Um, just my body.” They described the use of exercise as:

A cathartic experience with it. Like, a very therapeutic experience with it. But, like, I don’t know, like I feel like I’m creating something, and I don’t know if that’s just like good vibes or good energy with doing that.”

Alison also shared that she incorporates creativity into her exercise regime. She said, “I don’t like just going to the gym constantly. So, I try to either incorporate something to where it’s...I at least have fun and enjoy it.”

2.10. Fused glass, stained-glass, and furniture building. Three participants indicated they participate in fused glass art, stained glass, or furniture building as forms of everyday creativity. Irish girl shared that she regularly makes fused glass art and has done so for the last fifteen years. Tulip shared that she owns a small business selling stained glass art. She reported using stained glass projects both as a form of everyday creativity and as a means of profit. Paul shared that he engages in furniture building and described the process of conceptualizing, designing, and building original furniture pieces for his own use and enjoyment.

2.11. Graphic design, photography, and videography. Three participants disclosed that they engage in forms of graphic design, photography, or videography as part of their everyday creativity. For example, Sai shared that she is the graphic designer in charge of advertising the events for her K-Pop lovers’ group. Chuck described dabbling in photography and video-editing as form of everyday creativity. Finally, Coco described using photography

as a means to document and share about some of her creative projects, like cooking and collaging.

2.12. Lighting and stage management. Two participants discussed their experiences in lighting and stage management. For instance, Emily shared that she got into lighting design while participating in theatre in high school. She shared that she has since worked as a lighting designer and stage manager for a modern dance ensemble. Elizabeth shared that she is a musical theatre performer who spends a great deal of time writing, choreographing, and working backstage, as well performing. She shared about her experiences obtaining a degree in stage management. Both participants spoke about doing various activities for profit and enjoyment during their work on performances.

2.13. Music and singing. Eleven participants shared that they play music or sing as a form of everyday creativity. For example, five participants reported that they have degrees in music. Paul shared that he both plays the organ and also is the head of a music department. He stated,

Well, my profession is as a musician. So, I always have various what I call “projects,” which are uh, certain assembled pieces of music that have to be distributed to my musicians or to my own uh...physical need to practice music for...for the organ. Micha disclosed that she once played music as part of her education, but now utilizes music as a form of everyday creativity. Lee reported that he now both gives music lessons and participates in “a 5-piece (musical) group.” Tulip described playing music as a “soul-satisfying” experience, which she couldn’t live without. Hope shared that she is currently studying music at university and is both a songwriter and performer. Other participants

focused solely on singing, rather than play music. For example, Dawn reported that she engages in Native American folk singing and Elizabeth shared that she sings as part of her musical theatre group.

While many participants like Lee, Chuck, Claude, and Tulip perform and compose music, Sai indicated that she prefers to support the music of others by running a social media group for lovers of K-Pop music. Sai shared that she organizes events like group sing-alongs or dance parties for members of her group. Alison described being inspired by the music of others during her creative process. Finally, Claude reported that he creates movie scores as a form of everyday creativity.

2.14. Painting. Six participants described using painting and watercolor as forms of everyday creativity. For instance, Beth described herself as a multi-media artist who utilizes found objects, painting, and weaving in her projects. Irish Girl indicated that while now she primarily focuses on fused glass art as her creative medium of choice, she also has a long history of painting. Dawn noted that she was experimenting with new types of painting and art at the time of the study. She said, “Um, well, with the art, I’m currently working on this thing called A Dirty Pour. A technique where you, kind of, combine paints, and then put them on canvas, and then cover them in resin.” Emily and Coco described various painting classes where patrons drink wine and paint together. Other participants, like Pam, described utilizing watercolor as an alternative to oil or acrylic painting.

2.15. Garment construction and sewing. Only one participant described sewing and garment construction as their source of everyday creativity, which did not represent a significant theme for the study, as only one participant described the activity. Micha reported

that she runs a business designing custom corsets and historical clothing. She also described doing alterations for friends and various not-for-profit sewing projects. She said, “Sewing has always been just kind of my...my de-stressor, my creative outlet, I guess. It’s the thing that I do because I like to do it, because I like to explore, because I like to learn new things.”

Theme 3: Decision to Begin Creative Activities

This theme represents participants’ decisions to begin various creative activities. This data emerged throughout interviews, but primarily during questions regarding their histories with everyday creativity and the types of activities that participants partake in regularly. All participants discussed their personal decisions to begin creative tasks. Eight codes emerged and were included in this theme: academic requirements, family histories of creativity, hobbies and interests, “I didn’t choose creativity, it chose me,” “I’ve always been creative,” mentor or friend encouragement, new experiences, and creative occupations.

3.1. Academic requirements. Eight participants disclosed that academic requirements influenced their decision to begin creative tasks. For example, Lee described an experience in elementary school when he became interested in studying music. He said,

Um, so when I was really little, when we were kind of using the Orff instruments. So, those are the mallet instruments that are really small... I just was always fascinated by it and I always just wanted to play music at that point. I just knew that when I was like in first grade.

Emily, Coco, and Elizabeth shared that their creative pursuits began later in high school. Emily noted that she began learning about lighting design during her work on theatrical productions in high school. Coco described her experience in an art class. She said:

When I was a freshman in high school, we had to do some art project. It was like a basic basic art class. And, we had to pick an artist, um, and then do a... Write a paper about that artist and then, do like an art project that was similar to the kind of art that that artist did. I had no idea. I didn't know anything about artists. So, um, my art teacher just like picked someone for me and it was like this... I don't remember who it was, but it was like this really famous collagist. And, so, um, I got... That was when I got super into it and I've been doing it ever since.

Elizabeth shared that she got involved with "choir and drama" in school, which inspired her love of musical theatre. Micha described the experience of growing up in a religious household that homeschool their children. She noted that her creative abilities provided her with an opportunity to study music in college by earning scholarships.

Other participants discussed how their current academic requirements impact the frequency of their creative activities. For instance, Hope said, "Um, so, sometimes I feel like I lose touch of my creative self. Um, like, now, during the summer when I'm working full-time and I'm doing school full-time, I don't have as much energy directed toward creative activities. And, so, I kind of feel like, 'Ugh, I just wish I was more creative right now.'" Similarly, Coco added that her graduate school schedule does not always allow her to spend as much time as she would like on her creative pursuits. However, she noted that sometimes class projects allow her additional opportunities to incorporate creativity. Furthermore, Alison discussed how raising children, working, and attending school creates comparable barriers between time and creativity.

3.2. Family histories of creativity. Twelve participants discussed family histories of creativity. Many participants described being raised in creative families. For example, Paul, Tulip, and Micha all had one or more parents who were musicians. Additionally, Chuck, Claude, and Beth all had one or more parents who were artists. Many participants within this group described participating in various creative activities with their families. For instance, Emily shared that her mother was a librarian and art teacher. Therefore, she discussed the early cultivation of art and creativity in her life. Coco added that she viewed her mom painting and writing poetry growing up and soon adopted those creative skills herself. Dawn disclosed that watching her mother engage in artistic activities made her want to participate in them as well. She added further that pursuing similar activities makes her “feel connected to her (mother).” Lexi indicated she and her mother have started a business selling homemade crafts online.

Other participants were encouraged by their parents to begin their own creative journeys. For example, Erdnase shared that he was exposed to magic after being taught parlor magic tricks by his father. He then discussed how he took those influences and became a magician far exceeding his father’s skills. Elizabeth shared that she was taken to a Broadway show by her father, wherein she decided to pursue musical theatre. Finally, while Irish Girl did not come from an inherently creative family, she cultivated one within her own home, sharing that she met a creative partner and has raised children and grandchildren to appreciate the arts. Overall, this code suggests that being raised in a creative household may influence some individuals’ decisions to begin creative tasks.

3.3. Hobbies and interests. Thirteen participants claimed that hobbies and interests were the reason they began their creative activities. For example, Coco and Emily reported that television shows featuring baking and cooking competitions inspire them to be creative in the kitchen. Micha and Irish girl shared that their love of museums and art inspire them to create their own works of art through sewing and fused glass, respectively. Lee and Hope who both compose music, shared that they derive inspiration from other musicians and songwriters.

Other participants discussed how their interests are interwoven into their creative projects. For instance, Elizabeth shared that she frequently sets her novels in Victorian England because of her interest in that time period. Micha noted that her love of choral music is often reflected in the music she plays on the piano. Tulip said she often interweaves her love of nature into her stained-glass projects. Overall, participants hobbies and interests influenced their decisions to begin creative activities and generally fueled the ongoing inspirations for them.

3.4. “I didn’t choose creativity, it chose me.” Six participants discussed a pre-destined relationship with creativity, such that there was no coincidence they would engage in creative tasks, rather it was fated. For example, Paul stated, “I didn’t choose to do music. Music chose me.” Erdnase said about magic, “I’m not sure I quite made the choice. I think it found me, in a sense.” Beth stated:

I didn’t wake up at 16 and go, ‘Oh, I think, you know, I don’t want to be a secretary. I think I want to draw pictures.’ That didn’t happen...Having (an art) show seemed like something I was always gonna’ do.

Emily and Tulip described innate creativity being engrained into their personalities. Irish Girl simply said “[Creativity] was just who I was.” Lee expanded on this idea of kismet in creativity suggesting that he is not the creator of his works but rather he is the medium from which they flow naturally. Overall, participants discussed the divine relationship between creatives and their works.

3.5. “I’ve always been creative.” Ten participants discussed their longstanding relationships with creativity stating they have “always been creative.” Seven participants used the word “always” to describe their relationship with creativity. For instance, Sai said, “I’ve always been one that loves to draw and loves to do all of that kind of stuff...and that’s always been in my life.” Emily stated, “It’s just always been a part of my life.” Tulip said, “I don’t think of...I don’t really think of putting on a creativity hat and taking one off. It just is always turned on. I’m always creative.” She added later, “I’ve always been creative.” Other participants went on to say that they could not remember a time when they had not been creative. Emily stated, “I can’t really pinpoint a moment where it’s um, made life different, because it’s kind of just always been there, so.” Beth said, “I really can’t actually remember when I wasn’t an artist.” Micha described her creative side as her “natural state,” whereas Lexi and Chuck just described engaging in creative tasks as something they have “done for years.” Overall, this theme suggests that half of the participants in this study identify as always having been creative.

3.6. Mentor or friend encouragement. Eight participants shared that mentors or friends encouraged them to begin creative activities. For example, Emily stated “[Creativity has] always been cultivated and encouraged to grow in my life from various sides of whether

that be teachers, parents, friends...So, that's...I guess it's it's really important." Beth shared that her mentor was "always pushing" her to be better and to create new works of art. Micha noted that her friends often encourage her to construct garments for them. Sai and Irish Girl shared that mentors have helped them navigate new opportunities. For instance, Irish Girl shared that her mentor allowed her to be a part of various art shows that showcased her work. Sai noted that her friend gave her the opportunity to join an existing social media group as an administrator, allowing her to promote group events music lovers. Overall, participants discussed how friends and mentors have encouraged them to pursue creative tasks.

3.7. New experiences. Nine participants described how the desire to have new experiences urged them to participate in creative activities. For example, Emily said about baking, "I took it as a fun kind of outlet to try new things." Micha shared that her creativity activities serve as a means to cultivate new areas of interest in her life. She stated, "I look for variety, absolutely I'm...it's a way for me to get new content into my life when the rest of my life is very um...I think mom life can be kind of pedestrian and like the same every day." Similarly, Claude shared that he enjoys learning about new things and interpreting them in creative ways. Abby and Alison discussed how trying new things pushes them to be creative in different ways than they've previously been before. Overall, the desire to have novel experiences seemed to spur creative activities in participants' lives.

3.8. Creative occupations. Thirteen participants discussed their experiences moving between everyday creativity and working in creative occupations. For instance, Lee and Paul discussed their experiences as professional musicians. Lee shared that he works as a music teacher and performer and Paul noted that he runs a music program at a university. About his

career as a professional creative, Lee said, “Um, so, part of it is for money, part of it is for passion, as well. Um, cause’ I make my living as a musician too. So, I don’t even have to do any other jobs.” Paul made an interesting comment about the uniqueness of being in a creative job, he said:

I don’t think that... In every profession it’s possible to feel that other people would want to be in the midst of you as you conduct your vocation. Say, an accountant or an electrician, or uh...you know other people that are in maybe the service industry... There’s nothing that exciting about someone standing around and watching them work.

Other participants like Irish Girl and Tulip discussed leaving jobs to pursue creative ones. For instance, Irish Girl shared that she retired from a career in data analysis to pursue creativity full-time. She indicated she still uses aspects of her job, such as problem solving, in her creative pursuits. Tulip described feeling “unsatisfied” in her previous career as a computer analyst, stating she “could not stay in the corporate world.” She said this about switching to a career in stained glass art, “I jumped off the deep end. Never looked back.” She said she “look(s) forward to coming to work every day” now and finds the atmosphere to be less stressful.

Other participants like Chuck, Claude, and Erdnase described their creative pursuits as activities they do outside of other employment. Chuck said, “Yeah, it’s formed so much of what I think about um and I’ve never gotten really good at um integrating it into a professional life.” Claude added that while he has sold some of his art, he is not able to live off of that income alone. He said, “I’m not rolling in it or anything like that. It’s definitely

not a monetary incentive.” About his work as a professional magician, Erdnase said: “I’m glad that it’s sort of a healthy side-hustle for me. Right now, at least. I’ve got many uh friends who do it for a living. Uh, but what’s interesting about that is I can’t get any of them to tell me how they live for longer than a week at a time.” Erdnase and Emily discussed how creative passions can dwindle when creators start engaging in creative activities for money. Emily said after she began baking professionally, her work became “Less creative and more of just like on the ‘How fast can we get it done?’”

Other participants found creative work to be a flexible source of income. For example, Beth stated: “I needed like three little part time jobs. I used to do that because then, you know, if you say, ‘Hey, I can’t take that 5-9 shift,’ or whatever it is, they just fill it. It’s no—Nobody’s upset. You don’t—You don’t have any big commitments.” Many participants discussed selling various creative products in order to create additional income. Overall, participants discussed their experiences grappling between everyday creativity and creative occupations.

Theme 4: Functions of Creativity

This theme refers to the functions of participants’ creativity. All participants discussed reasons they engage in creative activities and how that participation serves them. Four codes emerged that were included in this theme: administration of a creative job, escapism and hiding, practice and performance, and translating ideas into product.

4.1. Administration of a creative job. Six participants discussed the administration of creative jobs. Participants discussed various administrative activities associated with their creative work including, bill paying and managing employees. Paul stated:

I do an awful lot of administration because I run the entire music program where I work. So, the kind of things I would be doing would have me at a computer or a Xerox machine, or finding materials, or searching the internet for the ideal materials and if I cannot find it, then I have to craft it.

Sai described planning art and crafts activities for her patients at an assisted living facility.

Emily shared about her experiences as a lighting designer for a modern ballet company.

Tulip described her routine of managing administrative tasks each morning prior to spending her afternoon immersed in creativity. She said, “It allows me to take care of the things that I have to do in order to then enjoy being creative.”

Some participants discussed the concept of obtaining experience within their fields. For instance, Micha, Lee, and Beth described having to study their craft both formally and informally to build experience in their respective fields. Other participants discussed the mentor-student relationship. For example, Paul described the process of moving from student to mentor within his career. About his experiences with mentors, he stated, “I was very excited by them taking time to share these ideas with me, sharing materials with me, and visiting their localities so I can see specifically how they did these things.” Upon discussing his current experiences as a mentor, himself, he described the experience of having to motivate others in similar ways. Sai said this about mentorship, “Helping others be creative. That kind of thing. I think, all of that takes creativity.” Micha added that while working in the fashion design business, she had the opportunity to have her work evaluated by a mentor who shared that she had gained so much experience in pattern drafting that she did not need to attend formal classes. Lee described his shared that his mentors helped him move beyond

“cookie cutter” songs and helped him to think outside of the box. Overall, these participants discussed their experiences working in creative jobs, from administration of creative duties, to obtaining experience, and being mentored.

4.2. Escapism and hiding. Four participants discussed using creativity as a means of escapism. Claude said, “I always enjoyed being really creative and just... you know, kind of go into my own little world and stuff like that. You know? Like, that’s the best part about it. It’s kind of just like um, I don’t know. It’s escapism in a way, for sure.” Beth added that she utilized creativity as a means of coping with difficult life experiences. She said, “There were hard– hardships in my childhood and uh being able to dive into creativity was a way to escape that.” Abby noted that they used creativity as an escape from difficulties related to their transgender identity. They said. “Um, like reading, and writing, and stuff like that would allow me to escape into a different world. Because I couldn’t really... I didn’t feel like I could really be myself in my external world.”

Conversely, Elizabeth discussed hiding various parts of herself behind her writing. She described feeling limited by her religious identity with regard to her creativity, such that she worried others in her religious community might perceive her negatively if they read her work and did not approve. She said,

And, so, I really kind of acted in the confines of thinking of the 80-year-old lady sitting on the front pew that would buy my book. And, so, I limited who I was, at that time in the writings so that I could appease them. I was hiding behind this person that was afraid. Just living in fear all the time.

Regardless of intention, participants described using creativity as a means to escape or hide from various hardships.

4.3. Practice and performance. Six participants discussed practice and performance as functions of creativity. Some participants discussed what tasks needed to be done in order to perform. For example, Paul described needing to both practice his instrument, the organ, to facilitate performances, as well as distributing materials to other musicians, and rehearsing pieces. Chuck described the individual work and the collaboration that goes into his performances. Elizabeth shared about her experiences rehearsing musical theatre numbers prior to performances.

Other participants described the need for both practice and flexibility. For example, Tulip said, “As for the music, my own performance, um, I...I practice, and I keep my chops up and I look for outlets all the time.” Erdnase described the need for flexibility as a magician, especially with regard to performances, such that once the show begins, he must continue with show regardless of circumstance. He said:

So, the script is there, and we need it. It’s good, but at any moment uh a waiter could drop a tray, could have a heckler at any moment, so, you gotta’ be prepared to where that’s... As far as the audience is concerned, that’s part of the show.

Overall, participants discussed both practice and performance as functions of their creativity.

4.4. Translating ideas into product. Nine participants discussed the notion of translating ideas into product as a function of their creativity. Dawn shared that she typically begins with an emotion and translates thoughts and feelings into her artwork. She said, “Um, it just means that I am able to um... Focus my energies and my thoughts on creating

something outside of myself... Getting the thoughts that I have inside, outside.” Similarly, Lexi indicated that she uses art as a medium to express her thoughts. Hope shared that she uses songwriting as a means to overcome difficulties with communication. Paul and Micha described their experiences of going from inspiration to final product. Paul said, “I have to conceptualize absolute accuracy in individual pieces and make sure that I’ve created these individual pieces accurately before they can all be pulled together to create one whole piece of furniture.” Micha added:

I’ve just made the change in sewing life from going from...I was making a lot of copies like medium copies for people and I just finished my first like “big girl” editorial project where I had like like an emotional idea that I turned into a sketch, that I turned into a contemporary corset, that I got a model and a photographer and a make-up artist for and we like went out into a field and took pictures and told a story.

Overall, participants discussed various ways they translate ideas into creative products.

Theme 5: Routine for Creative Activities

This theme refers to participants routines before, during, and after creative activities. All participants described their creative rituals, inspirations, flow, and closing routines of their creative activities. Three codes emerged that were included in this theme: before creative activities, during creative activities, and after creative activities.

5.1 Before creative activities. Participants discussed common routines and rituals they carry out prior to creative activities. Five sub-codes emerged and were included in this code: gathering materials; noting inspirations; rituals and motivations to create; emotional and mental preparations; and scheduling, planning, and visualizing.

Gathering materials. Fifteen participants discussed gathering materials prior to beginning creative activities. Many participants discussed the tools and resources they have available for creative tasks. For instance, Beth shared that her finances often dictate the materials she has to put toward creative projects. Therefore, she sometimes utilizes found objects in her pieces. Alison shared a similar sentiment of using whatever equipment is available to use during her creative exercise routines. She stated:

And, like use whatever they have out there, or I may go to...if I take my kids with me, right? We can go the playground and I just see what I can do like I guess within the playground, what I'm actually capable of doing, what I could actually use.

Pam shared that she visualizes her project prior to deciding on materials. She said, "I will kind of start to visualize in my head...how I...what size paper I want to do it on, what medium I want to do it on." Conversely, Tulip noted that she must decide on materials prior to starting her creative projects. She said, "I need to ensure that I have the materials on hand before I can even start cutting the glass." Other participants, like Irish Girl and Paul have specialized equipment used specifically for their creative tasks, such as kilns and musical instruments.

Some participants shared that they glean inspiration directly by working with their materials. For instance, Abby said, "Cooking, sometimes, is a little bit of a creative process for me, too. Like, I just kind of throw a bunch of different foods together and sauces, or whatever, and just kind of see what happens with it. You know?" Dawn, Claude Irish Girl discussed sitting down with their materials and relaxing into the experience.

Other participants discussed how their cultural identities and experiences influence their choice in creative materials. For example, Micha said, “My experience in church...um... colors ...yeah, how I think about what I make, and what I choose to make, and the way I choose to present it.” Pam added that her identities and experiences likely influence her “choice of materials.” Overall, participants discussed the process of gathering necessary materials for creative tasks, what goes into choosing tools, and inspirations taken from working directly with media.

Noting inspirations. Fourteen participants discussed how they note inspirations for creative works. For example, Claude and Hope discussed using emotions as inspiration for their creative works. Hope said, “I kind of relate the emotion back to like a color, or something physical, um, and try to tie that into whatever I’m trying to say.” Pam and Elizabeth described using daydreams as sources of inspiration for their creativity. Chloe stated that she looks to current events and society to create jokes for her comedy routines. She stated, “You just kind of find outliers within norms within social norms and then you just comment on them.”

Many participants described being influenced by various ideas and media. For example, Claude said, “I’d say the way that I prepare would be...just trying to like take little mental notes of things that interest me and like subject matter that I think it is important to me and um...Yeah, I mean, just trying to be observant, mostly. You know, and then, like, remembering those things.” Hope stated that she generally works from a “main idea,” and then incorporates “specific words” or phrases. Erdnase described using “insight learning” into writing his magic routines. He described his process stating, “I’ll have an idea... I’ll

have an idea for something like, ‘I wanna’ see this happen,’ or ‘This is an effect I’d like to see happen’ then he works backward from there. Other participants discussed taking inspiration from places like websites, other artists, and television. Some participants described deriving motivation from images. For example, Pam said, “Yeah, generally, I will uh, search for...images that capture my interest and attention.” Micha and Beth noted that they are often inspired from their own sketches. Beth stated:

Either sketches I’ve been working on uh just on a daily basis, maybe a clip of colors, or something that I saw a few months ago and I put those on a board that I have... um just there on the board and I just stick–tear my pages out and just start sticking things up and um getting a feeling for, you know, which things are gonna’ jump out at me and what direction I’m gonna’ start in.

Regardless of the origins of these inspirations, participants discussed the various ways they note their motivations and incorporate them into their creative works.

Rituals and motivations to create. Fifteen participants discussed their rituals and motivations for everyday creativity. Participants shared that many times, they simply get an urge to create, as opposed to forcing productivity to happen. For example, Claude likened his experience to fishing, such that he may attempt to make progress on creative activities, but he “may not always pull something in.” Rather, he shared that other times he will feel the urge to create. He said, “I can be in a headspace and think, ‘Yeah, I should go do...I should go write some music right now,’ or something like that. But I don’t know how to make that happen.” Similarly, Abby stated, “In general, I’m not the type of person that plans a ton. I

just kinda' go with what feels right in the moment." Other participants discussed similar urges to create that lead them to make progress on creative works.

Only three participants described having a specific ritual they carry out prior to engaging in creative activities. For instance, Micha noted that she prefers to begin her routine in a relaxed manner, such that she does whatever she feels like doing prior to working productively. Lee noted that his ritual involves the development of sounds. He indicated that he begins his musical compositions by creating complex sounds designs. Finally, Tulip shared that she carries out a specific routine before her creative activities which involves journaling, "a cup of tea," and carrying out administrative tasks for her stained-glass business. Upon describing the value behind her morning ritual of journaling, she said, "It gives me uh a sense of centering. It also gives me um, a lot of focus for what I wish to accomplish for this day. And, it's a little bit of a review on what I wished to accomplish yesterday, and did I accomplish it? If not, what...What were the barriers?"

Despite, some participants engaging in specific routines for creativity, most participants shared that they preferred not to plan too much prior to creative activities. For some, avoiding planning left projects open to possibilities, while for others it was an effort to stave off potential disappointment. For example, Emily said:

It's better to just jump in and go, um, because if I try and plan it out too much, then if I get into the project... Um, and it's not how...going as I planned... That's more emotionally taxing and um frustrating of like, 'Wait, I had a plan and it's not going to plan. Now, I feel like a failure,' as opposed to 'Let's just do it.'

Other participants shared that they simply take a “dive in” approach to creativity without planning at all. Claude said, “That’s the process. It’s just getting there and making your... like yourself do it.” Overall, participant discussed various ways they begin creative activities, albeit through specific innovation, ritual, or simply “diving in.”

Emotional and mental preparations. Fifteen participants discussed the emotional and mental preparations they must make prior to engaging in creative activities. For instance, some participants noted that they have no particular mental or emotional preparations they complete prior to being creative but rather they described creativity as their natural state of being. For example, Tulip described being “always creative.” She said, “I don’t really think of putting on a creativity hat and taking one off. It just is always turned on.” Emily also indicated that she does not separate her creative self from other parts of her identity. Lee shared that he doesn’t typically do anything to prepare mentally or emotionally for creativity, but rather he can access creativity from many different mind states. He said, “I can actually be in a lot of different creative headspaces emotionally to get there.” Chuck added, that he has been engaging in creative activities for so long that he considers creativity to be his natural state of being.

Other participants described getting out into nature as part of their mental and emotional preparation. For example, Micha said that she prefers to access her creativity in the morning outside during the “pre-bright sunlight.” She stated, “You’re still kind of in that emotional way of thinking rather than like the productive concrete thinking.” Lee added that when he is trying to mentally or emotionally prepare for creativity, he sometimes takes walks outside.

Some participants described a process of taking care of unrelated responsibilities prior to creative tasks to facilitate mental clarity. For example, Beth stated:

I pay the bills the month before— I get them all set up on a computer—and so I don't have to worry my pretty little head about it. You know what I mean? Uh, I think just making sure the rest of my life is like...no...I don't have to worry about things being paid for, or taken care of, or you know, everything's set up. I can just go on about whatever I need to do.

Tulip and Pam shared similar approaches to managing outside responsibilities prior to creative tasks. Tulip added, "Although, sometimes bill paying can get creative. But, um, it allows me to take care of the things that I have to do in order to then enjoy being creative." Pam said, "It's more about making time...you know? Just setting aside the things I think I should be doing to make time for the stuff I want to do."

Other participants preferred to center themselves emotionally prior to creative activities, by seeking out calm or joyful mood states. For example, Sai said, "I'll listen to music while I'm doing it and that helps me kind of build uh...a good space to be able to mentally prepare." Alison added, that she prefers a calm atmosphere from which to create. Furthermore, Pam added that she emotionally prepares by lowering her expectations during the beginning of a project. She said, "So, I guess that the biggest thing is just to start with anything. It doesn't have to...don't expect it to be pretty. Just...Just start doing something and let it come. Every piece doesn't have to be a masterpiece. It's worth the effort even if you don't like the final outcome."

Other participants chose to mentally prepare for their creative activities by thinking ahead to the final product and problem solving, as needed. For instance, Paul stated:

I think about what the finished product needs to be, and I think about what my resources will be that are available to me. And, then, from there, I work backwards, and I think about the time frames necessary to do the preparation.

Tulip said, “So, there’s a lot of preparation a lot of mental preparation um that goes on. Solving problems...’The client wants this,’ ‘The materials won’t handle it,’ ‘How can I, you know, resolve the problems between the two?’” Dawn added that she prefers to gather her thoughts and think about ways she can incorporate them into her pieces. Overall, participants discussed mental and emotional preparations that occur during the early stages of a project.

Scheduling, planning, and visualizing. The final code that participants discussed prior to beginning creative tasks was scheduling, planning, and visualizing a project. Seventeen participants discussed this process. For example, many participants discussed the concept of scheduling. Paul described the need to schedule musicians and rehearsal spaces prior to beginning creative tasks. Alison noted that she needs to schedule her creative workout routines based on childcare and weather. Tulip described a process of reserving time to herself each morning to prepare for her activities. She said, “I reserve um the first hour of the day as quiet time for myself without any assistants. So, I can set up the shop and get my headspace right.”

Planning represented another vital aspect of the creative process for participants. For example, Beth said, “There are so many things that go into planning.” Regarding her one-woman shows, she described doing research on “what’s current,” and focusing on the

“cohesion” of her material. Claude described a planning process of “weed(ing) out” ideas that he feels will not develop into larger projects. Related to planning her cooking projects, Coco said:

Um, so, I’m like, ‘I’m gonna’ cook when I get home.’ And, then, I start thinking about like, ‘What are the things in the fridge?’ Like, ‘What’s in the freezer? What are the things in the pantry?’ Um, and by the time I get home, I have a general idea of like things that I might want to put together.

Other participants utilized visualization strategies to organize their creative projects before beginning them. Micha described setting up a “workflow” for herself to organize her thoughts. Elizabeth added that when writing novels, she often uses her imagination to put herself in the characters shoes to visualize how she wants the scene to go. Regardless of stylistic preferences, the act of planning, visualizing, and scheduling projects plays a vital role in the creative process during the beginning stages of activities.

5.2. During creative activities. This code refers to routines that participants engage in during their creative activities. Three sub-codes emerged and were included in this code: experimenting with new ideas, flow, and creating a comfortable space.

Experimenting with new ideas. Nine participants described a process of experimenting with new ideas during creative activities. For example, Micha and Tulip described how their approaches to creativity involve “a willingness to explore,” and an enjoyment of “learning new things.” Lee discussed how he tends to view problem solving by examining a situation from multiple perspectives. Emily said, “There’s no right or wrong...Um, it’s trying, and failing, and learning, and growing.” Claude held a similar view.

He said, “I think it’s like a daily thing for me. Like, I definitely try to do...Try to make something new every day and some of them get thrown in the wastepaper basket and some of them, you know, stick around and stay.” These participants discussed how learning and experimenting with new ideas plays a fundamental role in their creative activities.

Flow. Eighteen participants described experiences of flow during their creative activities. Many participants described the experience of flow as a period of fluid ideas and inspiration. For example, Paul described playing the organ and getting through a piece without even noticing his fingers have touched the keys. Emily explained flow as a “driving force” that ushers her along. Beth posited that flow feels like “plugging into a light socket,” such that she is overcome with ideas and creative energy. Tulip described her experience as rhythmic, “like dancing,” whereas Irish Girl shared that she simply felt “absorbed” in her projects, such that “everything else goes away.”

Many participants described losing track of time while experiencing flow. For instance, Chloe, Lexi, and Hope shared that they become so engrossed in their creative activities that once they become cognizant of the time, several hours have passed. Erdnase and Lee described similar experiences of time loss and used words like “got lost” in the activity and “I didn’t even know where (the time) went.” Some participants focused on the emotional experience of flow using words like “soothing,” “meditative,” “calm,” and “happy” to describe their emotional states. Dawn said, “It’s kind of exhilarating and I just feel like, you know, I’m doing something, and I’m releasing tension and stress in my life.” Elizabeth described flow as “a wonderful feeling.”

Only two participants described alternative experiences with flow. For instance, Abby shared that their main creative activities of cooking and exercising related back to their history of disordered eating. They shared that in order to maintain healthy boundaries with their self-care, they had to avoid entering into a flow state. Additionally, Beth indicated that in her experience, losing track of time with flow, negatively impacted her income, such that she could not afford to enter a flow state without being adequately compensated for her time. Overall, nearly all participants described experiences with creative flow. Most described the state as being positive, comforting, and innovative. Notably, two participants described specific reasons for regulating flow states.

Creating a comfortable space. Fifteen participants described the need for a comfortable space in which to create. For example, Pam, Beth, and Irish Girl described having devoted spaces for creative work. Lee prioritized spaces with “good lighting” or airy qualities for creating, while other participants discussed the need for “tranquil” or joyous spaces. Chloe and Irish Girl prioritized having a “clean,” well-organized space in which to create, while Alison and Chuck preferred to work in “private” settings. Erdnase and Micha discussed the need to reduce noise in order to create, whereas Tulip and Emily preferred to have calming television or music playing in the background. Paul described a need for a practice space with good acoustics for his music rehearsals. Overall, many participants described having certain preferences or needs from their creative spaces in order to facilitate their work.

5.3. After creative activities. This code refers to routines that participants engage in after their creative activities are complete. Two sub-codes emerged and were included in this code: emotional responses and sharing works; and completing projects.

Emotional responses and sharing works. Sixteen participants described their routines for after creative activities. After creative tasks are finished, participants ranged from having emotional responses to sharing their works. For example, once creative tasks are completed, Paul, Elizabeth, and Chuck described feelings of “accomplishment,” “fulfillment,” and “satisfaction.” Elizabeth described a practice of “internal celebration” that takes place once she has reached the end of a project. Emily and Lee reported feeling exhausted and “depleted of energy.” Some participants described sharing their work with others upon completing projects. For instance, Elizabeth and Coco described posting about their projects on social media, while Hope noted that she prefers to play her completed songs for friends and family. Dawn and Lexi prefer to display their work around their homes so that others may view their creations.

In lieu of celebration, some participants described simply going about the rest of their days, while other participants described moving on to other creative projects. Beth, Dawn, and Abby reported having no routine after their creative projects. For example, Dawn noted that many of projects remain open-ended and incomplete, while Abby described the need to move on to another project to avoid the “emotional lull that happens when (projects are) over.” Only one participant described having a specific routine after creative activities, which did not represent a theme for the study. Tulip described having a specific routine after her creative activities. She shared that she must follow Occupational Safety and Health

Administration (OSHA) guidelines as her work in stained glass involves hazardous materials. She described a necessary routine of changing clothes and showering after work.

Completing projects. Six participants discussed a unique phenomenon that occurs when they are completing or nearing the end of projects. For example, Micha described a propensity to move on to other creative projects prior to finishing current ones. She named these projects “UFOs” standing for “unfinished projects.” She reflected on this experience stating:

I feel like it was for me anyway, was like this this pattern of like avoiding discomfort or like really hard things where I’d get to a certain point in a project that would require me to like to do that...to unfix things or like start over...like do something that was like hard and I didn’t want to do it...So, I left a lot of like unfinished projects.

Claude described similar experiences, indicating that he would like to see himself become “more of a finisher” in the future, rather than someone who begins new projects every day. Coco added that she never feels like her collages are finished. She said, “I feel like there’s always something that can be changed, or can be added, or can be taken off, and that’s like very difficult for me to sit with.” Dawn added that many of her writing projects remain “open-ended.” Beth indicated that she prefers to work nonlinearly and on multiple projects at once. She said:

I take a lot of things home. Um, lots from multiple canvases and once I know the direction I’m going, it just...I have multiple spaces with paint and brushes, canvases... It’s sort of like, you know, you’re working on one and as you back up to

look at it uh you realize that whatever you sort of discovered or came upon with that piece, would look good on this one over there. So, it's simultaneous. You're just moving around.

Overall, nearly half of all participants shared similar experiences of either working on multiple projects simultaneously, beginning new projects without completing others, or struggling to wrap-up tasks.

Theme 6: Emotions Associated with Everyday Creativity

This theme refers to the emotions participants associated with their everyday creative activities. All participants discussed the emotions they experience while creating. Thirteen codes emerged that were included in this theme: experiences of emotion during creativity; accomplishment, pride and success; anger and frustration; anxiety, stress, and worry; boredom, daydreaming, and inactivity; calming, soothing, and meditative; confidence and comfort; energy, excitement, and stimulation; fatigue; humility; joy, happiness, and positivity; sadness, grief, and isolation; and vulnerability.

6.1. Experiences of emotion during creativity. Fifteen participants discussed their experiences of emotion during creativity. Many participants used everyday creativity as an outlet for emotion. For example, Sai and Pam described using creativity as a means to process difficult emotion and to regulate feelings. Beth simply said that her creative activities help to keep her “sane.” Micha added that many members of her family “stuff” their emotions. Therefore, she described everyday creativity as her “only real way to process emotions.” Hope described creative activities as a “release,” whereas Abby described creativity as a way to “uncover” hidden or repressed emotions.

Other participants noted that their emotions tended to inspire their creative efforts. For instance, Coco shared that she might start a creative project because she is feeling a certain emotion. Lee added that his emotional state “lights the fire” for his creative activities. Claude, Chuck, Lexi, and Hope held similar views, sharing that their creative tasks are often influenced by emotional experiences. Hope and Lee discussed how emotions can be communicated through their artwork, while other participants discussed utilizing creativity to express feelings.

Some participants shared that they do not begin creative projects from an emotional place, but rather emotions were evoked through the creative process. For example, Lee described the “intensity,” he felt while creating his first album. Coco described feeling “dejected” when her creative activities didn’t turn out as she’d hoped. Erdnase described feeling an “emotional high” when he reaches an audience member with his magic. Elizabeth discussed the feelings that are evoked when she shares emotional experiences with the fictional characters she writes. Overall, emotion appears to be present in various ways throughout the creative process whether it is inspires creativity, is reflected in creative products, or is cultivated during the creative process.

6.2. Accomplishment, pride, and success. Nineteen participants described feelings of accomplishment, success, and pride due to their creative experiences. Many participants described feeling accomplished when they achieved their creative goals. For example, Paul stated, “So, I think probably for the average person they have a set of routines that create this gratification because they’ve accomplished tasks.” Other participants described feeling accomplished when they share their work with others and receive praise. For instance,

Elizabeth said, “Um, sharing on social media that you’ve accomplished something. That’s always a... A good feeling.” Lexi added, “It’s nice to have people like admire some of the projects that you complete.” Some participants discussed feelings of pride when looking back at their work. For instance, Micha, Claude, Paul, and Sai described feeling proud of their creative accomplishments, especially when looking back on them fondly. Overall, nearly all participants described feelings of pride, accomplishment, and success when it came to their creative activities.

6.3. Anger and frustration. Three participants described anger and frustration when discussing their creative activities. For example, Lee and Hope discussed using feelings of anger to foster creativity. Lee said this about creating from the emotion of anger, “I think being more like under like melancholy is a lot easier to create stuff (than joy) and then anxiety is too, as well as anger.” Hope added, “Whether that emotion is sad, or happy, or angry, just kind of putting it off of...Like, getting it out of the forefront and moving it to the side. So, that I can, um, you know, deal with it a different way.”

Lee and Hope also reflected about the vital role music played in their processing feelings of anger during adolescence. Hope said:

Um, whenever I, you know, I was learning how to write songs and play other people’s songs, kind of, at that pivotal time in my life like right toward middle school, um where I felt like nobody understood me and all of this teenage angst. And, so, being able to uh direct that to something else, so that I didn’t put that on other people or make their lives more crazy.

Lee added, “So, I know when I was younger, I was like...I would get super-duper angry at my parents, you know? Like, typical stuff. And, I had 100-watt tube amp and I would crank it. Make it super loud. So, that’s how I dealt with emotion.”

Emily discussed some frustrations she experiences during the creative process, such as times when her creative works don’t turn out as planned. She indicated it is generally better for her not to create comprehensive plans for her projects because when these frustrations arise, she is less likely to “feel like a failure,” if she has not overly planned her activities. Overall, participants described various experiences of anger and frustration and ways they can use creativity as a means to manage those feelings, as well as feelings of frustration that arise during the creative process.

6.4. Anxiety, stress, and worry. Twelve participants described anxiety, stress, or worry in relation to their creativity. Most participants described their creative activities as an outlet for their daily life stressors. For example, Sai stated, “I’m a very anxious person when it comes to certain things. Especially, when it comes to relationships with other people...Doing things in a creative outlet definitely helps roll that off. I’m able to um talk through it with myself.” Pam added, I almost use my art as my therapy. That’s where when I’m stressed, I go, and I find that it helps me unwind. It helps me de-stress.” Four participants described feeling stressed during the creative process. For example, Pam described feeling intimidated by the “blank page” at the beginning of projects. Emily and Tulip described stress associated with having creative jobs and meeting deadlines. Chuck said, “Yeah, if it’s— If everything is firing right, [the creative process] is very soothing and meditative. But, a lot of the times, like, I guess, bookended by that, is stress, yeah.” Expanding further, Chuck

described the creative process he engages in alone as peaceful but noted that sometimes the process of collaboration with other artists as stressful. Overall, more than half of participants described using creativity as a means to de-stress from their daily anxieties, while a few participants described stressors associated with the creative process.

6.5. Boredom, daydreaming, and inactivity. Eleven participants described feelings of boredom, daydreaming, and inactivity relating to their creativity. Most participants described boredom as vehicle for creativity, suggesting that feelings of boredom can lead to creativity. For example, Pam and Tulip described feeling bored at work or during meetings and wishing they could participate in creative activities. Coco described feelings of boredom during her daily commute, which is time she typically uses to brainstorm recipes. Emily said she is most creative when she has “had at least two or three days off and (she) get(s) bored.”

Half of all participants described feelings of boredom inspiring creative activities. Elizabeth described using daydreaming as a means to fuel her creativity. She added, “For writing, um, I tend to kind of daydream. I like to kind of imagine through the scene and a lot of times I put myself in it.” Additionally, two aspects of boredom led to no themes being found. One participant described feeling bored after creative tasks were over and other participant described others being bored when she shares about her creative projects. Neither of these incidences were supported by themes. Therefore, they were not reflected within the study’s themes. Overall, half of all participants described boredom as a vehicle for creative endeavors.

6.6. Calming, soothing, and meditative. Thirteen participants described feelings of tranquility in relation to their creativity. Most participants described calming, soothing, or

meditative feelings through their creative activities. For example, Irish Girl said about crocheting, “It’s almost like meditation.” Lexi stated, “Even doodling, for me is just a very calming exercise.” Chuck added, “(Playing music) is very soothing and meditative.” Some participants described a need to have a calm environment to be able to relax into creative activities. For example, Tulip said, “I keep music playing constantly to set the tone for the work.” In order to be creative Alison said, “Mentally, I have to be in a place where there’s not a lot of chaos.” Beth added that she too prefers that outside responsibilities are taken care of so that she can be free to engage creatively.

Interestingly, control was a secondary subtheme found within this code. Four participants described a sense of control in conjunction to feeling calm during their creative tasks. For instance, Lexi said this about having control within her creative activities, “It gives me a sense that I have control over what I’m doing.” Abby added that creative tasks are “grounding” and represent something they “can rely on.” Emily said:

It gives me a weird sense of balance between ultimate control and ultimate freedom, if that makes sense? Because, I...I have exact control over everything that’s going into that cake or recipe because I like cooking, as well. Um...so ultimate control over those, but then the freedom and like...’Well, if it’s not perfect who really cares?’

Like...and it’s gonna be messy in the kitchen and...It’ll be fine.

While Micha shared that creativity gives her a sense of control over her life. Overall, more than half of all participants described feeling soothed by their creative activities, while four participants described calm feelings derived by maintaining control of their creative tasks.

6.7. Confidence and comfort. Eleven participants described feelings of confidence and comfort gleaned from their everyday creative activities. For example, Abby, Paul, Elizabeth, Sai, and Micha discussed gaining confidence in themselves through their creative engagement. Paul stated:

And, the everyday activities that one keeps ongoing in their life, hopefully, are the ones that make you feel gratified and confident, and like you are a success. No matter how trivial it may be...or how ordinary, or how much time it takes.

Other participants described feeling confident about their creative abilities. Pam said, "I think it gives me a sense of...of confidence." Abby added that as a result of their creative activities they are more confident in their other identities. They said, "But, now, I'm feeling much more secure in my identity and confident in it. Like, really, embracing it." Some participants described increased confidence related to their intersecting creative identities and cultural identities. Related to body shape and size and her identity as an actor, Elizabeth said, "And, so, now, I'm more accepting of myself because I like what I see for the first time in my life." Erdnase described gaining confidence related to his ability status and his experiences as a magician. He said this about his identities, "The emotional high is, 'Wow, I can do more than I thought I did, and plus, it reaches other people and lets them know they can too.'"

Some participants described gaining confidence by sharing about their creative products. For instance, Coco and Elizabeth indicated they glean confidence by sharing about their creative works online through social media. Tulip and Micha also disclosed that they generally enjoy discussing their creativity with others. Overall, participants described gaining

confidence in themselves and comfort in their respective identities as a result of their creative endeavors.

6.8. Energy, excitement, and stimulation. Eighteen participants discussed feelings of excitement, energy, and stimulation related to their creativity. Many participants described feeling excited or stimulated by their creative activities. For instance, Tulip said that she looks forward to her creative job every day. Pam added, “I just kept doing it and I looked forward to the time that I got to spend, uh you know creating art and being creative.” Lexi, Chloe, and Claude described creativity as a source of stimulation for them that provides joy and fulfillment.

Other participants described times when they feel bursts of energy to create. For example, Abby, Alison, and Sai described a level of mental energy and excitement toward a project that is necessary for them to be creative. Coco described moments of “mental clarity” when she becomes inspired and energized to create. Some participants described using creative tasks as a way to release stored up energy. For instance, Lexi noted that she feels the need to always keep herself busy. Therefore, her creative activities act as a source of stimulation that restless pent-up energy. Abby added, “But (creativity) also is like an energetic outlet at the same time, too. Like, I’m releasing some energy that I have on the inside and when I’m able to create that plan and like execute it.”

Some participants described receiving energy or feeling excited by sharing their creative ideas and works with others. Abby and Emily discussed feeling stimulated by sharing with others. Overall, nearly all participants described feeling energized and excited

by their creative engagement, whether due to the creative process itself, sharing their creativity with others, or by releasing bottled up energy through creative means.

6.9. Fatigue. Eight participants discussed fatigue in relation to their everyday creativity. For example, Lee and Alison noted that fatigue deterred their creativity, such that it was more difficult for them to engage in creative tasks if they were tired. Tulip described how mentally taxing stained-glass work can be. She indicated that she feels “exhausted” at the end of most workdays, due to “the mental focus” she puts into her work. Emily and Beth discussed fatigue in relation to forced expectation, such that when creative work becomes expected as a part of a job or career, it can become tiresome rather than stimulating. Some participants discussed using up creative energy stores until they feel depleted or hit “mental roadblocks.” For instance, Lee stated, “I just generally start to tire myself out until my creative energy is all gone.” Coco added, “I finished the project...Most of the project in a night. Then, I got to like a...Um, what would you call it? ... Almost like a mental roadblock, where I was just like staring at the collage for like 15 minutes.” Overall, participants described various points at which they feel fatigue during the creative process. Themes that were generated within this code included fatigue due to forced expectation, labor-intensive work, and how feelings of fatigue can prohibit creative work.

6.10. Humility. Six participants discussed feelings of humility related to their creativity. For example, Pam described herself as a “private person” who does not like to share about her creative identity or works. She said, “So, my art to me is just part of my private self...I don’t necessarily hide it, but I don’t put it out there for people to view.” Similarly, Claude and Chuck noted that they would be reluctant to share with new people

about their identities as creative people or their activities. Beth stated, “There’s a modesty about it,” such that she feels she must be humble about her artistic prowess, as not to be disrespectful of others who may have less overt talents. Erdnase discussed humility within his craft as a magician, as well as a desire for others to get to know him for his other attributes instead of merely acknowledging his creative identity. Paul discussed feeling humbled by hearing his music played back to him. He indicated this affirms his identity as an artist. Overall, humility appeared to come up for participants in relation to sharing their creative identities or works with others, particularly in relation to wanting to be humble or modest around disclosure.

6.11. Joy, happiness, and positivity. Nineteen participants discussed feelings of joy, happiness, and positivity in conjunction with their creative pursuits. In general, participants described feelings of joy when discussing their creative activities, but it seems that participants experienced happiness at different points throughout the creative process. For example, nearly all participants described feeling joyful, as a result of their everyday creative activities. Emily said, “(Everyday creativity) is just the time to enjoy what I’m doing and just kind of relax into it. Um, and that usually helps lift my mood.” Some participants described their creative tasks in terms of a positive outlet for their emotions. For instance, Dawn said, “Yeah, I think that it brings me some balance. Um, it helps me to stay focused and kind of, you know, release bad energies and... And, refill my good energy.” Other participants indicated that positive moods inspire them to create. For instance, Beth said, “Everything’s uh, I think it’s easiest to be creative when things are pretty well. They’re good.” Coco stated,

“But, normally, like cooking and collaging are like moments where I...They happen when I’m feeling energized and feeling happy.”

Some participants described feeling happy as a result of sharing about their creative works or abilities. For example, Elizabeth stated, “Um, sharing on social media that you’ve accomplished something. That’s always a... A good feeling.” Some participants disclosed that displaying their creative tasks brings them joy. For example, Pam said, “I do get satisfaction going back looking at the things I’ve created and the memories of when I was actually creating them.” For others, the idea of contributing something is what brought them joy. For instance, Lexi noted, “It’s not only for myself but I like knowing that other people got joy out of it, as well.” Other participants described the bond they share with other creatives and how their creative tasks have helped give them a sense of community. Irish Girl discussed how meaningful it is when she receives positive feedback about her work from another artist. Claude and Erndase described how a sense of camaraderie with other artists brings them joy and has kept them motivated to continue engaging in creative tasks. Overall, nearly all participants described feelings of joy fostered by participation in creative activities, completing creative projects, and sharing creative ideas and products with others.

6.12. Sadness, grief, and isolation. Eighteen participants described feelings of sadness, grief, or isolation when discussing their creative activities. Most participants who mentioned sadness described feeling that way because of life circumstances, such as in times of grief or isolation. In these cases, participants noted they used creativity as an outlet to process feelings or engage in positive distractions. For example, Chloe shared that she turns to her comedy writing or illustrating her graphic novels when she feels isolated. Elizabeth

described a time of depression in her life, stating, “I was able to come back to something that I knew, and that creative outlet got me through.” Chuck said, “I guess I’m a fairly emotional person and with music especially, it usually uh... comes from a place of um attempting to find like solace.” Similarly, Hope noted that she turns to creativity for comfort. She added:

Um, as terrible as it sounds, like after something bad happens... You know, after I get in a fight with a friend, or I... You know, my parents are on my case about homework or... Or a grade... Um, then, I feel like that’s the perfect time for me to direct um how I feel to something else. So, that I’m not, caught up in whatever I’m feeling.

Other participants noted that grief and sadness negatively impact their creativity. For instance, Beth said:

Well, if something really truly crushingly sad happens, I’m not talking about a boyfriend breaking up with you when you’re 16, I’m talking about life events where you lose a family member or there’s been a— you know, something major major, I really can’t switch (creativity) on. I have to—I have to work through that a bit first.

It’s not like I won’t get to it... I just sort of let it—I let that grief do its thing.

Irish Girl added, “Um, if I’m not feeling up, you know? If I’m kinda’ down, not feeling well or something, (creativity) tends to go into hibernation.” Some participants described feelings of isolation during the creative process. For example, Emily and Beth discussed damaging experiences they’ve had when her creative ideas were rejected by others. Other participants described feelings of sadness pertaining to forced expectations. For example, Tulip and Beth discussed ways they’ve had to bend their creative wills to create for others or to create when they do not particularly feel inspired. Finally, Elizabeth noted that she sometimes experiences

sadness and grief when she is writing, and her characters are not doing well emotionally.

Elizabeth indicated she is “right there along with (them)” experiencing sadness.

Some participants, like Coco, described feelings of sadness during the creative process. She stated, “Like, when I’m cooking something... When I’m... You know, I start out excited, um and you know it doesn’t turn out the way I planned. So, then, I just feel like dejected and like don’t want to cook anymore.” Lexi indicated that sometimes her feelings of sadness can be reflected in the colors she chooses to use for her projects. Coco noted that she tends to gravitate toward certain types of creative tasks during times of sadness. She said, “So, like, if I’m, you know, feeling down or if I’m feeling sad, I might um journal, or I might write poetry, or um stuff like that,” whereas other emotions may lead to other types of creative tasks. Lee indicated sadness is an emotion he can create from easily, while positive emotions like joy are more difficult. Overall, when discussing sadness, grief, and isolation no participants described their creative activities as inherently saddening. However, most participants turned toward their creativity as an outlet to process difficult emotions, and some participants shared about some of the difficulties they experience during the creative process, including rejection, failure, and forced expectation.

6.13. Vulnerability. Ten participants discussed feelings of vulnerability related to their creativity. All participants described feelings of vulnerability related to sharing their creative identities and works with others. For example, Hope said, “You know, when you share something that’s very reflective of how you feel, personally, um, it can be kind of scary to put yourself out there.” Related to the discussion of sharing and vulnerability, Abby added, “But I think it um it’s scary for me, but at the same time that means that it’s meaningful for

me, and it's important for me." When asked about vulnerability, many participants expressed fears around being judged for their creative identities or works. For instance, Dawn said, "And, I feel that part of that is due to uh fear that the people who don't know me won't like it. Won't like my art or my writing." Claude stated, "Sometimes, it's like man, 'What are they gonna' think?' Like, meeting people who aren't pursuing creative endeavors um, you know, and don't really think that it's that important. Sometimes, you can like have this identity of like, 'Well, I don't... What matters to me doesn't matter to them at all.'"

Other participants discussed feeling vulnerable they might be judged for their personal cultural identities in relation to their creativity. For instance, Elizabeth discussed her relationship with body shape and size, and expressed fears about not obtaining musical theatre roles, due to her appearance. Claude shared that sometimes fears being rejected because he is a musician in his thirties. Beth described feeling vulnerable to judgments when people have made assumptions about her gender, due to the type of artwork she creates. Overall, participants discussed various reasons they feel vulnerable to the judgments and criticism of others based on their identities or creative works.

Theme 7: Duration, Frequency, and Timing of Creativity

This theme refers to the duration, frequency, and timing of participants' creative activities. All participants discussed the duration of their creative activities, how often they participate in them, and the times in which they create most and least often. Four codes emerged that were included in this theme: duration of creative tasks, frequency of creative tasks, when one is the least creative, and when one is the most creative.

7.1. Duration of creative tasks. Eighteen participants discussed the how long they have been engaging with their current creative tasks. Overall, participants were only asked about their current creative tasks, which does not encompass creative activities they do not partake in any longer. Eight participants disclosed that they began their creative activities in childhood, six participants reported that their creative endeavors began in adolescence, and four participants indicated they began their creative pursuits in adulthood. Two participants did not speak to the duration of their creative tasks. Additionally, two participants shared that they stopped their creative activities briefly, due to difficult life circumstances.

7.2. Frequency of creative tasks. All participants discussed the frequency with which they engage in their creative tasks. Many participants discussed continuous engagement in creative projects. For instance, Claude described his creativity as “a daily thing.” Thirteen participants reported working on creative projects daily. Other participants reported frequent creativity. For example, three participants reported engagement in creative activities more than four times per week. Three participants reported participation in creative tasks two to three times per week, and only one participant reported creative engagement one time per week. However, this participant also described drawing daily, which indicated her participation might be more often than her original disclosure.

Some participants indicated that their personal schedules sometimes circumvent creative activities, due to school or work commitments, lack of energy, and childrearing. Nine participants disclosed that they engage in creative activities whenever they can find the time. For example, Hope stated:

Um, now that I'm in college, I don't have as much time. But, I... when something's really weighing on my mind, I make time. So, it's not as frequent as it was when I was in like in secondary school, um, but um I appreciate it a lot more because I don't have that time that I used to.

Overall, most participants seemed to engage in creative activities daily, if not more than one time per week. Participants also spoke to daily life stressors that may prevent them from being creative as often as they would like.

Forced Productivity and Expectation. Ten participants discussed the topic of forced productivity and expectation with regard to the creative process and frequency of creative activities. For example, Erdnase stated, “(According to) the research on uh pursuing passions, the moment you start to do it for money is the moment the passion starts to diminish. There's uh many wonderful graphs that show this beautifully.” Emily added she experienced this decline after going to work for a bakery rather than baking for enjoyment. Similarly, Beth added that when she began working as a creative director rather than commissioning her own art pieces, she saw a decrease in happiness. She said, “It sucks your soul out. You... You... It's like chipping pieces of creativity off of you.” As an owner of her own stained-glass business, Tulip said “Cause almost everything I do is on commission. So, um, I don't do a lot of stuff which is purely for my own enjoyment.” She noted that she typically reserves time to conduct a special project that is all her own.

Overall, participants described a decline in personal joy once they started catering to the wishes of others within creative employment. Participants described not being as excited about their creative activities, “feeling stuck,” having to manage deadlines, feeling critiqued

by others, having to create to assigned themes, decreased passion for the work, having to suppress personal ideas to sell items, and in some cases, having to work other jobs to maintain creative activities.

7.3. When is one the least creative? Nine participants discussed times when they are the least creative. Many participants described how their moods greatly impact their creativity, such that when they are feeling “down” or disengaged with projects, they are less likely to participate wholeheartedly with creative tasks. For example, Sai said, “Like, if I’m not feeling it, it’s not gonna’ happen.” Emily stated, “Um, if I am not in the right mood, the right headspace, to...to bake anything, to make really any sort of the creative activities that I do like there’s no point.” Irish Girl added, “Um, if I’m not feeling up, you know? If I’m kinda’ down, not feeling well or something, (creativity) tends to go into hibernation.” Some participants also mentioned fatigue as a deterrent for creativity, as well. For instance, Lee said, “Again, it’s really hard to do stuff when I’m tired. Cause’ the mind’s just not ready to focus and ready to get to the task at hand.” Alison added, “Whenever I am not, I guess, no energy sluggish...If I’m...yeah, I... I don’t have like... I don’t really want to.” Overall, participants indicated they need to feel energized, enthusiastic about their creative projects, and in positive moods to be creative.

7.4. When is one the most creative? Nineteen participants discussed times when they are most creative. Many participants discussed feeling most creative when they are feeling happy. Coco stated, “Normally, like cooking and collaging are like moments where I...They... They happen when I’m feeling energized and feeling happy.” Sai noted, if she is “feeling comfortable and happy” her projects flow a lot smoother. Other participants

discussed feeling most creative when they are bored. For example, Emily described having days off from work when she is bored and engages in creative tasks. Coco described feeling inspired to cook while being stuck in traffic. Other participants discussed feeling their most creative while at work. For example, Pam disclosed that she often feels her most creative when she is at work and cannot engage with her creative materials directly.

Two participants described being most creative when they are feeling sad, anxious, or angry. For instance, Lexi said, “Um, like I said, when I’m stressed is when I really start doing things ‘cause it’s a good break up from schoolwork or just stresses of relationships of anything.” Other participants described feeling at their most creative when they have quiet time. For instance, Erdnase said that he tends to be most creative when things are “quieted” in the evenings. Elizabeth and Alison both described engaging in creative activities in the evenings when their children are asleep.

Participants also spoke to the time of day when they feel the most creative. Four participants described feeling most creative in the morning. For instance, Alison said “I have more creativity towards the morning.” Three participants described feeling at their most creative during mid-day. Tulip said, “Between 1 and 6 in the afternoon is when I am most creative.” More than half of all participants described feeling most creative in the evenings or late at night. For example, Claude said he prefers to work “super late at night.” Four participants described multiple periods of creativity throughout the day. For instance, Lee said, “My most creative is actually usually...usually in the early like mornings around 11 am and then I am like really creative at like 2 or 3 am too.” Overall, participants differed in their times of peak creativity and the circumstances under which they prefer to work. However,

most participants preferred to engage in creative activities when they were feeling happy, energized, unencumbered by other people or tasks, and most preferably at night.

Theme 8: Mental Well-Being

This theme refers to the ways in which creative activities positively impact participants' mental well-being. All participants discussed their mental well-being in relation to their engagement with creative activities. Two codes emerged and were included in this theme: benefits of creativity and the impact of creativity on life. Participants described many of the benefits of creative activities including self-expression, active problem solving, and increased self-awareness. Participants also discussed the positive impacts that creative activities have on their lives, including mental satisfaction, increased physical health, supplemental income, the fostering of friendships, and a therapeutic outlet to process stressors.

8.1. Benefits of creativity. This code refers to the benefits that creativity had on participants mental well-being. Seven sub-codes emerged and were included in this code: active problem solving; admiration of work; awareness and perspective; expression; freedom to create anything and be oneself; something that is all mine; and therapeutic outlet.

Active problem solving. Thirteen participants described active problem solving as a benefit of creativity. For example, Emily, Lee, and Micha indicated that solving problems is an essential part of their creativity, which they find enjoyable. Emily stated, "I think figuring it out is a big part of my creative process of like along the way and solving the problems." Lee said, "I like to know how things work together and how they function together." Micha added, "Sewing has always been just kind of my...my de-stressor, my creative outlet, I

guess. It's the thing that I do because I like to do it, because I like to explore, because I like to learn new things. For sure, that's part of it." Beth and Lexi discussed how constantly designing and solving problems helps them stave off feelings of boredom. Abby and Alison discussed how for them creativity acts as "an uncovering process," where they constantly ask themselves, "What can I do with these materials?" Irish Girl, Tulip, and Paul who have all had careers outside of their creative occupations, discussed ways that they use problem solving to help them "think outside the box," and remain "analytical" within their creative projects. Sai and Erdnase shared that problem solving comes into play for them when they encounter ideas that "flop" and they must reassess their creative projects in order to move forward. Overall, participants discussed ways they utilize problem solving in their creative processes to stimulate themselves, decipher problems, and bounce back from creative failures.

Admiration of work. Six participants described admiration of their creative work as a benefit of creativity. For instance, Pam stated, "I like to create stuff that I can then go back, look at, and enjoy." Participants discussed the joy they feel when they are able to "gaze" at their creative works once they are finished. Paul, Dawn, and Lexi described how nice it feels to have others notice the creative works they display in their homes. Claude shared that it makes him feel proud to look back on the work he has created. Overall, participants described feelings of pride and admiration upon viewing their creative products long after they were complete.

Awareness and perspective. Thirteen participants reported that their creative pursuits have increased their self-awareness and perspective. For example, Sai said, "(Creativity)

really opens my mind to looking at things from a different perspective. Um, cause' if one thing doesn't work this way, then you gotta' try it a different way. And, so, that helps a lot." Lee added, "It just makes me think in different ways and it makes me want to think in different ways, and to like think that there's not just one road to one place. There's many roads to take to one place." Many participants discussed how their creative pursuits allow them to remain flexible in their thinking. For example, Paul, Micha, and Lee discussed how their experiences with creativity lead them "think outside of the pre-written script" of what creativity can be. Claude and Erdnase discussed how creative engagement fosters new friendships and facilitates new experiences. Coco, Irish Girl and Emily discussed how their creative activities have increased their awareness of other cultures and deepened their worldviews, such that they have become more aware of the world and how they engage with others. Overall, participants discussed how their creative activities have increased their self-awareness and perspective by exposing them to new cultures, worldviews, experiences, friendships, and ways of thinking.

Expression. Fifteen participants discussed self-expression as a benefit of creativity. For instance, most participants described using creativity as a means to express themselves and process difficult emotions. Dawn said, "I like to create things and just express myself artistically." Sai stated, "I really enjoy being able to just express myself and put things out there in many different uh ways." Pam added, "It's more of just kind of a need to uh, an outlet just to express some thoughts and...and you know create something that I'd like to look at." Emily described how self-expression is part of her identity as a creative person. Micha described an experience where she took an emotion and turned that into a sketch.

Then, that sketch was transformed into a garment that was photographed. She indicated she was impressed with her ability to take an emotion and embody it in the form of a creative product. Hope and Claude discussed how they express emotion through song. Hope said:

Yeah, most times I can't... I'm not good at talking. And, so, if my mom is like, 'I really don't understand what you're trying to tell me.' Um, then, I'll write a song about it and I'll show it to her and I'm like, 'This is what I'm talking about it.' Um, so, it's a way without...I feel like without judgment that I can, kind of, tell people how I feel.

Lee and Pam shared that through their creative activities they are able to process difficult emotion and express them in their creative works. Overall, participants utilized their creative activities to process difficult emotions and express them through artistic means.

Freedom to create anything and be oneself. Eight participants described having the freedom to create anything and truly be themselves as a benefit of their creativity. For example, participants discussed the freedom to be imperfect and to create things that fit for them, rather than meeting the standards of others through their creativity. Lexi said:

I don't have to stress if it's not perfect. It's given me a way to show the world who I am rather than what they think I should be...It's just like... 'Cause like we're always in a world where people are like, 'Oh, no, you need to fit with this moral standing or you need to fit with this.' It's just nice to put my own thoughts out there, rather than be like, 'Oh, here's a coloring page. You color it the way we just want it,' and I... Instead, I get to create like my own coloring pages and like create my own projects rather than just conforming to everybody else.

Similarly, Irish Girl described her preferences as a child to create her own art using blank paper than utilizing coloring books. Lee indicated he prefers to create music based on his own interests, rather than playing cover songs of other artists. Micha and Tulip who often create products to sell to others, described setting aside intentional time to work on creative projects that are all their own. Overall, participants discussed stepping away from conventionality and following their own creative paths. They spoke about the ability to be imperfect and take time to follow their own interests, rather than conform to societal trends.

Something that is all mine. Thirteen participants described enjoying having an activity all their own as a benefit of creativity. For instance, participants spoke of personal time alone with their creative tasks that they did solely for themselves. Pam said, “So, I don’t do it for uh recognition or to show anybody, um, it’s really just my own creative process, my own outlet, you know?” Chuck added, “I find that most of the stuff that uh I do creatively is just work on my own.” Emily and Abby shared that their creative activities serve as a means for them to be feel “more connected” to themselves. Coco and Lexi spoke about creating works purely for the experience of being creative, without the intention of sharing with anyone. Micha added that she enjoys playing music simply for herself and not to improve her technique. Emily described her creative activities as “time just to be (her)self.” Overall, participants discussed their intention to have personal time all their own to work on creative activities, as a time to connect with themselves rather than create for recognition or contribution.

Therapeutic outlet. All 20 participants described their everyday creative activities as a therapeutic outlet. For example, Sai said:

I'm a very anxious person when it comes to certain things. Especially, when it comes to relationships with other people. I get anxious cause' I hate feeling like I have disappointed someone and so um, being...er...doing things in a creative outlet definitely helps roll that off. I'm able to um...talk through it with myself... And... for lack of a better word, I'm able to...um, figure things out through being creative in different outlets.

Other participants discussed using creative outlets to process difficult emotions. For example, Pam, Beth, and Irish Girl described using their creative activities as a therapeutic outlet to process significant traumas or illnesses in their lives. Beth indicated her creativity saved her during childhood difficulties. Pam said that her creativity provided her with a therapeutic outlet to “help (her) process the things she was going through.” Irish Girl described her creative activities as “(her) lifeline” when dealing with a long-term physical illness. Chuck and Lee indicated they use their creative activities to “decompress” from long days and to “seek peace during emotional times.” Many participants indicated they use creative activities to help regulate their emotions and keep themselves “sane.” Overall, participants discussed ways in which they use their creative activities as an outlet to process difficult emotions, regulate feelings, and decompress from significant life events and daily stressors.

8.2. Impact of creativity on life. All twenty participants discussed the impact creativity has on their lives. Many participants described how creativity affirms their identities or life trajectories. For instance, Paul stated:

So, right there in my home life, that's uh, a very big deal. And, as far as professional life with my music-making, I think that every time somebody makes a favorable

comment about how they have had a changed experience by being in my environment and hearing music, I think that is a humbling experience for one and it also confirms that what I'm doing is the right thing.

Lexi added, "It's given me a way to show the world who I am rather than what they think I should be." Abby and Elizabeth discussed how their creative activities allow them to feel "more connected" to themselves.

Other participants described how their creative pursuits help increase their self-awareness and deepen their worldviews. For instance, Coco said, "Um, and, I think (creativity) plays a... A big role in how I um, like...How I view the world, how I make sense of the world, how I engage." Sai added, "I mean, it does affect me as a person cause' I think... and this might sound like I'm tooting my own horn, but I feel like it opens my heart to other things and, makes me more um aware of the world." Lee discussed how his creative activities have increased his ability to think more complexly about music composition.

Other participants discussed the impact of their creative pursuits and how they have given them an outlet to deal with strong emotion. Participants shared about how their creative activities help them maintain emotion regulation. For instance, Hope and Irish Girl discussed how creativity helps them when they are feeling physically depleted or ill. Chloe and Pam described how creative activities help them stave off feelings of depression or isolation. Beth and Elizabeth described difficult times in their lives and how creativity helped ground them and allowed them to feel connected to themselves. Overall, participants described positive experiences with creativity, with regard to affirming the life-trajectories and identities of

participants, helping them grow intellectually and personally, and fostering a space in which participants can process deep emotion.

Theme 9: Identities That Impact Creativity

This theme refers to the identities that impact participants' creativity. All participants discussed various personal cultural identities and the ways they influenced individuals' creative engagement and works. Thirteen codes emerged that were included in this theme: ability status; age; body shape and size; education; gender; nationality and region; parent and partner identities; political affiliation; race and ethnicity; religion and spirituality; sexuality and sexual orientation; social class and socioeconomic status; and creative identity.

9.1. Ability status. Three participants discussed ability status in relation to their creativity. Erdnase spoke about his diagnosis of cerebral palsy and the physical limitations he has endured. He described an experience where an occupational therapist suggested he learn to shuffle cards to improve his fine motor skills. He shared that this began his journey toward becoming a working magician. He indicated his experiences with magic also had other lasting benefits in his life. He stated:

Once I got a few routines down and I got a few and I started seeing that wow, this reaches people in some measurable way, uh it really... Wow, maybe I can do more than I thought I could because you know growing... Growing up, uh parents really in the beginning uh didn't know what I would be able to do. Um, you know, they knew... They knew that they were gonna' be supportive and ready for anything... Anything like that, but magic was one of those things that really opened up... It

opened up a gateway where ‘Wow, now your penmanship’s improving, your communication with others is improving, and things.

Irish Girl shared about her struggles with ability status when she underwent treatment for a chronic lung disease. She said, “When I couldn’t do anything else...I...I could make things with my hands.” She shared that crocheting was her “lifeline” during that time in her life. Elizabeth also spoke about ability status, such that she sometimes incorporates American Sign Language into her musical theatre performances. Overall, participants discussed how creativity opened doors for them physically, emotionally, and socially, as well as made their art more accessible to others.

9.2. Age. Seven participants discussed age in relation to their creativity. Abby, Beth, and Hope eluded to being creative in childhood. Abby indicated that they sometimes participate in creative activities to connect with a younger part of themselves. Beth noted that she considered herself “an artist” from a very young age. She stated, “I didn’t wake up at 16 and go, ‘Oh, I think, you know, I don’t want to be a secretary. I think I want to draw pictures.’ That didn’t happen.” Instead, she shared that she always felt she was an artist. Hope described experiences listening to the music of an artist that inspired her at a very early age. She discussed how this led to her decision to become a singer/songwriter.

Other participants discussed age as it relates to their degree of professional experience or feelings of success. For example, Paul noted that he views himself as a very seasoned musician due to his many years of experience, whereas Emily and Claude discussed their age in relation to whether they felt successful and accomplished at their respective ages. Claude discussed his experiences with social comparison toward his peers. He said:

Um, as far as being like in your thirties... Yeah, like being in a band in your thirties, not a lot of people are still in bands in their thirties. So, there's always kind of like, 'Is this okay?' Like, 'Is this alright like with everybody?' Like, you know. But I mean, I don't really care that much, I guess. 'Cause I still do it.

Elizabeth discussed age in relation to the content of her writing. She shared that she feared writing novels that older women in her church would be embarrassed to read. When she discussed age, she noted that age may limit her respective audiences. Overall, participants discussed the roles that age plays in their creative pursuits in terms of social comparison, experience, or success.

9.3. Body shape and size. Two participants discussed body shape and size in relation to their creativity. For instance, Elizabeth described how her size influenced the types of roles for which she was cast in musical theatre productions. She noted that when she was larger-bodied, she was afraid to try out for lead roles and spent more time backstage as a stage manager. She said, "I recently lost a lot of weight... I was hiding behind this person that was afraid. Just living in fear all the time. And, so, now, I'm more accepting of myself because I like what I see for the first time in my life." She discussed how weight loss and self-acceptance have given her the confidence to try out for lead roles.

Abby who identifies as transgender discussed body shape and size in relation to being diagnosed with an eating disorder. They noted they withheld food as means of rejecting their physical body. They discussed how participating in creative activities like cooking and creative exercise have helped them feel more connected to themselves. Abby stated:

Um, with like the running and the cooking, and whatnot, um, that also kinda' relates to being transgender but also like disordered eating and body dysmorphia...So, like, focusing on like foods that I actually enjoy and like that are still like healthy and nutritious...So, that was kind of a... I don't know like a transformative like... Like, a little bit of this like transformative experience of like relating to like my food, and body, and like exercise, and like the experience of things...I'm using (creativity) as a way to like stepwise, like one step at a time uncover my true self, my authentic self, and feel secure in that.

Overall, participants discussed their body shape and size as it pertains to their creative engagement, specifically they expressed feeling more confident and connected to themselves through their creativity.

9.4. Education. Fourteen participants discussed education as it pertains to creativity. Many participants within the study discussed how they began studying art or music within childhood. Of those participants, nearly all of them shared how this coincided with their educational experiences. For example, Lee noted that he was exposed to percussion instruments in elementary school, which led to him study music composition in college. Lexi noted that she took art classes from elementary to high school. Beth added that she was often asked to help teachers decorate display cases and bulletin boards in school. Nearly half of all participants went on to study their craft formally at university. For example, Paul, Lee, Tulip, Micha, and Hope all have degrees in music. Emily and Elizabeth studied dance and stage management respectively, while in college. Beth returned to school to study Adobe art.

Overall, participants spoke of education as it relates to their creativity, particularly those that studied their craft formally in university settings.

9.5. Gender. Seven participants discussed gender as it relates to their creativity. Many participants when discussing gender spoke about marginalized identities. For instance, Beth spoke about how her father told her that her paintings “Looked like a girl did (them).” She noted that while he was teasing, her anger at his comments motivated her work harder. She said, “He would make me paint more. If he went by and said, ‘It looked like a girl did that,’ I would— It would make me so mad. I would probably paint four more pictures.” Elizabeth discussed her religious identity as a Christian and how musical theatre performances provided her with opportunities to work with transgender actors. Abby who identifies as transgender spoke about the intersections of gender, growing up in rural America, and creativity. They said:

I like... Grew up in a culture like... It was a very mid-Western standard, you know, American Dream culture. So, like, a little bit of like a rural America culture too. Where the guy had to be... Not necessarily... You know, the man had to be a man. The woman had to be a woman. And, you know, my genitals conflicted with my concept there of like my true identity. Um, my identity clashed with the identity I felt like I had to fulfill and the identity that was placed on me. And, that continued not only just with like gender stereotypes but even things I was interested in, too. I would like, at a younger age, like delve into like theatre and stuff like that... Um, but, my... You know, academia, and science, and math, and stuff, that was always strongly encouraged. You know, by the world I lived in, but also by my dad a lot too. And, so,

I put away that um... Like, you know, desire to be more theatrical and stuff like that. My truer identity away...And, tried to cultivate this identity that wasn't true to me, but to kind of seek-out that approval.

Abby went on to discuss how they pursued more traditionally masculine interests in order to fit in rather than embracing their interest in creative activities. Other participants discussed how for them gender was sometimes reflected in the type of subject matter they pursued. For example, Claude shared that while much of his song writing spans across the gender spectrum, he sometimes chooses topics to sing about that he considers specific to his identity as a man. Beth shared that when she studied traditional Navaho weaving, she learned this craft from Navaho women. She shared that according to the Navaho people she was working with, weaving was largely considered an activity primarily done by women. Overall, participants spoke about gender as it pertains to their creative activities, materials, and inspirations. Participants discussed how gender scripts and stereotypes sometimes influence how they work with others, the types of creative tasks they engage in, and the subject matter about which they create.

9.6. Nationality and region. Twelve participants discussed their nationality or region of the country in which they were raised as it pertains to creativity. Many participants were born and raised in America and discussed how their identities impact their creativity. For instance, Beth and Chuck shared that growing up in rural towns sometimes influences their creative inspirations. Chuck shared that he performs “folk-y” music and photographs “small American towns,” which are congruent to his upbringing. Beth related the size of her visual

art pieces to her experiences growing up on a cattle ranch. She noted that she learned to be tough, big, and unafraid of creating over-sized art.

Beth and Dawn discussed their experiences creating Native American art. Dawn shared that her creative projects are often influenced by her Native American heritage, such that she often creates short stories featuring Native American people, as well as “mandalas and things that connect (her) to nature.” Beth described learning Native American weaving practices in school. She noted that she often incorporates weaving into her visual art pieces.

Other participants described dual identities with their American heritage and those of their immigrant parents’ nationalities. For instance, Chloe shared about writing comedy as an Asian American writer. She said, “I mean, I guess you have to be socially aware or culturally aware...to be able to make comments on these things and package it in way that’s relatable to the audience. So, I mean, I suppose yeah, I guess growing up ethnic you kind of like, I guess, you kind of view American culture and you comment on it as an outsider.” Coco spoke about her identity as both an African American and Nigerian woman and how that influences her creativity. She shared that holding both identities has encouraged her to be creative in order to find her place in the world. Overall, participants discussed how their nationalities and regions of the country impact their creativity, albeit by influencing the types of creativity they engage in or the media they use.

9.7. Parent and partner identities. Five participants discussed their identities as parents or partners as they pertain to their creativity. Alison discussed how childcare sometimes impacts the time she can devote to creative activities and sometimes influences the types of creativity she engages in, such that she will shift her activities to ones where

she can include her kids. Micha discussed the “pedestrian” and sometimes repetitive nature of child rearing and noted that her creative activities are a way for her to incorporate new content into her life. Beth discussed how her creativity permeates her life as a mom. She said:

Because you’re creative in other ways too. You’re not...You’re not a linear thinker. So, when you have scheduling problems or um somebody’s not gonna’ get what they wanted for their birthday ‘cause there’s not enough money, you come up with pretty crazy, creative things to make them kind of forget about it because whatever you’re doing seems pretty phenomenal to an eight year-old, or whatever.

Elizabeth described how her creative writing helped her feel connected to herself after becoming pregnant and moving across the country left her feeling disconnected from her identity.

Participants also discussed their partner identities in relation to their creativity. For instance, Lee, a musician, noted that he feels self-conscious about sharing his music with his partner, as she is also a trained musician. He expressed fear that his music might be evaluated negatively by her. Elizabeth described feeling like the content in her novels may be criticized by the parishioners in her partner’s congregation. She described the process of censoring her early writing on behalf of her partnership. Overall, participants discussed how their relational identities impact their creative engagement.

9.8. Political affiliation. Three participants discussed political affiliations with regard to their creativity. Paul listed his identity as a liberal as one of the facets of his identity that informs his creativity. Micha shared that her values around sustainability and environmental consciousness inform her choice of materials in the garments she constructs. Elizabeth

indicated that as an actress, she sometimes has the opportunity to perform with other stage actors who hold different identities than her own. She shared this also comes up in her creative writing, such that sometimes she writes characters who hold opposing identities. She noted that sometimes this includes her political values. She expressed her desire to work with people of various identities in order to work toward acceptance and growth. Overall, discussed how their political identities impact their creativity, albeit through influencing materials, inspirations, or creative counterparts.

9.9. Race and ethnicity. Twelve participants discussed race and ethnicity in relation to their creativity. For instance, Coco stated:

So, I am African American and Nigerian. Um, but in both of those cultures, food is... Is a big part um of life. 'Cause I really...It started with me trying to find ways to like incorporate Nigerian foods into like my...The foods that I wanted to eat. Like, combining like traditional Nigerian dishes with things you wouldn't normally um eat those things with, which, you know, really annoyed my dad...I think... Like, my identity as a creative person, I... I think has a lot to do with like my mixed cultural background. Um, like, just being in like the crosshairs of being like Nigerian and being African American has been... And, continues to be such like a crazy experience of just like trying to um find where I fit in and trying to find my place. Um, and, though, I think that it's almost like forced me to be creative. Like, to...Creative in the way that like I think about myself and in the way I um...Uh, conceptualize like my own identity.

Dawn added that her Native American heritage heavily influences her creativity. She described feeling connected to her ancestors by infusing Native American themes into her writing and painting.

Other participants described their relationships with race and creativity from an outgroup perspective. For example, Chloe described her Asian American identity and shared that she often tries to avoid writing jokes about race sharing that she considers that to be “a faux pas” in the world of standup comedy. Despite her being born in the United States, Chloe described feeling like she was part of the outgroup, she said, “I guess growing up ethnic, you kind of like, I guess... You kind of view American culture and you comment on it as an outsider.” Sai shared about her experiences running a fan group for Korean Pop music, while she herself does not identify as Asian. She noted that her interests and love for learning about cultures encourages her to continue pursuing creative activities. Beth described being very inspired by Native American art after spending time doing portraits on a reservation. However, she shared that she would be uncomfortable displaying those pieces in an art show, given that she identifies as a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) woman. Overall, participants spoke about race from either ingroup or outgroup perspectives with regard to race, such that they either felt their race influenced their creative pursuits or they spoke about other races and cultural groups with which they did not identify and how that influenced their creative activities.

9.10. Religion and spirituality. Eight participants discussed religion and spirituality as it pertains to their creativity. For example, Micha described her experiences growing up in a Fundamentalist Christian household and how that influences her creativity. She said, “I was

like religious homeschooled and so (music) was kind of the only thing that I could go to college for and I was like, ‘Well, I can audition and get scholarships and things.’ So, that’s what I did. I went and I got a bachelor’s in classical piano.” Later, she shared about how her religious identity sometimes intersects with her creative pursuits making custom corsets.

Regarding sharing her work with others in her religious circles, she said:

And, I’m trying to be braver around those people, but yeah for me that’s where the the um...the conditioning...the sort of like self-selecting like, ‘Well, I really want you to like me and I know you’re not going to like this part of me. So, I’m not going to talk about it around you.’ Those are the only people who I still have those walls around. Like, in the rest of society I feel that I’m very free to just talk about what I like and what I do and if they don’t like me, then that’s okay.

Lee and Tulip added that they too began playing music for others while playing in the church band. Lee noted that later he broke away from those activities, as he wanted to compose his own music. Similarly, Hope discussed how she interweaves her identity as a Christian into her music.

Irish Girl and Elizabeth described how their creative activities are influenced by the religious identities of others. For example, Irish Girl shared that her Celtic background and the celebration of Samhain influences her love for Día de los Muertos celebrations. She indicated that she enjoys creating art with Día de los Muertos themes, despite not having a Mexican heritage. Elizabeth shared that as a musical theatre performer, she is sometimes impacted by other members of her acting company who do not identify as Christian, as she identifies. She noted that by working with individuals who hold different beliefs than her

own, she is encouraged to be more accepting of herself and others. Overall, participants discussed how their religious identities and the religious identities of others impact their creativity.

9.11. Sexuality and sexual orientation. Five participants discussed sexuality and sexual orientation with regard to their creativity. While sexual orientation came up within the study as participants self-identified about their sexual orientations and sexualities, no participants discussed ways that those identities influenced their creativity in any specific way. For instance, Paul and Chloe identified as gay and both participants denied having a connection between their sexual orientations as gay people and their creative pursuits. Similarly, Emily and Sai both identified as heterosexual and declined any connections between their sexuality and their creativity. Elizabeth discussed her experiences working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) people within her musical theatre company. She described how working with those individuals sometimes caused “conflict with (her) own home” as her husband is a former Baptist minister. She described her experiences working with queer people as “eye-opening” and “wonderful.” Overall, participants discussed sexuality and sexual orientation as they relate to creativity.

9.12. Social class and socioeconomic status. Six participants discussed social class and socioeconomic status as it pertains to their creativity. Many participants described needing to work to sustain their creative activities. For example, Erdnase described his income earned as a magician as “a side hustle,” noting that he earns the majority of his income as a community college professor. He shared that his attitude toward magic would be

different if he depended on it financially. Chuck added, “Over time, I’d probably have a lot more money if I didn’t seek creative uh endeavors as much as I do. Uh...Um, I mean, that’s— It’s...Yeah, it’s formed so much of what I think about um and I’ve never gotten really good at um integrating it into a professional life.” Claude shared that his creative pursuits are not incentivized by monetary gains, but rather ones that offer him emotional fulfillment.

Beth discussed selling art to earn an income. She posited that artists who depend on selling their works for income can sometimes appear “desperate,” such that they might need to sell their works in order to survive, which can also influence the type of art created. She shared that she has prefers to work other jobs to support her creative activities, noting that she’s worked in art galleries, on a cattle ranch, and as a maid to maintain her lifestyle. She said, “You’re going on with a paycheck. Your bills are paid. You don’t have to stress. So, you can— Your art remains more pure. It’s not— It’s not freaked out.”

Emily shared about her social class privilege and how this influences the types of art to which is exposed and creates. She said:

But, like, growing up going to the ballet in the like classic European style, that kind of art, and I guess, I’ve probably been extraordinarily privileged to be able to go to the art museums, and the libraries, and museums constantly and regularly to the point where I can say that creativity is innate in my life. Um, there are probably a lot of folks who can’t say that and that they did discovered it and it did save their lives because they didn’t have the chance to experience it so young.

Overall, participants shared about how the influence of social class and socioeconomic status influences the types of creativity to which they are exposed and how their relationships with money allows them or disallows them to continuing pursuing creative activities.

9.13. Creative identity. All twenty participants discussed their creative identities as they pertain to their creative activities. The explanation of creative identity was one that proved to be very complex. For instance, nearly all participants identified as “creative people.” Additionally, more than half of all participants shared that creativity is simply who they are, such that they would have difficulty imagining their lives without participation in creative activities. Only two participants within the study denied feeling like they were creative. Chloe shared that she does not define herself as outwardly creative because she feels that identity will not bring her external value, like other identities including education may yield financial opportunities. She indicated that if she were to profit off her creative activities, she might identify outwardly as creative. Alison shared that she does not feel she is as creative as other people in her life. Therefore, she does not claim creativity as a personal identity.

Other participants discussed the notion that some people are unlikely to claim the identity as a creative person but indicated that there a many ways to be creative. Claude said:

Um, I just think that a lot of people who are creative don't necessarily think of themselves as creative. You know? Like, um people...I think human beings are kind of just creative, in general. You know? Like, think of all of the things that we have in this building we're in and all of that was designed by a guy who's super creative and all of that. And, everybody appreciates, you know, um a good-

looking building, or like a nice-looking car, or something like that. Lots of people are creative but they don't like necessarily to cultivate it in themselves as much.

When discussing creative identity, other participants discussed ways they put their own individual stamp on their artistic works. Others discussed significant experiences they have had while being creative. Many participants discussed the benefits they have noticed as a result of their creative identities including opening their hearts to new experiences, boosting their confidence, and having something unique and interesting about themselves. Emily, Coco, and Erdnase described feeling validated by others through their creative activities. Overall, participants discussed their identities as creative people or not creative people, how they defined the creative identity, what that identity has meant to them, and how that identity has influenced their work.

Theme 10: Patterns of Identity Impact

This theme refers to the ways that identity impacted participants' creativity. All participants discussed ways that their creative activities and expression were impacted by various cultural identities. Four codes emerged that were included in this theme: affirming and disaffirming identities; intersecting and overlapping identities; no connection, "I don't think about it," and "I don't know," and ties between creative identity and creative products with others.

10.1. Affirming and disaffirming identities. Eight participants discussed how their creative activities affirm or disaffirm their cultural identities. For example, Paul, Emily, and Erdnase described feeling like their creative and cultural identities are affirmed when people

appreciate their creative projects. Paul, Dawn, Abby, and Emily shared that they experience identity affirmation as they are creating or re-experiencing their finished works. Paul said:

I feel...the results of my creativity every day, because I've lived in environments that I have personally created when I was restoring historic homes. The way I took something that was derelict and created uh... An environment that was beautiful and was of my own conception filled with furniture of my own conception, when I can look at a before picture and then re-live the after, every day that I open that door to my home space, I'm gratified when I walk in.

Later he said, "By being in my environment and hearing music (he has created), I think that is a humbling experience for one and it also confirms that what I'm doing is the right thing."

Erdnase and Hope shared they feel affirmed when they create something which conveys positive messages to others.

Other participants described situations in which they feel their creativity disaffirms their identities. For instance, Hope and Coco shared that when their creative activities do not go as planned or do not convey the message or emotion they intend, they feel poorly. Abby and Emily added they feel their identities are disaffirmed when they have bad experiences with feeling overworked or burdened in their creative spaces. For example, Emily said:

I didn't really have a day off for like 20 days in between baking...at the bakery and the...um, the show. And, so, it got to a point where it was like, 'I don't feel like myself anymore. I haven't cooked. I haven't cleaned. I haven't done the fun stuff. Um, so, it's...it's important. And, I often forget that. Like, I didn't realize it until I had a day off to be like, 'Oh, like cooking, and dancing, and just enjoying life, and

making something beautiful is important and without that I just...I shrink up and I pull back from my friends and I'm just...like, 'I'm not here with you.' And, then, I remember and it's like, 'Oh, let me go...let me just do something real quick. I'll be back,' and then when I get back, I'm myself again.

Abby shared about experiences when their interest in pursuing creative activities was punished by their parents, due to gender stereotypes. They shared this made them feel disconnected to both their creative identity and their gender identity. Overall, participants described times when they feel their creative activities either affirm or disaffirm their creative and cultural identities.

10.2. Intersecting and overlapping identities. Fifteen participants discussed the intersecting and overlapping nature of their identities as they pertain to creativity. Participants noted that they have both intersecting cultural identities and creative identities. For example, Micha described being a parent, a seamstress, and someone reared within the Fundamentalist Christian church. Erdnase shared about his being a community college professor, a magician, and someone who identifies as having a physical disability. Regarding her intersecting identities, Tulip said, "I'm a businessperson, I'm a musician, I'm a stained-glass artist, I love baking, I, um...I do um...Wild edible plant scavenging and, um, canning. I do gardening. It...It all...It's all creative. So, I don't separate anything. It's just all me." Many participants argued that it is difficult to separate their intersecting and overlapping identities, especially with regard to their creative identities. They reasoned that their creative identities were simply additional facets of themselves not unlike other cultural identities.

Some participants spoke to conflicts that occurred between their various identities. For example, Abby spoke about their struggles with their transgender identity and how that overlapped with both creative activities and body shape and size. Abby discussed how they are working to incorporate creativity in the form of healthy exercise and cooking to overcome their previous attempts to reject their body because of both Anorexia and their gender identity. Micha and Elizabeth both spoke about the content of their creative projects, custom corset making and writing romance novels respectively, and how they struggled initially with their religious identities and fears of rejection by peers within their communities. Ultimately, all participants who disclosed such identity conflicts shared that their creative activities afforded them a space to process feelings and work through difficult emotions. Overall, participants discussed ways that their various identities overlap and intersect, which sometimes caused internal struggles creating discomfort, but creativity often served as an outlet to process those feelings.

10.3. No connection, “I don’t think about it,” and “I don’t know.” When asked how their personal cultural identities impact their creativity, if at all, seven participants shared that they either found no connection, had never thought of that relationship, or said they were unsure. For example, Paul stated, “I don’t know that I think of them actually influencing my creativity.” Of these participants, one person indicated that they felt there was no connection between their cultural identities and their creative activities, five participants discussed how they had never explored those intersections, and two participants indicated they did not know if their creative activities and cultural identities were connected to one another. Thus, this indicated that not everyone felt their creative endeavors and cultural

identities were overlapping, integral parts of themselves, rather some participants had not yet explored those connections and one participant felt there was no connection.

10.4. Ties between creative and cultural identities. Nineteen participants discussed connections between their creative identities and their personal cultural identities. Upon discussing connections between cultural and creative identities, nearly all participants indicated some connection between the two facets. This finding was curious, given some individuals' unawareness of the relationship between creative activities and cultural identities. However, findings showed that even participants who outwardly stated they were unsure about the connections between creativity and cultural identity ultimately alluded to them being related. For instance, Paul who stated that he was unsure how his cultural identities influenced his creativity, described how his identity as a musician is inherent in his life. This suggests that despite participants' overall awareness of ties between creative and cultural identities, participants seemed to profoundly speak about the two identities as if they were related. For instance, Chuck provided an example of how his creative and cultural identities intersect. He said:

My identity...Um, Well, quite a bit, I mean, I think that, you know, um, with music and like bands that I play in, like me as an...Identified as, you know, an American and like a country-person, or a rural person has affected the music that I intake and I do identify as. Um...I mean, I guess it's kind of everything. I think like what I take pictures of are a lot of um small, American towns. I think having not had a lot of money has a big effect um on the—the music that I like usually like to play and

stuff like that. Folk-y music and uh...pretty dominated by um what it means to be American, I guess.

In his example, Chuck described his nationality and regional identities, and his relationship to social class. He discussed how those cultural identities influence the types of creativity he engages with regularly. Emily and Micha discussed social class and political affiliations and how those influences dictated their access to materials and exposure to various forms of artistic expression. Coco, Dawn, and Alison described ways they incorporate influences from their racial identities into their creative works through cooking, creative writing, and dancing. Overall, participants discussed ways that they feel their personal cultural identities influence their creativity, by exposing them to various arts, influencing media used in creative projects, and shaping subject matter.

Theme 11: Sharing Creative Identity and Creative Products with Others

This theme refers to the ways in which participants share their creative identities and products with others. All participants discussed ways they share, things that deter them from sharing, and with whom they share their creative ideas and works. Six codes emerged that were included in this theme: contribution; entertaining others; group of enthusiasts; humanity, connection, and shared understanding; stigma and stereotypes of creative people and identities; and with whom things are shared.

11.1. Contribution. Eleven participants described their creative activities as a way to contribute to others. Participants indicated that a large reason they share their creative ideas and works with others is to provide a contribution. Subthemes that emerged within this code were: sharing, hospitality, collaboration, giving, charity, providing hope, and leaving a

legacy. For example, Irish Girl said, “I make hats for homeless people. And, so I will just get a bag and just start crocheting and putting colors together and... And, I’ve donated pieces to the uh No-Tie Dinner that benefits AIDS patients.” Similarly, Emily and Coco discussed how they are more motivated to create for others than for themselves. Micha and Tulip discussed leaving a legacy for themselves by creating art that can be passed down through generations. Hope discussed the notion of helping others navigate difficult times through her music. Overall, participants described various ways they hope to contribute to society by sharing their work.

11.2. Entertaining others. Nine participants discussed how they use their creative activities to entertain others. For example, when speaking about his magic shows, Erdnase said:

For a corporate audience, it might be, ‘Say the magic words: Ford Motor Company,’ and your signed card comes back to the top, or whatever it is. So, a lot of times, uh a lot of times after that initial interaction, I’m not selling myself anymore. I’m selling the company. Or...Or, you know, I’m making uh...Or I’m making the birthday girl the star or whatever it is. So, it’s not about me anymore. It’s about creating a moment that those folks will never forget.

Other participants who spoke of sharing their work for the purposes of entertainment included musicians, visual artists, and actors. Overall, participants described sharing their creative works to provide entertainment and content for others enjoyment.

11.3. Group of enthusiasts. Ten participants shared that a benefit of their creative activities is sharing in community with other creative people. The concept of building

community and belonging proved beneficial for many participants. For example, Claude said:

Like, I love talking about it with people who are creative also and stuff like that, you know? Yeah, well, a lot of times with like... When you're talking to other creative people, it's like you don't even necessarily talk about (your identity as a creative person). You talk about like the struggles to keep doing that. You know? Like, you're like, 'Oh, well, I have to do this, you know, like so that I can do what I like,' you know? Or this, or that, or whatever. Or, 'We had to like drive all the way to the city to play for like, you know, like no money,' and all that kind of stuff. So, you talk about that kind of stuff too. Like, kind of the hardships that go along with it or like the good things too.

Chuck, Lee, and Paul discussed the collaboration that occurs between musicians as they are composing and performing music. Visual artists like Irish Girl and Beth shared that they have formed communities with other artists through art shows. Irish Girl discussed trading pieces with fellow artists as a sign of support for one another. Emily and Erdnase discussed communities of fellow stage performers they have garnered. Overall, participants discussed the benefit of community and camaraderie that is gleaned by sharing ones' creative passions with others.

11.4. Humanity, connection, and shared understanding. Seventeen participants described a benefit of their creativity as being the shared understanding, connection, and experience of shared humanity gained from sharing creative works with others. Unlike participants who share their creative works to gain community with one another, an adjacent

group of participants discussed the benefit of shared connection and understanding gained by sharing their work. Participants described deep connections they have made with others by allowing their art to communicate for them, which sometimes led to a shared experience.

For instance, Paul said, “Um...the way I can convey to people uh...that we are all united in some way no matter what our disparate walks may be, as we come together in a single place at a single time to create music for the purpose that we’re...we’re assembled for.” Irish Girl added that she has felt connected to other artists when they have created work that has “spoken” to her. She noted that others have felt similarly connected to her art. For example, she described the experience of bringing her pieces to several shows without selling them, until one day someone feels compelled to purchase the piece. She indicated that in those moments, she has experienced a shared understanding that was communicated through her art. Her art spoke to someone else. Hope shared that even when she plays her music for her grandmother who is non-English speaking, she hopes that the emotions will be conveyed through her art rendering a shared understanding or connection. Overall, participants discussed various ways they achieve greater connections to others, shared humanity, and understanding through their work.

11.5. Stigma and stereotypes of creative people and identities. All participants discussed the stigmas and stereotypes surrounding creative people and identities, as they pertain to sharing ones’ personal creativity with others. Many participants described stereotypes of creative people. For example, Emily stated:

A lot of people tend to clump (creative people) together, as like, ‘Oh, all creative people are the same,’ like...the like stereotype of the middle school art teacher...That image can come to your head of the like hippie, crazy, who knows?

Emily highlighted words like “hippie,” “crazy,” and “art teacher,” while other participants used words like “broke,” less accomplished, overly emotional, and “divinely blessed.” These findings suggest that across interviews, participants were aware of the common stereotypes of creative people. Other participants discussed stereotypes of what activities constitute as creative, such as being artistic or crafty, as well as creative activities always being fun or labeled as hobbies. Despite these known stereotypes of creative people and activities, some participants noted that you can bring creativity into any activity.

When discussing whether participants identified as creative, some participants indicated they felt creative, but not as creative as others. The notion of “I’m not as creative as them” seemed to span across participants. For instance, when asked if he identified as creative, Claude said, “Yeah, I guess so. For sure, um, I know people who are like 10,000 times more creative than me but uh I would definitely...I guess, I would have to put myself in that column.” Others noted that despite some peoples’ deflection of the creative identity, there are many ways to be creative and more people could claim creativity as part of themselves. Tulip added that it took her a long time to call herself an artist. She described claiming that identity as “a huge stumbling block” for herself and many others.

11.6. When and with whom things are shared. Sixteen participants discussed those with whom creative works and ideas are shared. Seven participants indicated they do not share many aspects of their work at all. Six participants indicated that their sharing would

depend on the project itself. For instance, Lexi said, “Um, I guess, it depends on the depth of the work but most of the time I like to show people what I’ve done. When it came to sharing their work, half of all participants noted they only share their creative works with certain people. For example, Emily said:

Um, I have...encountered many different types of people and I think being able to be read the person and what they’re willing to talk about...It’s easier to share a part of your creative self, if they’re going to be able to share it back with you.

Lee added, “Um, it really depends on the person too. If I’m like, trusting of that person like I can just...you know, like trust them right away, then I’m open to it.” Finally, two people reported that while they would be initially hesitant to share, ultimately, they would share their creative projects with others. Overall, participants discussed with whom they share their creative works and under what circumstances.

Theoretical Coding/Conceptual Map

The final step in the grounded theory process is demonstrating the conceptual relationships between the themes which emerged in selective coding (Chun Tie et al., 2019; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Giske & Artinian, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Hernandez, 2009). Based on the researcher’s analysis and grounded in the descriptions of these processes by the participants themselves, Figure 1 provides a visual overview of these relationships.

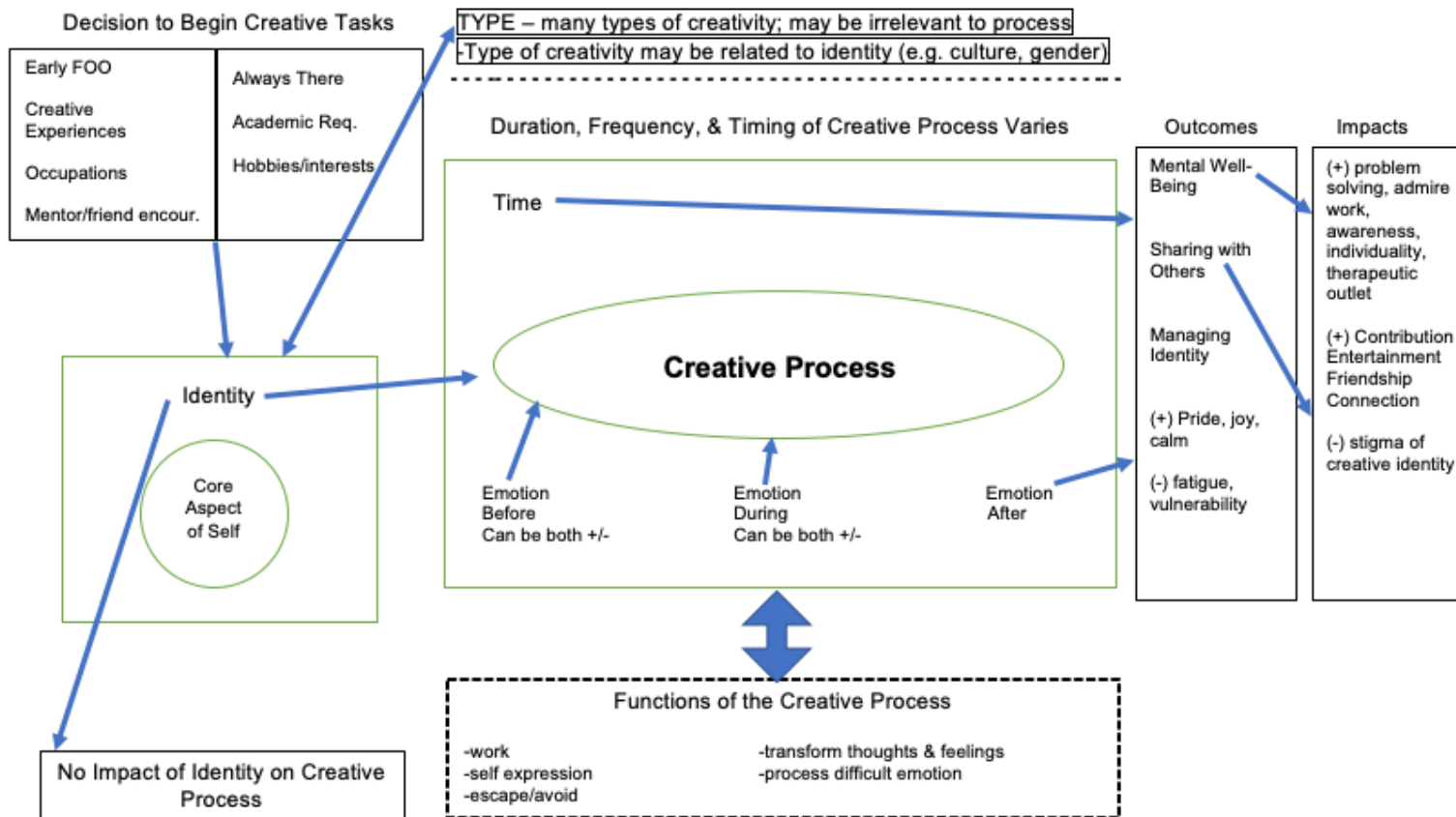


Figure 1. Conceptual Map.

Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the concepts found within this study. The conceptual map features participants' decisions to begin their creative tasks, including early family of origin influences; creative experiences; occupations; mentor and friend encouragement; creativity that has always been there; academic requirements; and hobbies and interests. Participants' decisions to begin creative tasks related to their identities, therefore a relationship is shown between the two constructs. Identity relates to core aspects of participants' selves. However, individuals' identities were not always directly tied to their creative processes. Therefore, identity has two arrows shown within the graphic representing those participants' whose identities were related to their creative processes and others whose identities had no impact on their creativity. Types of creativity are outlined at the top of the map, demonstrating a bidirectional relationship between type of creativity and identity, as type of creativity may be related to identity (e.g., culture, gender) but also may be irrelevant to the creative process. Duration, frequency, and timing of the creative process varied among participants and was shown this way in the map. Time spent on creative activities was shown to impact mental well-being. Therefore, an arrow demonstrates this relationship.

Emotion before and during creative activities was found to be either positive or negative and led to the creative process. The positive emotions that tended to follow creative activities were typically pride, joy, and calm, whereas some of the negative emotions participants' experienced were fatigue and vulnerability. Some of the functions of the creative process represented within the map were: work; self-expression; escapism/avoidance; transforming thoughts and feelings; and processing difficult emotion. A bidirectional relationship was shown between functions of the creative process and the

creative process, which represented their mutual impact on one another. Outcomes of the creative process represented in the conceptual map were improved mental well-being, sharing with others, and managing identity. Some listed benefits of mental well-being were increased problem-solving abilities, admiration of work, increased awareness, individuality, and having a therapeutic outlet. Sharing with others benefitted participants by allowing them to contribute to society through their work, entertaining others, fostering friendships, and forming connections with others. One negative outcome of sharing with others was the need to overcome the stigma of the creative identity.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The present study examined everyday creativity and its relationship to mental well-being, emotion, and identity. The researcher's analysis generated 11 themes: Defining Creativity; Types of Creativity Discussed; Decision to Begin Creative Activities; Functions of Creativity; Routine for Creative Activities; Emotions Associated with Everyday Creativity; Duration, Frequency, and Timing of Creativity; Mental Well-Being; Identities That Impact Creativity; Patterns of Identity Impact; and Sharing Creative Identity and Creative Products with Others. Themes were composed of many codes representing the patterns of behavior, thoughts, and emotions of participants who engaged in everyday creativity at least one time per week.

Theme 1, Defining Creativity, represented participants' efforts to define creativity. Participants discussed the various ways they describe creativity, as well its impact on their lives. Some participants highlighted creativity's relationship with innovation and growth, whereas others focused on the universal nature of creativity spanning across time and culture. Participants also discussed the complexity and individuality of creative endeavors. Some participants expressed difficulties with explaining how creative activities are beneficial, while other participants focused on the notion that one can be creative doing the most mundane of activities. Participants also discussed the fundamental role that creativity plays in

their lives. Many participants shared that they could not imagine a world in which they did not engage in creative tasks. Some suggested that their creative projects are not something they do, but rather that creativity is something they are, suggesting it is an inherent part within individuals' personalities. Additionally, participants discussed creativity's relationship with "out-of-the-box" thinking. Participants likened creative thinking with originality, uniqueness, innovation, and "going off script."

Theme 2: Types of Creativity Discussed, reflected the various types of creativity that participants within the study described as part of their typical engagement. Participants discussed various types of stage performance including acting, comedy, and magic. They highlighted various nuances of stage performance including scripting material, rehearsal, and live performance. Participants also discussed art, including their experiences taking formal art classes, teaching arts and crafts to others, and how art is largely defined. Participants also discussed cooking and baking. Some participants described cooking as it pertains to their individual family cultures or with regard to their other identities. Other participants discussed their affinity for collaging, crafting, and jewelry making, while some described experiences with drawing, coloring, and sketching. Participants also shared about their relationships with creative thinking and planning as a form of everyday creativity. Others preferred to participate in everyday creativity through creative writing tasks. Participants who chose to write creatively spoke about writing novels, personal blogs or journals, comic books, and poetry. Some participants shared their experiences with crocheting, cross-stitching, and weaving, whereas other participants discussed dancing, creative movement, and exercise. A few participants disclosed that they create visual art, stained-glass, or fused glass art. Other

participants indicated they participate in creative activities related to graphic design, photography, and videography. Some individuals shared about their participation in lighting and stage management projects. More than half of all participants described music and singing as part of their everyday creativity. Many participants highlighted their proficiencies in playing or composing music, writing lyrics, as well as their membership in bands that perform live music. Some participants reported that they regularly paint or watercolor, and one participant reported engagement in sewing and garment construction. Overall, participants described their participation in various creative activities, expanding on types of creative tasks in which they typically engage.

Theme 3, Decision to Begin Creative Activities, represents participants' reasons for beginning their creative projects. Many participants shared that they began engaging in creative activities while in school. For instance, some participants discussed their experiences playing instruments, taking art classes, or participating in school theatre groups. Participants also discussed creativity as it was passed down through their families. More than half of all participants reported having family members who participate in creative tasks as well. This finding suggests that being raised in a creative household may influence some individuals' decisions to begin creative tasks. Participants also discussed their hobbies and interests, as they pertain to their creative activities. Many people shared that their interests often inspire their creations or leads them to certain types of activities altogether. Some participants shared that they didn't choose their creative tasks, but rather there was a spiritual relationship between themselves and their activities, which drew them together. Participants described fated relationships bringing creatives and their works together. Other participants discussed

innate relationships with their creativity, such that they have “always been creative.” Half of all participants described their creative engagement as something they have always done. Some participants also disclosed that they were inspired to create by friends and mentors, while others were simply drawn to new experiences. More than half of all participants described earning some income from their creativity, albeit from selling their art, performing, or working on stage productions. Overall, within this theme, participants spoke to the reasons they began participating in creative activities.

Theme 4, Functions of Creativity, represents the purpose of peoples’ creativity and how their activities serve them. Participants discussed the various undertakings that go into the administration of their creative jobs and the preparations they must complete to carry out their creative tasks. Some of these activities include collaborating with other artists, obtaining materials, and putting in many hours of work to gain experience. Participants also discussed the ability to use creativity as means of escapism. Participants described the desire to avoid hardships or difficulties with identity by distracting themselves with projects. Many participants also discussed practice and performance as functions of everyday creativity. They described the need to rehearse their crafts and perform them, as a part of the creative process. Other participants discussed the process of translating their creative ideas into products as a function of creativity. Participants described a process where creative activities serve as a vehicle of expression from which they take thoughts and emotions and manifest them into creative works. Overall, participants within this theme described the functions of their creative activities and the ways that those activities serve them.

Theme 5, Routine for Creative Activities, represents the routines and rituals that people carry out before, during, and after creative activities. Participants discussed the typical things they do prior to creative activities, such as gathering materials, noting their inspirations, emotional and mental preparations, as well as ways scheduling, planning, and visualizing their projects. Participants also described their motivations and inspirations to create. Participants shared about their experiences during the creative process where they experiment with new ideas, experience flow, and create comfortable spaces in which to create. Participants described their routines after creative tasks are complete. Individuals expanded on their emotional responses to completing their works and their routines around sharing them, as well as their patterns of behavior around completing projects. Overall, within this theme, participants discussed their routines, rituals, and experiences before, during, and after creative activities.

Theme 6, Emotions Associated with Everyday Creativity, represents the emotions that participants described in relation to their creativity. Participants began by discussing the various roles that emotion plays in the creative process. For instance, participants noted that emotion inspires creativity, is reflected in creative works, and is fostered during the creative process itself. Participants also discussed various emotions they experience during their creative activities. Participants described feelings of accomplishment, success, and pride, especially with regard to completing creative tasks. Participants described feelings of anxiety, stress, and worry during the creative process. While most individuals noted they use their creative engagement as a way to decompress from daily life stressors, a few participants reported feeling anxious as a result of their creative activities. Participants discussed

boredom, with nearly half of all participants describing boredom as a catalyst for creative endeavors. Participants reported experiencing calming, soothing, and meditative feelings as a result of their creative participation. Many participants reported feelings of comfort and confidence gleaned by their creative activities. Nearly all participants noted they experience stimulation, energy, or excitement as a result of their creative activities. Participants also discussed fatigue in conjunction with their creative tasks, especially with regard to forced productivity, laborious work, and the negative impact fatigue has on efficiency. Participants described feelings of humility as it pertains to sharing creative works. Nearly all participants reported feelings of joy, happiness, and positivity as a result of their creative engagement. Some participants discussed feelings of sadness and fear in conjunction with their creative activities. However, no participants described their creative participation negatively, rather most participants noted a tendency to turn toward their creative projects during difficult times. Finally, participants disclosed feelings of vulnerability during the creative process, especially when sharing about creative works or ideas.

Theme 7, Duration, Frequency, and Timing of Creativity, represents the duration, frequency and timing of participants' creative activities. Participants discussed when they began their creative activities and how long they have been engaging in them. Individuals described beginning creative tasks during various life stages. They also shared about the frequency of their creative activities, which suggested that most participants in the study participate in creative tasks more than one time per week, if not daily. Participants described the negative impact of forced productivity and expectation on creative output. Most participants indicated they experience a decline in joy when they begin creating for others,

rather than for enjoyment. Lastly, participants described the times when they were most and least creative. Overall, participants noted they need to feel energized and enthusiastic about their creative projects in order to be productive. Individuals seemed to have different times of peak creativity. However, most people preferred to create at night, when they were feeling happy, energized, and unburdened by other people or tasks.

Theme 8, Mental Well-Being, represents the positive impact that creativity has on individuals' mental well-being. Participants discussed the various benefits they gain from their creative activities. Participants described active problem solving as a benefit of creativity, such that they were able to stimulate themselves by resolving problems and gaining resilience by overcoming creative failures. Participants discussed admiration of their creative works as a benefit of creativity, such that they can display their works and share them with others. Participants reported gaining increased awareness and perspective as a result of creative activities, such that they were exposed to new cultures, ways of thinking, experiences, and friendships through their creative engagement. Participants described self-expression as a benefit of creativity, such that they were able to utilize artistic means to process and express difficult emotions. Participants also discussed the freedom that comes with creative engagement, such that they can follow their own paths, create anything, and be their authentic selves rather than subscribing to conventionality. Participants reported that through their creative tasks they can create things that are all theirs, fostering a sense of personal time where individuals can reconnect with themselves. All participants reported using their creative activities as a therapeutic outlet to process difficult emotions, regulate feelings, and decompress from daily life stressors. Finally, participants discussed the positive

impact creativity has had on their lives, including affirming individuals' identities, fostering growth and relationships, and providing people a space to process emotions.

Theme 9, Identities That Impact Creativity, represents the identities participants mentioned when discussing their creativity. For instance, participants discussed ability status as it pertains to creativity. Two participants described how creativity served as a means to help them cope physically and emotionally with health conditions impacting their ability. Participants also discussed age and the role that it plays in their creative activities, especially with regard to social comparison, experience, and perceived success. Participants described body shape and size and its relationship to creativity. For example, participants explained how their feelings about their bodies impact their comfort during live stage performances. Participants discussed educational identities, as they pertain to creativity. For instance, individuals spoke about their educational experiences, particularly those who studied their crafts formally at universities. Participants examined gender as it relates to their creative engagements, with regard to gender stereotypes about creative works, subject matter, or tasks. Participants spoke about how their nationalities and regional identities impact their creativity, by influencing their exposure to certain types of media or inspirations. Participants examined their identities as parents or partners and discussed how those relationships impact their creative endeavors. Participants deliberated about race and ethnicity and how those identities influence their creativity both positively and negatively. Participants also discussed in-group and out-group perspectives on race and ethnicity. Participants examined religion and spirituality and how those identities impact their creativity, albeit during the creative process or while sharing their creative works. Participants discussed sexuality and sexual

orientation as they relate to creativity, especially with regard to collaborating with artists holding different identities than their own. Participants spoke about social class and socioeconomic status as it pertains to their creativity. Participants shared about how their relationship with money and resources exposed them to various art forms and either allows or disallows them to continue pursuing creative activities by affording them access to materials and opportunities. Finally, participants discussed their identities as creative people or not creative people, how they defined the creative identity, the impact of holding that identity, and how the creative identity has affected their work.

Theme 10, Patterns of Identity Impact, represents the ways that participants' identities impact their creative works. Participants discussed how their creative activities have either affirmed or disaffirmed their creative and cultural identities. Participants examined their intersecting and overlapping identities and discussed how these intersections impact their creativity. Some participants described a lack of connection between their personal cultural identities and their creative activities, whereas other participants disclosed close ties between their cultural identities and creative activities. Overall, this theme spoke to the various ways that individuals' identities influence their creative works, albeit through overlapping and intersecting identities, an overt relationship between creativity and identity, or a less obvious relationship.

Theme 11, Sharing Creative Identity and Creative Products with Others, reflected participants' experiences sharing their creative works with others and their reasons for disclosing. Participants examined how sharing their creative works contributed to society as a whole by giving to charity, guiding others through shared experiences, and leaving a legacy.

Some participants described sharing their creative works to entertain others. Participants who hoped to entertain, spoke about doing so through visual art, acting, and music, among other things. Other participants described sharing their work as a means of fellowship with groups of enthusiasts. Some participants described sharing about their creative projects to obtain a greater connection to humanity, whereas other participants discussed ways their art could communicate by conveying messages or emotions. Participants also examined common stigma and stereotypes of creative people and identities. Lastly, participants discussed when and with whom they share their work.

Integration with Previous Research

Mental Well-Being

As Pearce (2017) so aptly noted, creativity impacts mental well-being in many ways. Creativity has been found to increase reflection, engender thought, and improve emotion regulation (Gladding, 2008). Recent studies have also determined that neural networks that predict facets of intelligence overlap with areas within brain networks that predict creative ability (Frith et al., 2020). Researchers found that intelligence and creative thinking may be closely related in that they likely rely on similar neurological systems (Frith et al., 2020). Creativity has also been linked to visuospatial intelligence and inhibitory control (Lloyd-Cox, Christensen, Silvia, & Beaty, 2020). For example, Lloyd-Cox et al. (2020) found that fixation based on visual primes impaired performance on creative tasks. Therefore, high visuospatial intelligence may increase creative thinking, due to increased inhibitory control (Lloyd-Cox et al., 2020).

Moreover, creative activities foster emotional responses consistent with fulfilling interpersonal relationships, such as love, appreciation, and acceptance, and are linked with positive ratings of mental well-being (Sealy, 2012; Stebbins, 2018). Specifically, everyday creativity is comprised of individual expressions of creativity (Sawyer, 2006) comprised of acts of self-care, leisure activities, or hobbies. Participation in such activities has been shown to help individuals maintain a positive mental well-being (Habib & Durrani, 2015; Stebbins, 2018), promote healing (Sealy, 2012), and self-expression, as well as reduce stress and negative emotion (Parkinson et al., 1996; Reynolds, 2003, 2004; Reynolds et al., 2008; Teti et al., 2017).

Previous data are consistent with findings in Theme 8 of this study, which found that creative engagement positively impacted the mental well-being of participants. Granello (2013) postulated that positive mental well-being is associated with elevated mood, active cognition, fulfilling interpersonal relationships, effective emotion regulation, and a general lack of distress. Participants within this study reported increased joy as a result of their creative activities. According to researchers, positive moods frequently improve cognitive flexibility (Vosburg, 1998) and enhance problem solving abilities (Ashby et al., 1999). Furthermore, creative problem solving has been associated with more effective emotion regulation (Gladding, 2008; Fink et al., 2017). Nearly all participants within the current study reported increased problem-solving skills, joy, and emotion regulation, as a result of their creative activities, which is consistent with findings from previous research.

Participants within the current study also discussed the benefits of group membership as a result of their creative activities. Participants described both the shared understanding

and connection they gleaned from sharing their work with others, and also the overall sense of community they experience when gathering with other creatives. Within Theme 8 of this study, participants described how their creative activities afforded them increased access to friendships and new experiences. These findings are consistent with previous research which has found that group participation in creative activities fosters a sense of belonging and social support, increases positive emotions, decreases negative emotions, and provides individuals a space to process feelings (Dingle et al., 2017; Griffiths, 2005; Teti et al., 2017).

Finally, participants within the current study reported both increased awareness and personal stimulation as a result of their creative engagement. These findings are consistent with previous research, which suggests that creativity can lead to moments of insight (Ghiselin, 1952), enlightenment (Wallas, 1926), and productivity (Ghiselin, 1952; Gnezda, 2011). Within the current study, participants shared that their creative pursuits increased their self-awareness by making them more culturally aware, afforded them new opportunities, and expanded their worldviews. Participants also reported increased stimulation and satisfaction as a result of their creative endeavors. Consistent with Granello's (2013) original principle, which suggested that positive mental well-being is comprised of factors including positive moods and relationships, active cognition, emotion regulation, and a general lack of distress. Participants within this study described positive moods, increased emotion regulation, problem-solving skills, new friendships, a network of social supporters, increased awareness, stimulation, and personal satisfaction as a result of their creative activities. In conclusion, participants within this study gleaned a higher mental well-being from their participation in creative tasks.

Emotion

In answering the question, “what role does emotion play in individuals’ creative process?” consistent with previous findings (Forgeard & Elstein, 2014; Yuan, 2015), emotion and creativity are related. Theme 6 of the current study expanded on the individual emotions participants experienced throughout the creative process. Most often, participants described positive emotional experiences associated with their creative activities, including joy, excitement, satisfaction, and fulfillment. According to researchers, positive emotions, sometimes called positive affect, refers to pleasurable feelings and interactions in the environment (Clark et al., 1989). Positive emotions have been found to enhance creativity and promote a positive mental well-being by fostering resilience, enthusiasm, and energy (Salovey et al., 2000). Previous findings suggest that positive emotions often predict creativity, which indicates that people who feel positively are more likely to participate in creative activities (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski et al., 2017).

In accordance with previous findings, participants within the current study reported that they feel their most creative when they are feeling happy, energized, and unburdened by other people or tasks. Conner and Silvia (2015) also found that people tend to be the most creative on days when they feel positively, while participants who feel anxious report feeling less creative. Similarly, as was reflected in the Theme 7 of the current study, participants reported feeling their least creative when they were experiencing low or negative moods, felt depleted of energy, or unenthusiastic about their creative projects. It is the intension of this researcher to prescribe creative activities for those struggling with depression, despite the lack of inclination to be creative when they are experiencing low moods. It is my hope that

similarly to behavioral activation strategies, which are behavioral interventions often prescribed to reduce depression by reducing maladaptive behaviors that lead to isolation and avoidance by increasing positive forms of active coping (Lewinsohn, Biglan, & Zeiss, 1976). In a similar fashion, creative activities can be used to combat depression by encouraging individuals to engage in healthy behaviors that reduce avoidance and isolation and boost life satisfaction.

According to researchers, the creative process can bring about negative emotional experiences (Gnezda, 2011). Gnezda postulated that while the creative process is often rich with novel ideas and fruitful work, it can also be accompanied by bouts of dormancy, lethargy, and frustration. Feelings of self-doubt are not uncommon during the creative process, as individuals work to solve difficult problems, foster original ideas, and generate innovative products (Gnezda, 2011). The creative process is often encompassed by periods of increased energy, as well as deep apathy and inactivity (Jung, 1923). These findings were consistent with reports from participants within the current study, such that factors like laborious activities, creative setbacks or failures, reevaluation of projects, exhaustion of resources, and questioning of one's abilities brought about negative emotional experiences for people throughout the creative process.

Gnezda-Smith (1994) posited that emotions sometimes improve as creative projects are completed, but can also dwindle as a result of revisions, critiques, and feelings of self-doubt. Theme 6 of the current study expands on negative emotional states participants experienced throughout the creative process including, sadness, anger, anxiety, fatigue, and vulnerability. Among other things, participants described experiencing negative emotions as

a result of having to complete projects, collaborate with others, or experiencing rejection. No patterns were found between the type of activity and these negative emotion states. Results suggest that while the creative process is generally a positive experience for most people, negative emotions can arise, as well.

Regarding the predictors of creativity, researchers have found that personality, emotion, intellect, and creative achievement are all predictors of everyday creativity (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski et al., 2017). Furthermore, individuals with high intelligence, creative achievements, (Karwowski et al., 2017) and openness (Conner & Silvia, 2015) tend to engage in creative activities more frequently than others, especially on days when they experience positive moods. All participants within the current study participate in creative activities regularly and have experienced creative achievement. Additionally, as was discussed within Theme 7 of the current study, participants reported that positive moods yielded more creativity than did negative moods.

Current events also have the capacity to impact creative engagement. Researchers have investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on various types of creativity (Karwowski et al., 2021; Mercier et al., 2021). Karwowski et al. (2021) utilized diary entries from March of 2019 (pre-pandemic) and March of 2020 (during the pandemic) to investigate how the global health crisis affected creativity. Findings indicated that compared to 2019, participants in lockdown engaged in more creative activities (Karwowski et al., 2021). Investigators also examined the intensity of participants' thinking and talking about COVID-19 (Karwowski et al., 2021). Results indicated that on days when participants spent the most time researching or discussing the pandemic, they engaged in more creative activities but

also experienced more mixed emotions (Karwowski et al., 2021). Researchers postulated that early in the pandemic, individuals may have had more time to explore their creative potential and may have been both positively and negatively impacted by broadening their know of the COVID-19 virus. Mercier et al. (2021) examined both professional and everyday acts of creativity by investigating creativity pre-pandemic and during the pandemic. Findings suggested that professional acts of creativity did not significantly change due to the pandemic, while everyday creativity significantly increased among participants during lockdown (Mercier et al., 2021). Additionally, participants with lower baselines of creative engagement before lockdown disclosed that they benefited more from effects of quarantine restrictions than did those with higher initial baselines of creativity (Mercier et al., 2021).

Positive relationships were also described as a precursor for creative activities. Both interpersonal and intrapersonal factors have been found to impact everyday creativity (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski et al., 2017). For instance, emotion and personality, also known as intrapersonal factors, can inspire or negatively affect creativity. Between-person factors, like external events or relationships can also impact creativity (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Karwowski et al., 2017). Within the current study, participants spoke to both interpersonal factors and intrapersonal factors impacting their creative engagement. For example, within Theme 6 of this study, participants discussed personal hardships, such as experiences with chronic illness, grief, and sexual assault that impacted their creativity. Participants described periods of difficulty which rendered them temporarily unable to participate in creative activities. However, all participants who described these periods of hardship, noted that they eventually utilized their creative activities to help them through

these experiences, by providing them a space to process difficult emotions, express themselves, or foster community. In such cases, the current study reaffirmed that both internal and external experiences impacted individuals' creativity.

According to previous research, there is a certain phenomenon that occurs during the creative process called *flow*. Flow is described as a period of intense focus in which individuals become completely engrossed in their work, disengaging from self-awareness, time, and the world around them (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 2017). Within the current study, participants spoke about flow, noting they often begin a creative activity and quickly lose track of time, finding themselves fully immersed in the task at hand. One participant described this experience as playing his organ without even noticing he had touched the keys. Alternatively, one participant likened flow to “being plugged into a light socket.” Another participant described her experience of flow as something rhythmic, like dancing. Consistent with previous research (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 2017; Ghiselin, 1952; Gnezda, 2011; Wallas, 1926), participants indicated moments of flow were filled with an abundance of ideas, enlightenment, and productivity.

Within the current study, positive emotions were found to have a bidirectional relationship with creativity, such that positive emotions both elicited higher creativity and helped individuals feel better. Participants were able to speak to what creative days look like emotionally, such that individuals often experimented with new ideas, entered into flow states, and fostered innovative works while in comfortable spaces. These experiences often involved various emotions including excitement, joy, serenity, distress, stagnation, and vulnerability. Emotions appeared to wax and wane at various points throughout the creative

process. While the current study sheds some light on the role that emotions play within the creative process, more scholarship is necessary to fully understand how creativity can be used to improve individuals' mental well-being (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Conner et al., 2018; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Identity

According to researchers, creativity has been found to be socially constructed (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Morris Miller & Cohen, 2012; Rudowicz, 2003; Westmeyer, 1998; Yi et al., 2015), which suggests that creativity is impacted by time periods, social location, and historical context. Therefore, as creativity is embedded within culture, these influences must be considered when examining the influence of creative people and their works (Schoon, 2006). Creativity is also a multidimensional concept containing rules and conventions, an individual who generates creative works, and a field of experts who regard those works as innovative and useful (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Therefore, since cultural experiences inform identity (Brown, 2010; Varga-Dobai, 2015), it is important to consider identity when investigating creativity. Within the current study, participants' identities deeply shaped their creativity. In many cases, participants' identities impacted the types of creative products they produced, the kinds of media they used, and their experiences often shaped their decisions to begin creative activities. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that identity, historical context, social location, culture, and personal experiences influence creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Morris Miller & Cohen, 2012; Rudowicz, 2003; Schoon, 2006; Westmeyer, 1998; Yi et al., 2015).

In a recent study conducted by Gentile and Salemo (2019), researchers utilized social media platforms to inform the public about the intersecting and overlapping identities of those within both the LGBTQ community who also identify as undocumented immigrants. Authors of the study launched a social movement organization called the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project (QUIP) to support those identifying with both communities (Gentile & Salemo, 2019). Investigators utilized photography as a creative means to communicate intersecting identities visually, by portraying distinct experiences of queer undocumented immigrants by posting images on social media platforms (Gentile & Salemo). The study highlights how creativity can provide meaningful expression of those with marginalized identities, both for themselves and in terms of awareness for others.

Significant identity experiences affect mental well-being (McKay & Cole, 2017; Rostosky et al., 2018; Tran & Sangalang, 2016). Furthermore, identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social class impact creativity (Plucker, 2017). Participants within the current study, discussed correlations between their cultural identities and their creative pursuits. For instance, participants shared that their gender has sometimes impacted the types of creativity they engage in, while their social class experiences have affected their access to specific materials or opportunities to showcase their work. The current study also found that creative engagement led to increased self-acceptance, a sense of personal identity, and decreased social isolation, which is consistent with the current literature (Cornelissen, 2009; Fisher, 2010; Jahoda, 1981; McHugh, 2016).

According to previous research, creative engagement positively impacts those with longstanding physical health issues (Sealy, 2012; Teti et al., 2017), experiencing systemic

oppression, (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2010), battling job loss (Mays & Cochran, 2001), or advanced aging (McHugh, 2016; Pearce, 2017). Findings within the current study supported previous data, such that creative activities positively impacted the mental well-being of participants struggling with health concerns, marginalized identities, and various losses. Participants attributed higher ratings of life satisfaction and mental well-being to their participation in everyday creative activities. This finding is consistent with those found in Sherman and Shavit (2017), who found that those who incorporated creativity into their daily routines rated their life satisfaction, general well-being, and purpose more highly than those who did not.

Consistent with previous research, participants within the current study confirmed that their creative engagement was impacted by their social environments (Lubart, 2016), including familial influences (Munt & Hargreaves, 2009; Subotnik et al., 2011) and educational setting (Mellou, 1996; Shankland et al., 2009; Sternberg, 2017). According to Runco and Albert (2005), families influence the development of individuals' cognitive abilities, motivations, and attitudes toward creative thinking and activities. This finding is consistent with modern research investigating familial influences on creativity. Lebuda, Jankowska, and Karwowski (2018) examined how parents' creative self-concepts and creative activities are related to creativity within families. Researchers examined family lifestyle (i.e., family cohesion, flexibility, communication, and family satisfaction), family climate for creativity (i.e., nonconformism, support of creative efforts, and encouragement to fantasize), and their creative self-concept (i.e., creative self-efficacy and creative personal identity; Lebuda et al., 2018). Findings suggested that parents' self-concept and their creative

activities positively predicted support for creativity within the family, as well as more balanced and satisfying familial relationships (Lebuda et al., 2018).

Creative self-efficacy was also a consistent predictor of family cohesion, satisfaction, flexibility, and communication (Lebuda et al., 2018). Within Theme 3 of the current study, participants disclosed the factors which influenced their decisions to begin their creative activities. Participants discussed how both familial and academic experiences played a role in beginning their creative activities.

The creative individual. According to researchers, creative people tend to be cognitively flexible (Runco & Albert, 2005), excel in problem solving tasks (Carson et al., 2005; Furst et al., 2016; Jonason et al., 2015; Kaufman, 2012), and readily generate new ideas (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Individuals who are highly creative tend to also be inquisitive (Costa & McCrae, 1992), energetic (Furst et al., 2016), and emotionally sensitive (Falavarjani, 2017; Feist, 1998). Within Themes 3 and 8 of the current study, participants discussed the benefits of creativity affording them a place to experiment with new ideas, indulge their curiosities, and engage in active problem-solving.

Additionally, within Theme 8 of the current study, all participants noted their creative tasks served as a therapeutic outlet in which they could process difficult emotions. Many participants indicated their creative endeavors made them feel grounded and “sane.” Creative activities served as a positive contribution to mental well-being, which contradicts some of the literature, which draws parallels between creative individuals and depression (Lipson et al., 2016; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Gillam (2012) described commonly perpetuated stereotypes of creative individuals that are still widely used today, likening creatives with

phrases such as *creative genius* and *artistic temperament*. However, literature has shown that creative people are as unique as the works they create, as they are shaped by individual interests, motivations, and lived experiences (Barbot et al., 2016). While creative people come in all shapes and sizes, Sternberg (2018) illuminated one commonality among creative individuals, noting that creative people must buck conventionality, defying the crowd by daring to think differently.

Despite creative individuals having outlets for their emotions and often having building communities of other enthusiasts, researchers have found that some people rate their own work more harshly than experts (Priest, 2006), while others find self-critiques to be fairly accurate (Silvia et al., 2012). If individuals feel successful after their creative activities due to feeling positively challenged or by sharing their work with others, positive self-perceptions can be fostered (Rose & Londale, 2016). However, researchers are quick to warn individuals that creative self-perceptions, or self-assessments of creativity (CSA)s, should be considered self-reported evaluations, which reflect individuals' beliefs about their own creative abilities, process, or creativity itself (Kaufman, 2019). CSAs are generally used because of their practicality. Kaufman (2019) noted that CSAs are faster and less-expensive to administer than performance-based measures. However, researchers have questioned their accuracy and validity, as participants may exaggerate to appear more desirable, they may not be aware of their creative abilities, or fully understand them at all. Despite these concerns, nearly 40% of all empirical studies about creativity include self-report measures (Kaufman, 2019). While Kaufman (2019) suggested the use of the preferred performance-based measures, he indicated that CSAs can be used as a proxy in lieu of performance-based

assessments and can be particularly helpful when examining how something impacts how people feel about their creativity.

Modern creativity research tends to investigate creative self-beliefs by examining the following constructs: creative self-perceptions (CSP; i.e., how one would rate their ability at a creative task in a nonspecific sense), creative self-efficacy (CSE; i.e., perceived confidence that one can creatively perform a task), creative metacognition (CMC, i.e., beliefs about one's creative self-knowledge and contextual knowledge), and creative personal identity (CPI; i.e., how much one values creativity) within self-report measures (Karwowski & Kaufman, 2017; Snyder, Sowden, Silvia, & Kaufman, 2020). Researchers view these self-beliefs as influential to the development of one's creative identity and can influence whether a person will pursue creative opportunities and performances, persist when obstacles arise, and reach higher levels of creative achievement (Karwowski & Kaufman, 2017; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). While previous research has suggested that creative self-beliefs appear to be domain specific (Barbot et al., 2016; Pretz & McCollum, 2014), many studies have revealed mixed results on this matter. Karwowski and Kaufman (2017) suggest using more robust methods of analysis, including latent class analysis (LCA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; Barbot et al., 2016), as these techniques may help researchers overcome limitations of conventional techniques when examining the domain specificity of creativity or creative self-beliefs.

Snyder et al. (2020) investigated whether university students differentiate between these concepts within their survey responses, as well as determine whether there were significant group differences or patterned responses. Findings showed that participants did

not differentiate between these constructs within their responses, instead they typically differed with regard to domain (Snyder et al., 2020). Some participants responded similarly across domains, whereas other groups identified with certain domains over others (Snyder et al., 2020). Findings suggest that university students may not all view their creativity similarly (Snyder et al., 2020). Notably, students' perceptions of their creativity pertaining to areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) domains represented a significant aspect of divergence (Snyder et al., 2020). Some participants considered themselves to be creative, particularly in math and science, whereas other participants noted that they felt creative in all areas but math and science (Snyder et al., 2020). Researchers suggest that if individuals do not view themselves as creative, particularly within the STEM domain, they may be less likely to pursue creative activities overall, even within the STEM fields (Snyder et al., 2020).

Despite its many benefits, the creative process is not always described positively. Within the current study, participants spoke about the difficulty of claiming the word "artist" or identifying as creative. Others expressed reluctance to share their work with anyone and many struggled with the idea of telling people about their creative endeavors. Some participants shared that they identified as creative but knew someone else who was "more creative" than they were. This leads me to question, if participating in creative activities benefits mental well-being and serves as a source of joy for many people, why are people adverse to believing they are creative?

Perhaps, the reason some people have difficulties claiming to be creative is because of the existing biases about creative people (Plucker et al., 2004; Sawyer, 2012). Within the literature, creative people have been described as hippies, loners, and starving artists (Plucker

et al., 2004). Theme 11 of the current study highlighted the fact that participants recalled similar stereotypes about creative individuals being “broke” or less accomplished, and likened them to hippies, and art teachers. However, creative individuals have not always been represented in this way. In fact, as creativity is a product of culture, who and what is categorized as creative has changed throughout history (Sass, 2000). Perhaps, it is time that creative people work toward owning the title of artist and proudly identify with their creative propensities. If participating in creative activities can foster relationships, increase personal awareness, provide amusement and joy, affirm identities, and improve mental well-being, shouldn't we be incorporating creativity into our everyday lives? Questions such as this assist us in considering implications for research, as well as practice and training.

Implications

Implications for Research

Creativity research continues to fall behind other areas of psychology scholarship in terms of popularity (Plucker, 2017; Plucker et al., 2004; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Although this discrepancy is improving, more scholarship is necessary in this fundamental area of study. Creativity has been shown to positively impact cognition (Sternberg, 2018), personality (Furst et al., 2016), and mental well-being (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti et al., 2017). Creative individuals tend to be divergent thinkers (Guilford, 1956; Sternberg, 2017), who are high in openness, enthusiasm, assertiveness, curiosity, and flexibility (Batey & Furnham, 2006; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Feist, 1998; Furst et al., 2016). Preliminary studies have found that those who have experienced severe trauma often demonstrate heightened creative abilities (Orkibi & Ram-Vlasov, 2019). Higher CSE scores,

divergent thinking, and emotional creativity have been found among those who have survived traumatic events, including exposure to war as civilians (Orkibi & Ram-Vlasov, 2019). While the current study adds to the collective of literature about creativity, it is imperative that research within this area of study continue to grow as it has been shown to positively impact the mental well-being of individuals by providing a therapeutic outlet, fostering relationships, and promoting happiness. In trying times, it is crucial that we better understand creativity's impact on mental well-being, so we can utilize it to help individuals struggling with mental health disorders.

The current study found that creative activities have the power to affirm and bolster identity. Participants noted that their participation in creative tasks helped them feel more connected to themselves and their identities. While most individuals within the current study, identify as creative people, studies show that creativity is not exclusive to certain people and is not the product of grand enlightenment (Barbot et al., 2016; Sawyer, 2012). Rather, creativity is derived from individual undertakings and personal insights. (Barbot et al., 2016; Sawyer, 2012). Creative ideas and works emanate from personal interests and motivations and are as unique as people who create them (Barbot et al., 2016). Further understanding the relationship between creativity and identity is necessary to cement the bond between culture, identity, and well-being.

Stereotypes can negatively impact the experiences of individuals. As was discussed within the current study, stereotypes pertaining to creativity still exist and are widely known in today's culture. Some participants within the current study spoke about the difficulty of labeling themselves as "artists." Others shared that while they saw themselves as creative,

they did not view their creativity as being as evident as someone else's. This suggests that social comparison surrounding creativity and modesty with regard to sharing one's creative ideas, works, or identity prevented some participants from identifying as creative. It is imperative that researchers add to the collective of scholarship pertaining to the creative personal identity and CSE, as stigmas can lead creatives to downplay or deny their creativity (Karwowski & Kaufman, 2017; Plucker et al., 2004; Proudfoot et al., 2015; Snyder et al., 2020).

The current study found that creativity had the power to increase participants' positive emotions. Positive moods have been associated with cognitive flexibility (Vosburg, 1998) and advanced problem-solving abilities (Ashby et al., 1999). According to Salovey et al. (2000), positive emotions can also increase individuals' mental well-being by cultivating resilience. Thus, it is essential that we understand more about the positive impacts creativity can have on mental well-being, so mental health providers can prescribe creative activities to boost the mental well-being of individuals undergoing mental health treatment.

Creativity has been used within helping professions to help individuals improve their emotion regulation, develop coping skills, and process difficult experiences (Gladding, 2011; Morse et al., 2015). Studies show women tend to utilize creative activities more than men (Fancourt, Garnett, & Mullensiefen, 2020). Additionally, those of lower SES use creative activities to regulate their emotions more often than those of higher SES (Fancourt et al., 2020). Regularly participating in creative tasks, being trained in a particular artistic activity, and experiencing joy while engaging are all predictive of increased ability to use creative activities to regulate emotions (Fancourt et al., 2020). Researchers have also created

measures to examine how individuals use creativity to regulate their emotions (Fancourt, Garnett, Spiro, West, & Mullensiefen, 2019). Three types of emotion regulation strategies were identified: distraction (i.e., using emotion regulation to engage in distraction, suppression, and detachment), approach (i.e., using emotion regulation to engage in acceptance, reappraisal, and problem-solving), and self-development (i.e., self-identity, self-esteem, and agency; Fancourt et al., 2019). Consistent with previous research, findings within the current study support the notion that regularly participating in creative tasks, being trained in a type of artistic activity, and experiencing joy while creating are related to increased emotion regulation. While the current study did not examine causal relationships between these variables, nearly all participants within the study engaged in creative tasks more than one time per week, if not more often. Nearly all participants reported experiencing joy as a result of their creative endeavors and all participants described their creative activities as a therapeutic outlet with which they can process difficult emotions.

Historically, creative activities have also been used in conjunction with therapy services in the form of creative arts groups (Cole et al., 2018) and artistic interventions. In spite of the value of these interventions, many clinicians report that they struggle to incorporate creative activities into their daily practices (Gladding, 2011), due in part to few training opportunities (McCarthy, 2017; Smith, 2011; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999) and to creativity not being deemed a formal psychological competency. A more thorough understanding of creativity is necessary to ensure that providers feel competent in delivering creative interventions. The current study added to the literature surrounding creativity and its impact on mental well-being and will also provide a therapeutic model that practitioners can

use with their clients. Providers can utilize this model to prescribe creative activities to their clients in an effort to improve their mental well-being (Gladding, 2011; Morse et al., 2015). Researching the utility of such interventions will be important.

To sum up, creativity can be utilized as a mental health tool, which fosters emotion regulation (Sawyer, 2012), improves cognition (Ashby et al., 1999; Vosburg, 1998), bolsters identity, provides individuals with a sense of community, and offers them a space to process difficult emotions. Dispelling myths about creativity can help reduce stigmas about creative individuals and perhaps allow them the freedom to own their creative identities and share their works more readily. Continuing creativity research will also add to our understanding of how emotions impact creativity and how creative activities can be utilized in conjunction with mental health treatment to improve individuals' mental well-being.

Implications for Practice and Training

Findings from the current study have important implications for practitioners and those that train them. Historically, creativity has been used within the helping professions to assist individuals in developing coping skills, increasing emotion regulation, and processing difficult experiences (Cole et al., 2018; Gladding, 2011; Morse et al., 2015). Creativity has also been found to increase positive emotions, cognitive flexibility (Vosburg, 1998), problem-solving abilities (Ashby et al., 1999), and resilience (Salovey et al., 2000). Consistent with the current study, creative engagement helps individuals acquire new skills, provides a therapeutic outlet to process difficult emotions, facilitates social connections, increases personal stimulation and engagement, helps foster self-confidence, expression, and affirms identities (Irons, Cross, Sheffield, & Bird, 2020). Practitioners should attend to

clients who are experiencing depression, anxiety, or other mental health disorders and if they are open to it, prescribe them weekly creative activities to improve their mental well-being. Improved cognition and increased resilience may bring forth new insights which can be invaluable in therapy. Similarly, to behavioral activation strategies often prescribed to combat depression (Lewinsohn et al., 1976), creative activities can be prescribed to increase individuals' positive emotions and encourage engagement in healthy behaviors that reduce avoidance and isolation and boost life satisfaction. Therefore, clinicians can utilize creative interventions as tools to promote growth and healing.

Additionally, practitioners may highlight many of the secondary benefits of creative engagement. For example, creative activities may serve as a positive outlet for therapy clients to process difficult emotions and experiences, thereby improving emotion regulation and coping skills. Creative tasks can also provide individuals suffering from mental health disorders with opportunities to form authentic connections with others who share their interests (Dingle et al., 2017; Griffiths, 2005; Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Teti et al., 2017). The current study also found that individuals who participated in acts of everyday creativity reported increased perspective and awareness, especially with regard to feeling connected to other cultures and further developing their worldviews. Practitioners can utilize some of the positive benefits of creative engagement to promote healing by increasing individuals' access to social support, self-reflective practices, and coping skills.

The training of mental health professionals and students should focus on the importance of utilizing creative interventions to improve mental well-being. Regardless of whether these interventions take place within the context of therapy or whether they are

prescribed for individuals outside of session, it is important that student therapists recognize and educate their clients about the positive impacts of creativity so that it can be used to help improve the mental well-being of individuals undergoing therapy. Skills such as the use of creative writing tasks (Sealy, 2012), crafting (Morse et al., 2015), drawing, sculpting, poetry, music and creative arts groups (Cole et al., 2018) can be used throughout the course of mental health treatment to improve mental well-being and functionality.

Training initiatives should focus on incorporating creative interventions into the curricula for therapist education. According to researchers, many therapists struggle to utilize creative interventions in their regular practices for a variety of reasons, some being rigid adherence to formal therapy models, discomfort with creative interventions, or inadequate supervision and training relating to creativity in psychotherapy (Gladding, 2011; McCarthy, 2017; Reid & West, 2016; Smith, 2011). Including formal training courses on the use of creativity in psychotherapy among other key therapist competencies will provide practitioners with the proper access to training and supervision regarding the application of creative interventions, which will likely reduce clinicians' apprehensions about incorporating these types of interventions into their daily practices. Material gleaned from this study can also be used to train mental health professionals or those in the community about the positive benefits of creativity in the form of outreach presentations. The current research can be presented in schools or other organizations to provide training and psychoeducation about how creativity can be used to improve mental well-being. The current study found that engagement in creative activities promoted positive coping, improved mental well-being, and provided individuals with a place to process difficult emotions. Training initiatives should be

focused on encouraging everyday creativity in order to improve mental well-being. Additional research should focus on helping students explore and capitalize on the relationship between creativity and mental well-being within the context of therapy.

Upon completing this study, this researcher created a therapeutic intervention tool, which incorporates the use of everyday creativity to improve mental well-being (see Appendix G). This intervention tool is meant to be used within the context of psychotherapy and assigns parts of the activity as a homework assignment between sessions and assigns other parts to be utilized as an activity done in session. The tool first defines creativity broadly and then defines everyday creativity more specifically. This researcher includes examples of everyday creativity for the client's convenience and understanding. Next, the homework assignment is laid out in detail, instructing individuals to choose a creative activity to participate in at least one time per week for the next three weeks. Clients can choose from an activity that was provided or they may come up with their own creative activity. After clients have selected their creative activity, they are asked to complete a pre-activity reflection question.

Once individuals have participated in creative tasks for three weeks, they are encouraged to complete the post-activity reflection questions and bring them to their next therapy session. During the session, following the completion of the creative activities, clinician and client complete the in-session reflection questions together, which creates a dialogue about the experiences. As the discussion takes place, clinician and client notate salient details or insights from the discussion into the corresponding boxes labeled: emotions, identity, and mental well-being. Once completed, clients will have an abbreviated outline of

the insights gleaned from their creative activity experiences to reflect upon. From there, clients can choose whether or not they want to continue their creative activities, as a part of their mental health regime.

It should be noted that this therapeutic intervention tool may not be the ideal fit for every client. Providers should use discretion and try to prescribe the exercise for clients who they believe will be positively impacted by the experience. No client should be forced to participate in creative activities, should they not wish to do so. Furthermore, as it was noted within the current study, many individuals struggle with claiming the identity of artist or creative person. If individuals are resistant to the assignment or do not view themselves as creative, providers are encouraged to discuss the prospect of this assignment with their clients in order to determine whether to assign the activities. There is also room to reflect about negative reactions to the assignment within the pre and post activity reflections.

Implications for Counseling Psychology

Counseling psychology is a branch of psychology focused on person-environment interactions and advocacy (Brady-Amoon & Keefe-Cooperman, 2017; Ivey, 1979; Neimeyer, Rice, & Keilin, 2009; Neimeyer et al., 2011; Scheel, Stabb, Cohn, Duan, & Sauer, 2018; Stoltenberg et al., 2000; Watkins, Lopez, Campbell, & Himmell, 1986). This field has roots in vocational psychology, which aims to reinforce individuals' personal strengths and help them improve their overall functionality (Fretz, 1982; Robitschek & Woodson, 2006; Scheel et al., 2018). Counseling psychologists aim to promote the positive mental health of individuals (Ivey, 1979) by incorporating strengths-based interventions (Fretz, 1982), advocating for social justice (APA, 2010), and helping people live well (Robitschek &

Woodson, 2006). The field of counseling psychology recognizes individuals live in the world, which is shaped by systems of power, privilege, and oppression that influence the development and worldview of individuals (Scheel et al., 2018).

Counseling psychologists are trained within the value of scientific mindedness, by integrating both science and practice, promoting culturally competence, and engaging in ongoing self-reflection to limit biases (Scheel et al., 2018). In 2017, the counseling psychology Model Training Program (MTP) was created to highlight new directions in the field of counseling psychology (Scheel et al., 2018). The MTP model acts as a guide for training programs, which outlines the six key clusters of counseling psychology principles: counseling psychology-identity; multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice; health service psychology; developmental, prevention, and strengths orientation; science-practice integration; and professional relationships (Scheel et al., 2018). The current study positively benefits the field of counseling psychology because it promotes the use of strengths-based interventions that are used collaboratively with clients in order to positively impact their mental well-being.

The current study found that participating in everyday acts of creativity can positively impact individuals' mental well-being. Creative activities helped people foster relationships by engendering a sense of community, afforded them a space to process difficult emotions, affirmed their personal cultural identities, and generally promoted positive affect. These findings are of value to the field of counseling psychology because they provide a therapeutic model which mental health practitioners can utilize over the course of mental health treatment to improve the mental well-being of their clients. This model offers guidance to

clinicians about ways they can incorporate creative activities within the context of therapy and prescribe creative activities for individuals to do outside of session. The current study adds to the literature surrounding everyday creativity and its relationship to mental well-being, emotion, and identity, which promotes the use of creative activities to bolster the mental well-being of individuals.

Strengths and Limitations

The current study adds to the collective of data on creativity as it pertains to mental health, which combats an area of sparsity within this research area. This study examined everyday creativity and its relationship to identity, emotion, and mental well-being. To this researchers' knowledge, this is the first study of its kind to examine these four variables within one investigation. Furthermore, this study examined everyday creativity utilizing qualitative research methods, which expands on recent findings on this topic. The current study further illuminates the relationship between everyday creativity and mental well-being, which expands on previous findings positing that everyday creativity enhances mental well-being while cultivating enjoyment (Sawyer, 2006). This study also adds to researchers understanding of how cultural identity impacts individuals' creativity, and the role that emotion plays in the creative process.

The current study had a few notable strengths. One strength was the diverse age range of participants. Participants ages spanned across 55 years, which allowed this researcher to investigate creativity's impact on the lives of individuals across a wide breadth of development. This study's sample also included individuals from various minority groups including gender, sexual, and racial minorities, which allowed for a greater understanding of

how minority identities impact creativity. Additionally, a strength of the current study was its research design, which allowed participants to speak about their individual expressions of creativity without having to narrow participants to one type of creativity. Participants within the current study engaged in many different creative activities and this researcher was able to investigate similarities across disciplines. This study added the literature on creativity, as it further examined emotion's role in creative activities, as well as investigated the routines surrounding creativity and innovation.

There were also notable limitations of the current study, including difficulties with sampling, differentiating between various types of creativity, and providing the context necessary to investigate the relationship between cultural identity and creativity. Recruitment measures for this study were a limitation because both a criterion sample and word of mouth measures were utilized. This researcher used both social media and posting the study on the university's system for research involvement to recruit participants. Throughout the interview process, this researcher utilized word of mouth recruitment methods as some participants may have recruited people they knew to participate in the study. Recruitment measures such as these may have led to some of the homogeneity within the sample.

Additionally, the study's sample was homogenous in regard to several identity variables including gender, race, and college standing. For instance, the population sample was 70% woman identified, which may have been a limitation of the current findings. Furthermore, the sample was largely made up of White, college-educated participants which was a limitation. Moreover, the current study also only investigated individuals' current creative tasks, which may have been limiting, because it neglected to include creative

activities which individuals are no longer participating. There was also significant overlap across participants between everyday acts of creativity for which individuals derive pleasure or self-care and those activities for which participants obtain income. Many participants in the study have sold their creative works and also engage in creative activities solely for their personal enjoyment. Therefore, separating such activities proved difficult, and thus were a limitation of the study. Lastly, the questions pertaining to cultural identity as it relates to creativity within the semi-structured interview guide offered no explicative context, which led to confusion among some participants about the connections between individual cultural identities and creativity. For example, if this researcher had provided examples of connections between creativity and various cultural identities, perhaps participants would have been able to identify these connections more readily within their own experiences. These limitations may have impacted the results and thus should be considered.

Personal Reactions and Revisiting Personal Biases

Upon completion of the current study, I paused to reflect about my experiences conducting this project. Through reflection, I found that I remain enthusiastic about the seven domains of the wellness (Granello, 2013). I am affirmed in my conjecture that creativity can positively impact mental well-being and I am hopeful that I can pass along this awareness in my work with others as a researcher and practitioner. The current study aimed to use a grounded theory approach to examine how individuals use creativity in their everyday and professional lives. I was able to examine the lived experiences of individuals who engage in weekly creative tasks and I captured ways in which they use creativity to bolster their mental well-being. I am proud of the fact that my research design was such that I was able to include

many different types of creativity in the study, rather than focusing solely on one domain of creativity at a time. Furthermore, I am hopeful that the therapeutic intervention tool that was yielded from this study's data will be effective in helping those undergoing mental health treatment to reap the benefits of creative activities, as was evidenced within the current study.

In revisiting my personal biases, I still maintain strong beliefs about mental well-being and self-care practices. I was not surprised to learn that creativity positively impacts mental well-being, as I feel I have experienced this firsthand. While I was not surprised by the results of this study, I believe that I was able to interpret the data in an unbiased way by having a separate analytic coder confirm these suspicions. This study has affirmed my beliefs about relationship between mental well-being and creativity. I believe that self-care activities can positively impact mental well-being and I will continue to advocate for the presence of these activities in the lives of my clients. I still have a passion for working with diverse individuals and I enjoy speaking with clients about the presence of creativity in their lives. I still find it challenging to work with individuals who disparage the identities of others, but I am hopeful to continue building my tolerance and understanding of these individuals.

Over the course of this study, I was able to follow Miles et al.'s (2014) recommendation to include field notes, personal reflections, and memos during data collection and analysis phases of the project. I was able to track personal responses and reflect about potential biases in order to remain as impartial as possible. I believe these methods allowed me to put forth an accurate reflection of participant experiences and a portrayal of creativity's role in the lives of participants. It is my hope that this data be used to

better the lives of individuals to come by illuminating the relationship between everyday creativity, mental well-being, emotion, and identity.

Conclusions

Creative activities were found to positively impact the mental well-being of participants by providing them with a therapeutic outlet with which they could process difficult emotions. Through their creative participation, individuals fostered a sense of community, formed friendships, and found a place to be themselves. Participants reported receiving positive emotions from their creative endeavors and many individuals described the experiences of feeling closer to themselves. Overall, creative activities positively benefitted individuals' mental well-being by affirming identity, fostering emotion regulation, and providing individuals with activities that allowed them to explore new ideas and experiences, increase their personal awareness, and cultivate enjoyment. Furthermore, the current study found to be that there were different ways people were using their creativity, such that for some creativity served as a private, solitary experience whereas others found it beneficial to share their creative pursuits with others. For some, creativity was contained to a creative occupation, while other people indicated that it permeated their entire lives. Six creative profiles were generated to provide an example of the different ways people expressed their creativity and shared it with the world. Information detailing each profile can be found within the therapeutic intervention tool (see Appendix G). This researcher was able to investigate experiences of everyday creativity, as well as explore how it impacted individuals' mental well-being, emotion, and identity.

The goal of this study was to generate a therapy tool that can be used with psychotherapy clients. Upon analyzing data, this researcher was able to create a therapeutic model that can be used by practitioners to improve individuals' mental well-being. Through the use of this model, clinicians can prescribe creative activities or facilitate them during the therapy process to increase peoples' mental well-being.

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APPENDIX A

Pre-Screening and Demographics Questionnaire

Pre-Screening and Demographics Questionnaire

Type a check next to the box which best describes you, or type in your answer:

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Please indicate which year of study you are currently enrolled in your education:

- First year
 Second year
 Third year
 Fourth year
 More than four years
 I am not currently enrolled in school

4. Please indicate your ethnicity: (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Hispanic American, Latinx |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arab/Arab American | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> White/European American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biracial or Multiracial | |

5. Please indicate your gender identity:

- Man/male
 Woman/female
 Transgender- AMAB (Assigned Male at Birth)
 Transgender- AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth)
 Other _____.

6. Please indicate your sexual orientation (Check one):

- Heterosexual
 Lesbian/Woman Loving Woman
 Gay/Man Loving Man
 Bisexual
 Queer
 Questioning
 Other (Please Specify) _____

Type in your answer or place a check on the line which best describes your creativity:

Creative activities are defined as actions that include generating novel ideas, expressing oneself in original ways, and engaging in artistic activities, such as writing, painting, music, or art. Creative activities also encompass individual expressions of everyday creativity, including creative endeavors that foster enjoyment, leisure, and self-care.

7. What types of creative activities are you currently doing?

8. How often are you participating in creative activities?

_____ less than one time per week

_____ one time per week

_____ two times per week

_____ more than 4 times per

_____ daily

9. If you are selected to participate in the interview portion of this study, do you prefer a face-to-face, phone, or Skype interview? *Face-to-face and Skype interviews are preferred over phone interviews, but phone interviews will be available upon request.

10. Please provide your preferred contact phone number or Skype identification name:

11. I will need to contact you to set up an interview if you are chosen for one. Please provide your email address:

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Guide:

1. What creative projects are you currently working on?
2. What influenced your decision to begin that project (or those projects)?
3. Describe your routine before, after, and during your creative tasks.
4. What role does emotion play in your creative process?
 - a. How do you prepare for creative activities mentally and emotionally?
5. When do you feel your most creative?
6. Now, I'd like to ask you about the impact of creativity on your life. Some participants have described the experience as being life-changing, whereas others have said it didn't have much impact on their lives. How has creativity impacted you?
7. Some people have indicated that their creative pursuits are an important part of their well-being. To what extent is that true or not for you?
8. On your demographic survey, you indicated that you are a [give demographic here]. How do these personal cultural identities influence your creativity, if at all?
9. The last question asked about cultural identity shapes your creative *actions*. Now I'd like to know how your cultural identity influences your sense of self as a creative person—your creative identity. For some people there is a close tie between cultural and creative identities and for others there is not. How is it for you?
10. Some people talk often and readily with others about their creative self and activities; others are less inclined to publicly share these parts of themselves. What about you?
11. What haven't I thought of that you think might be important for me to know?

APPENDIX C
Informed Consent Form

**TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Title: Everyday Creativity and its Relationship to Mental Well-Being, Emotion, and Identity

Principal Investigator: Kaitlyn Brock, M.Ed. kbrock1@twu.edu 405-761-6063
Chair: Sally Stabb, Ph.D. Sstabb@twu.edu 940-898-2149

EXPLANATION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between creative peoples' identities, emotions, and mental well-being. This study will also aid the primary researcher in collecting data necessary to complete a required dissertation project.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

As a participant in this study you will be provided with a copy of this informed consent form to participate in research via a website link from PsychData. Each study consists of 1 pre-screening and demographics questionnaire and 1 informed consent form, which will last no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Additionally, each study will consist of 1- 45 minute semi-structured interview. Finally, each study will consist of 1 member check, which will allow study participants to review the findings. The member check will take no longer than 35 minute to complete. Therefore, the total time commitment for each participant could be up to 90 minutes. Should you be interested in participating in this research study, you will begin by filling out a pre-screening and demographics form. On this form, your name, phone number, email address and other information about yourself will be requested. You may or may not be selected to participate in an interview. There may be lag time of 7-10 days before you are contacted for an interview, as participants are being selected. If you are not selected for this study, you will be thanked for your time and no further involvement will be required. However, if you would like a copy of the study summary, you may request this at any time. This summary will be delivered via email upon the study's completion.

If you are selected to participate in an interview, you will contacted via email. Within this email you will be asked to spend approximately 45 minutes of your time in either a face-to-face interview with the researcher or participate in a phone or Skype interview. The researcher will ask you questions about your experiences with creativity and how it relates to identity, emotion, and mental well-being. You and the researcher will decide together on a location where and when the interview will happen, or whether the interview will take place face-to-face, by phone, or by Skype. You and the researcher will decide on a code name for you to use during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed so that the researcher can be accurate when studying what you have said.

Once the interview is complete, you will be sent a de-identified summary of themes found within the data to be reviewed to ensure accuracy and to give you the opportunity to respond to the initial findings. This will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time and will be completed electronically.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The researcher will ask you questions about your experiences with creativity and creative thinking. The researcher will also ask you questions about how your experiences impact your life, including your mental health. A potential risk of this study is emotional discomfort. Some of the topics may be of a sensitive nature. In order to minimize this discomfort, you may choose not to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. If you become upset you may take breaks as needed. You may also quit the study at any time without penalty. You may also stop answering questions at any time and end the interview. Your choice to participate or not will not affect your grade in any way. Participants who choose to withdraw from this study will receive SONA credit for their participation, regardless of withdrawal, and will not be penalized even if the interview is incomplete. Additionally, should emotional discomfort occur as a result of this study resources have been provided to you.

Another potential risk is fatigue. In order to minimize this risk, you are welcome to take breaks, or choose to not answer questions, or withdraw at any point without penalty should you experience fatigue while completing the interview.

Loss of confidentiality is also a risk. Participants will be asked for their email addresses, phone numbers/Skype identifications. Also, participants who participate in face-to-face interviews or interviews via Skype may also be identified by facial recognition. To minimize this risk, a code name, not your real name, will be used during the interview. No one but the researcher will know your real name. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

Confidentiality will be protected to the extent allowed by law. ID numbers will be stored on a secured server. Interviews will be held at a private location or during a private Skype or phone call that you and the researcher have agreed upon. The audio recordings and the written interview will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Only the researcher will hear the audio recordings. Once your interview is transcribed, the researcher, her dissertation advisor, and one other graduate student who is a research team member will read the transcript. The audio recordings and the written interview will be shredded after the study is finished.

Results of this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will never be used in these presentations or papers.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS

SONA credit is a direct benefit for research participation. Additionally, the information that we learn from this study may contribute to a better understanding of important psychological processes.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE STUDY

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their contact information is at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in the research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the TWU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via email at IRB@twu.edu.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX D

Recruitment Announcement

Recruitment Announcement

For post:

Hello!

You are being invited to participate in a research study approved by the Texas Woman's University (TWU) Institutional Review Board. All participants will be entered to win a \$50.00 Amazon gift card.

The purpose of the study is to better understand the experiences of adults, and to investigate creativity, mental well-being, emotion, and identity. This study will be used to both increase the scholarship on the variables of creativity, mental well-being, emotion, and identity. This study will also aid the primary researcher in collecting data necessary to complete a required doctoral dissertation.

You must be over 18 years old to participate.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. There is a potential loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions. An additional potential risk of this study is emotional discomfort. Some of the topics may be of a sensitive nature. In order to minimize this discomfort, you may choose not to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. You may also quit the study at any time without penalty. Should emotional discomfort occur as a result of this study resources are provided following the consent form.

If you are aware of other individuals who meet the criteria for this study, please feel free to send this announcement to them.

Please click on the following link to view the informed consent document and to participate in the study:

<https://www.psychdata.com/EXAMPLE>

Kaitlyn Brock, M.Ed., Principal Investigator
kbrock1@twu.edu

Dr. Sally Stabb, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor
sstabb@twu.edu

APPENDIX E

Emotional Discomfort Resources

Should you experience emotional discomfort as a result of participating in this study, please consult any of these resources.

Texas Woman's University Counseling Center- 940 898-3801

Dallas Suicide and Crisis Center- 214-828-1000

Denton County Crisis Line- 800-762-0157

Fort Worth/Tarrant County Crisis Line- 817-335-3022

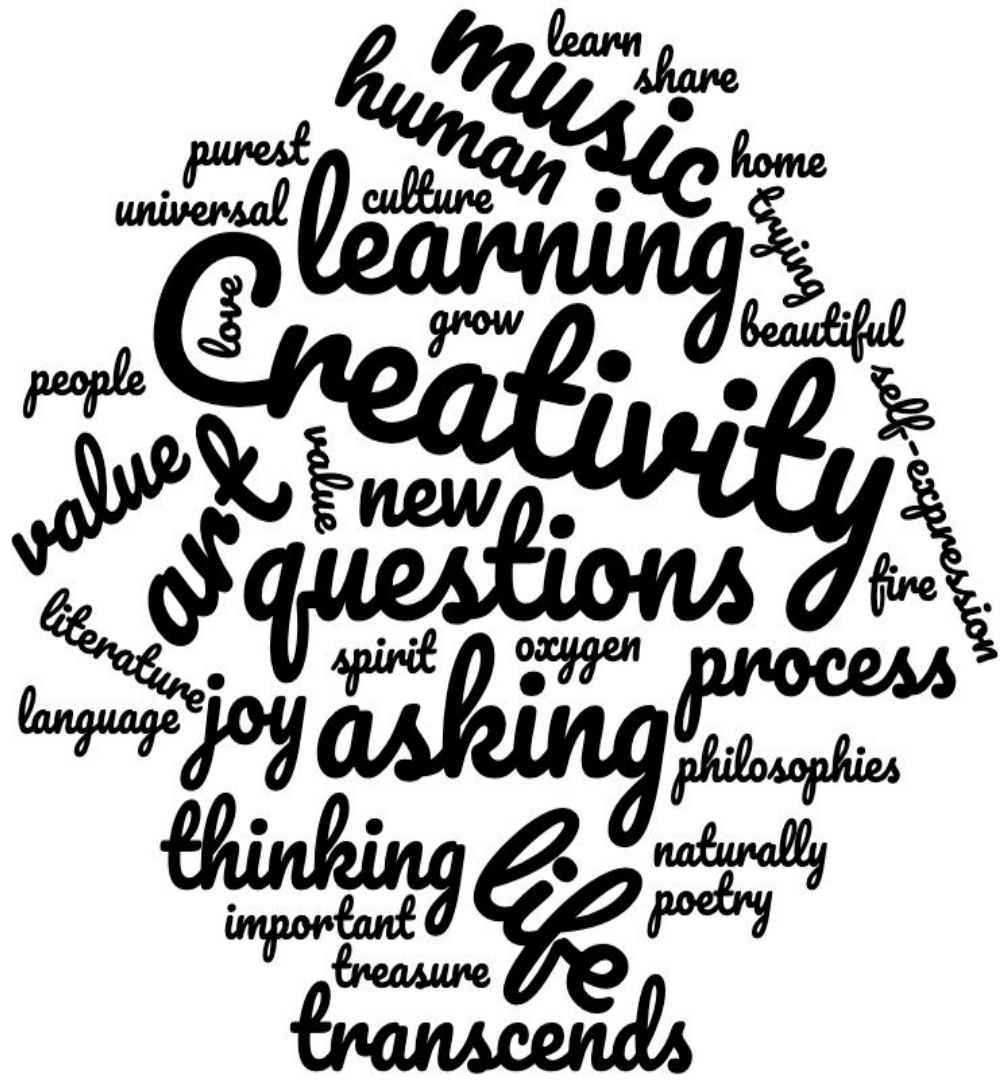
Grayson/Cooke/Fannin County Crisis Line- 877-277-2226

Colorado Crisis Support Line- 844-493-8255

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline- 800-273-8255

APPENDIX F

Defining Creativity Word Cloud



Defining creativity word cloud.

APPENDIX G

Creativity Intervention Tool

Utilizing Everyday Creativity

Creativity is the ability to think innovatively and foster new ideas or bodies of work (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Evidence suggests that engaging in creative activities positively impacts people's mental well-being through promoting relaxation, reducing stress, and fostering life-satisfaction (Rose & Lonsdale, 2016; Stebbins, 2018; Teti, French, Kabel, & Farnan, 2017).

Everyday creativity can be used to enhance mental well-being, while cultivating enjoyment. Everyday creativity involves individual expressions of creativity (Sawyer, 2006), which are achieved by participating in self-care activities, leisure activities, or hobbies. Some examples of everyday creativity are listed below.

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| * Acting | * Art | * Baking |
| * Blogging | * Collaging | * Coloring |
| * Comedy | * Comics | * Cooking |
| * Crafting | * Creative thinking | * Crocheting |
| * Cross-stitching | * Dancing | * Drawing |
| * Furniture making | * Fused glass | * Graphic Design |
| * Illustration | * Jewelry making | * Journaling |
| * Lighting | * Magic | * Music |
| * Painting | * Photography | * Poetry |
| * Sewing | * Singing | * Sketching |
| * Stage management | * Stage performance | * Stained glass |
| * Videography | * Weaving | * Writing |

Practitioner tips:

- Like most other therapeutic interventions and tools, this assignment may not be the best fit for every client. It is important to consider appropriateness when assigning homework in the context of psychotherapy, as well as your client's willingness to engage with the tasks.
- Research has shown that people sometimes struggle to view themselves as creative or to adopt certain titles, such as "artist." There are also some known stigmas about creative people. For example, some may view creative people as flighty, broke, starving, or hippies. As you are discussing this assignment with your clients, it is important to consider and talk through any resistance to activities. The pre and post activity reflections can also be a useful place to reflect on any negative experiences. If any negative experiences are determined to cause detriment to one's mental well-being, such as causing a considerable amount of emotional distress, consider stopping the activities as they are aimed at improving mental well-being and are not intended to cause distress.

Different Types of Creatives: Research has shown that there are many different ways to be creative. Regardless of medium used to create, the current study found that there were different ways people were using their creativity. The following six profiles were generated to provide an example of the different ways people expressed their creativity and shared it with the world. If you don't identify with any of the types below, not to worry. Perhaps you are a maverick all your own, finding ways to be creative that suit your unique tastes!

The Isolated Innovator: This creative type prefers to engage in creative tasks alone. They typically like to get creative in private and prefer to keep their creative works and ideas on the down low. While they are not likely to share with others, they certainly still reap the benefits of their artsy tasks and enjoy the alone time.

The Vocalizer: This creative prefers to tell anyone and everyone that will listen about their creative thoughts and ideas. They don't mind sharing photos or their work on social media or displaying their work around their home or office. This innovator likes to share their creative self with the world.

The Constant Creator: This innovator is always on. Their creative juices are always flowing, and they are constantly brimming with artistic energy. You won't find this creative taking much down time. They are always working on coming up with their latest idea or adding to an ongoing piece.

The Worker Bee: This artist keeps their creative energies focused on work. You won't see them burning the midnight oil at home. They are paid to be creative and have the luxury of spending their downtime working on projects outside of their creative pursuits.

The Escape Artist: This originator uses creativity as an escape from everyday life. You'll see this creative sneaking off to solitude to work on their creative projects any chance they get. Why think about the world's problems when you can bask in a world of your own creation?

The Connector: This creative is all about finding connection and shared understanding by connecting with other creatives. The opposite of the Isolated Innovator, this originator is all about finding groups of other enthusiasts to chat with at parties. This artist is all about connecting with others and using creativity to meet people.

Homework Assignment: Choose an activity to participate in at least one time a week for the next three weeks. You may choose from the example activities given above or come up with your own creative activity. After a creative activity is selected, complete the pre-activity reflection below. Once you have finished the assignment above, please complete the post-activity reflections and bring them to your next therapy session.

Pre-Activity Reflection:

What is your initial reaction to this assignment? Do you have thoughts about what the obstacles to your success might be? What things might work in your favor?

Post-Activity Reflection:

What are your initial reactions to your creative experiences? What were they like for you?

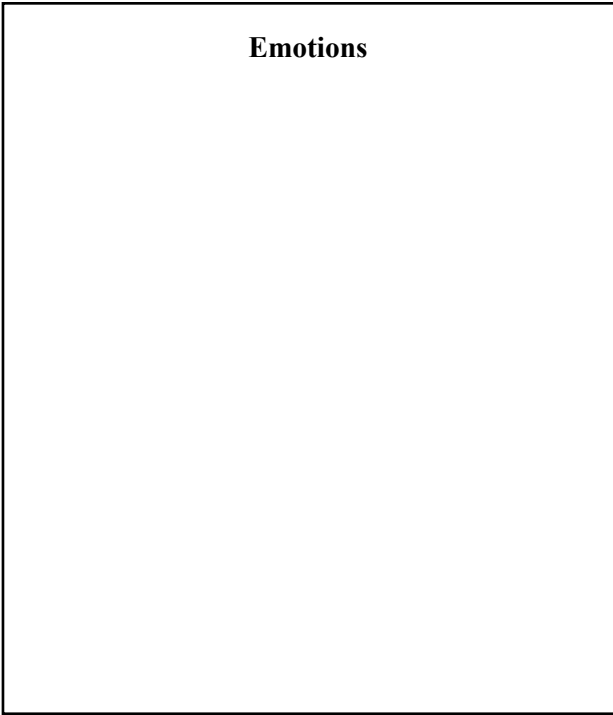
Will you share about your creative activities? Why or why not?

Are you willing to continue your creative activities? Why or why not?

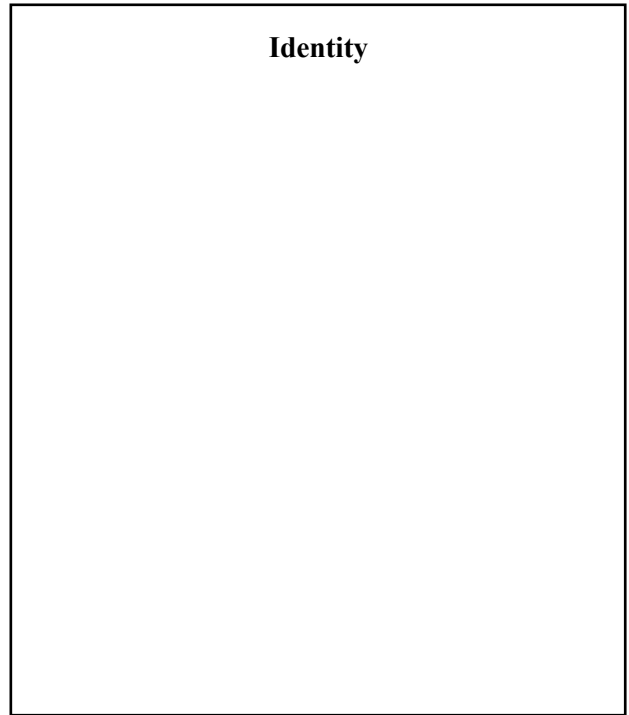
What are the obstacles that you may come up against if you choose to continue or discontinue your creative activities?

In-Session Activity

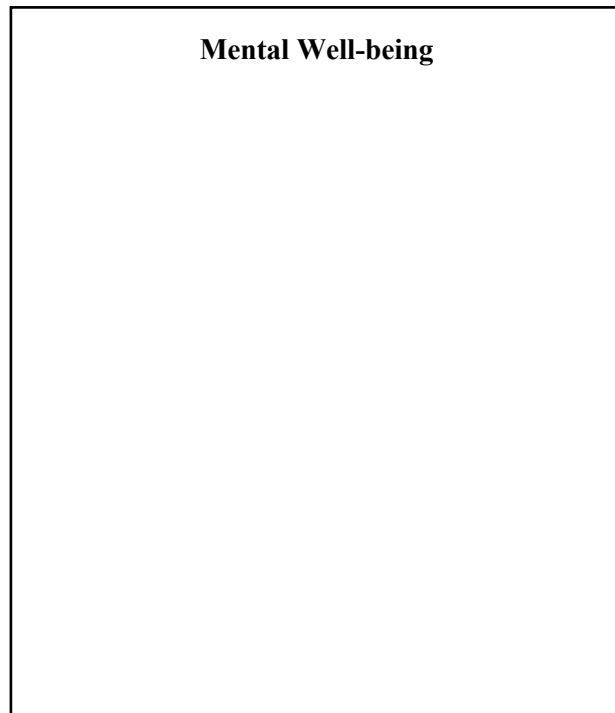
Emotions



Identity



Mental Well-being



In-Session Reflective Questions:

Following three weeks of consecutive creative activities, use the boxes above to take notes while collaboratively discussing the following reflective questions.

Emotions:

- What role did emotion play in your creative process?
- What emotions preceded your creative activities?
- What emotions were present during your creative activities?
- What emotions were present after your creative activities?

Identity:

- How are your creative identity and your creative activities related, if at all?
- If you made connections between the two identities, what does this mean for you?
- How can you utilize your creative activities to express parts of your identity?

Mental well-being:

- How did your creative activities impact your mental well-being, if at all?
- Did you notice any benefits that emerged as a result of your creative activities? (i.e., creative community, increased self-awareness, problem solving abilities).