Application qualifies as: ☐ Exemption from Review ☐ Expedited Review ☐ Full Review
***Note*:** *this selection will be completed by the IRB committee following review of the submitted application*

Application for Review of Human Subjects Research

Date Submitted ___12/25/2027_____ (*please update for revised submissions*)

Lead Researcher*: Please list Name, Address, Phone, E-mail

Jane T. Doe, 1111 Sky Pl, Pueblo, NM 87000, 505-505-1111, jdoe2@lesley.edu

**For supervised research, including doctoral dissertations, the student is the lead researcher*

Faculty Supervisor** (only if student researcher): Please list Name, Address, Phone, E-mail

Dr. Q. Frances, Lesley University 29 Everett St, Cambridge, MA, 616-234-5678, fran@lesley.edu

***Faculty Supervisor is the official Principal Investigator under Federal Regulations*

If you are a student researcher, please indicate whether your supervising faculty has read and provided their approval for submission of this application: __x__ Yes _____ No

**If NO is selected, please have your supervisor review and provide their approval prior to submitting this application.*

Investigator(s) status – indicate all that apply:

☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐x Graduate student(s) ☐ Undergraduate

Title of the Project:

Perspectives of Resilience in Mental Health Counselors

Proposed Project Dates:

4/22/2028

Type of Project:

□ Faculty Research □x Thesis/Dissertation □ Independent Study □ Other (please describe)

Section I: Foundational Project Information

1.1 Briefly describe the purpose of the study:

This study will address existing gaps in the understanding of psychological resilience as a dynamic and multidimensional construct. Inconsistencies in defining resilience have hindered establishing a universally accepted model and effective intervention strategies. Mental health counselors might contribute to the current literature by providing their perspectives about what resilience is as they have encountered the construct in their practices that enrich understanding of the nature of resilience. The primary research question guiding this study is: How might mental health counselors describe their understanding of resilience? This may help to advance theoretical knowledge and yield practical implications for the field of mental health.

Commented [RC1]: Notice that citations are not needed.

1.2 Provide the number of adults, and the number and ages of minors:

Up to 10 adult licensed mental health counselors.

1.3 Briefly describe the project design (e.g., experimental, ethnographic, arts-based research, etc.):

The proposed study employs a qualitative research methodology through focus group discussions. The study plans to recruit up to 10 practicing mental health counselors through a professional listserv combined with snowball sampling. Informed consent will be obtained from each participant, emphasizing voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any point. Data collection entails one in-person semi-structured focus group discussion lasting approximately 90 to 120 minutes, followed by one 45 to 60-minute virtual (Zoom) member checking focus group facilitated by the lead researcher. The first session will involve participants' perspectives on resilience and its application for clients, and the second session will be conducted virtually for the validation, verification and/or correction of the preliminary findings. The semi-structured questions for the in-person focus group discussion is included in Appendix A. The semi-structured questions for session two are included in Appendix B.

Commented [RC2]: Identify appendices

1.4 Indicate whether the study involves any of the following – indicate all that apply:

□ Case Studies	□ Experimental Intervention	□ Task performance and/or Artmaking
□ Educational tests	□ Standard psychological tests	□ Survey or questionnaire
X□ Interviews	□ Observations	□ Analysis of existing data

1.5 How will subjects be recruited? (note: please make sure to include your recruitment letters and flyers as appendices)

Following approval from the Lesley University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher will recruit up to 10 mental health counselors currently practicing in and around Boston, MA. Recruitment will take place through a mental health counselor listserv associated with the local

Commented [RC3]: Must be consistent throughout

mental health counselor association to which the researcher belongs. The recruitment flyer (see Appendix C) will encourage people to share with others they know to effect snowball sampling and include the researcher's email address. Confirmed participants will be contacted via email for informed consent (see Appendix D) and scheduling of the in-person session.

1.6 Do subjects risk *any* stress or harm by participating in this research? If so, why are they necessary. How will they be assessed? What safeguards minimize the risks? (note: this should be referenced in the informed consent/assent)
It is not necessary to eliminate all risks, only to be clear and explicit about what the risks may be. The IRB is alert to any tendency to suggest that risks are lower than they may be.

Participants should not face any anticipated risks of stress or harm as a result of their participation in this research. The study primarily involves exploratory discussions with professional mental health counselors to gain insights into their perspectives on resilience. Participants will engage in voluntary and informed discussions in a focus group format for both groups. To ensure that the research process is conducted in an ethical and supportive manner, confidentiality for the group will be stressed and maintained. Participants will also have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative consequences.

1.7 Describe the data that will be collected:

One in-person semi-structured focus group discussion, lasting approximately 90 to 120 minutes, will be conducted. The discussion will explore participants' perspectives on resilience.
A virtual (Zoom) second focus group with the intent of member checking results from the in-person group lasting 45 to 60 minutes, will be facilitated by the lead researcher. This session aims to validate, verify and/or correct preliminary findings from session one. Both sessions will be audio/video recorded to ensure accurate capture of discussions. Additionally, a digital transcription will be generated for the virtual session.

Commented [RC4]: Keep consistent throughout

1.8 Describe the steps to be taken to respect subject's rights and expectations of confidentiality and anonymity:

Prior to participation, each participant will receive an informed consent form (see Appendix D) outlining the study's purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and risks. Participants will be explicitly informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. During discussions and subsequent reporting, participants' identities will be safeguarded using pseudonyms or number coding to contribute to participant privacy. These identifiers will be used consistently in any transcripts, notes, or reports. Participants will be reminded in each focus group of the importance respecting the confidentiality of all members of the group. Anonymity is not associated with this study.

1.9 Will subjects' identities or private information be revealed if this study be reported through publication or public presentation?

Subjects' identities and private information will not be revealed in any publication or public presentation resulting from this study. Confidentiality is of paramount importance. Pseudonyms or assigned codes will be used to ensure the complete protection of participants' identities. All data will be presented in aggregate form, preventing any individual participant from being identifiable.

If this application is seeking an **exemption from IRB Review**, please check the policy in the Faculty Handbook. Please see the worksheet on the criteria for an exemption. If you believe that the proposed research qualifies for an exemption, you may end the application here and submit these two pages to irb@lesley.edu . You will be notified whether your application for exemption has been approved. If it is not approved, you will be asked to complete the remaining sections of this application.

Applicants seeking either expedited or full IRB review are required to complete the remainder of this form.

Section II: Affiliations, Collaborations, and Funding

2.1 Provide the name and institutional affiliation of the Principal Investigator. Make sure to include school, division, center, or office at Lesley. If applicable, identify the name and affiliation and status of the co-investigator who is a student.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Frances, Department of Mental Health, Lesley University 29 Everett St, Cambridge, MA, 616-234-5678, fran@lesley.edu

Co-Investigator: Jane T Doe, Graduate Student, Department of Mental Health, 1111 Sky Pl, Pueblo, NM 87000, 505-505-1111, jdoe2@lesley.edu

2.2 If applicable, identify the institutional affiliation of additional members of the research team and/or co-investigators on the project who are not members of the Lesley University community. If not applicable, insert: N/A.

N/A

2.3 If applicable, identify the funding source and any relevant restrictions on the research.

N/A

2.4 If the proposed project involves collaboration with another institution, please identify and indicate if IRB review from that institution has been sought and granted. Include the IRB review number. Include relevant contact information.

N/A

2.5 Identify the location(s) of the research activity:
The in-person focus group will take place at the office space of the lead researcher 952 Mass Ave.

#3, Cambridge, MA. It is brightly lit, easily accessible through public transportation, has blinds to maintain confidentiality, and provides a conducive environment for the in-person focus group discussion as well as the virtual member checking focus group.

Section III: Procedures, Participants, and Data

3.1 Provide further details on the characteristics of the human subjects. Please describe in greater detail the numbers of subjects, the range of ages, gender, and other relevant demographic characteristics that may define the sample being studied:

The inclusion criteria will be mental health counselors with a minimum of two years of clinical experience supporting people with mental health challenges, practicing either within the private or public mental health sector. The research will involve a targeted group of up to 10 mental health counselors, with ages anticipated to span from the 20s to the 50s, reflecting a diverse ages and identities representative of the mental health counseling profession in the greater Boston area.

3.2 How are subjects to be chosen or recruited? Describe sampling procedures in detail:

Following approval from the Lesley University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher will recruit up to 10 mental health counselors currently practicing in and around Boston, MA. Recruitment will take place through a mental health counselor listserv associated with the local mental health counselor association to which the researcher belongs the Greater Boston Area Mental Health Counselors Association GBMHCA. The recruitment flyer (see Appendix C) will encourage people to share with others they know to effect snowball sampling. Subsequently, confirmed participants will be encouraged to forward the flyer email to additional individuals who could provide valuable insights for the research. Confirmed participants will be contacted for informed consent (see Appendix D) and scheduling of the in-person session.

3.3 What will subjects be asked to do, what will be done to them, or what information will be gathered? (Append copies of interview guides, instructions, tests, or questionnaires to the end of this application, see section V):

Participants will engage in two semi-structured focus group discussions facilitated by the lead researcher exploring their perspectives on resilience within the context of mental health. Session one will be conducted in person, lasting approximately 90 to 120 minutes. Session two will be conducted virtually and take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The questions for both focus group discussions are included in Appendices A and B.

Both sessions will be audio/visual recorded. Verbal content from both sessions will be transcribed to capture discussions verbatim. These research activities are designed to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of resilience and its application within the mental health counseling field.

3.4 If interviews are planned, identify the interviewers, and provide a description of their training and relevant experience in conducting research interviews:

Focus groups are planned. The researcher has completed two courses in qualitative research methods taken during the first two years of her doctoral studies at Lesley University. The researcher is an experienced Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the state of Massachusetts.

3.5 If an intervention is planned, please describe the intervention and include the number of times the intervention will be occur and over what period of time (see policy guidelines for the definition of "intervention"):

N/A

Section IV: Ethical Considerations for Participants

4.1 How do you explain the research to subjects and obtain their informed consent to participate? (Note: it is essential to allow participants to ask questions at any point. *Be sure to append your Informed Consent Form* to the end of this application).

Participants will be informed of the focus group nature and the goals of discussing resilience in the flyer (Appendix C) and the consent form (Appendix D). The information will be conveyed in a clear and accessible manner, ensuring that participants understand the study's context and goals. Informed consent will be sought from each participant before their involvement in the research. They will receive the consent form outlining the study's nature, potential benefits, risks, and procedures via email. This form will also include the contact information of the lead researcher to address any queries or concerns. At the beginning of each focus group, participants will be explicitly informed that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they have the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time, without facing any negative consequences.

4.2 If subjects are minors, or not able to provide consent, how will parent or guardian permission be obtained? How will verbal and written assent of the participants be obtained (Note: it is essential to construct an *Informed Assent Form* that is written for the target population in a developmentally appropriate manner. Be sure to append your *Informed Assent Form* to the end of this application).

N/A

4.3 How will subjects be informed that they can refuse to participate in aspects of the study or may terminate participation whenever they please?

They will receive a detailed consent form outlining the study's nature, potential benefits, risks, and procedures prior to study participation. This form will include the contact information of the lead researcher to address any queries or concerns. Participants will be explicitly informed that their participation is entirely voluntary again at the beginning of each focus group. They will be informed that they have the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time, without facing any negative consequences.

4.4 If subjects are students or clients, what measures have you put in place to ensure you protect them against feeling coerced into participation?

N/A

4.5 Are subjects deliberately deceived in *any* way? If so, provide rationale. Describe the deception, its likely impact on participants, and how they will be debriefed upon completion of the research.

No.

4.6 How might participation in this study benefit subjects (note: this should be referenced in the informed consent/assent)?

Participants may have the opportunity to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of mental health art therapy, enriching conceptual understanding of psychological resilience. Engaging in the research activities may prompt participants to reflect on their experiences and perspectives, leading to personal insights and growth. The study's findings could potentially inform practices within the field of mental health. Participants can engage in collaborative discussions with peers, potentially gaining new perspectives and broadening their own understanding.

4.7 Will participants receive a summary of results? If yes, please indicate how you plan to provide this for participants.

No.

Section V: Measures for Ethical Research Practice

5.1 How will the following be protected? Protecting *information* about participants. Depending on data collection procedures, a study may qualify for either confidentiality or anonymity. See descriptions below.

Definitions and IRB considerations**:**

a. *Confidentiality*: Protecting the identity or personal *data* about participants which is known to the researcher. State how access to data is limited, and who has access. The IRB requires that data be kept in protected form for 5 years and then destroyed. State how coding will be kept separate from information obtained, how data will be stored, and when it will be destroyed.
b. *Anonymity*: Protecting *names* and other *unique identifiers* of participants from anyone, including the researcher. For anonymity, not even the researcher knows or can trace the identity of participants.

- Please describe if/how *confidentiality* will be protected:

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study to ensure the privacy and identity of participants through the implementation of the following measures. Only the lead researcher will

have access to participants' data. The lead researcher will adhere to ethical guidelines and handle data with utmost discretion during the process of data collection, analysis, and reporting. Only the lead researcher and focus group participants will be privy to the actual identities of participants for the pilot study. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms to prevent identification to maintain confidentiality. Data will be stored securely on the lead researcher's computer in a password-protected folder. Files and documents will be encrypted when sending information over the internet. Identifying information will be kept separate from research data. Hard copies, if necessary, will be kept in locked storage. Access to both digital and physical data will be restricted only to the lead researcher. In compliance with IRB requirements, all data will be retained in protected form for a period of five years after the study's completion.
During data analysis and reporting, only coded identifiers will be used. The results will be presented in aggregate form, without disclosing any information that could lead to the identification of individual participants.

- Please describe if/how *anonymity* will be protected:

Anonymity is not a feature of this research.

5.2 Are there any other procedures or details of the study the Human Subjects Committee should use to assess how your study protects human subjects?

No, the procedures and details outlined in the submitted documentation comprehensively address the protection of human subjects.

Section VI: Appendices

**As appropriate, please insert all required forms as appendices to the end of this application.*

Section VI: Appendices			
Number	**Form Type**	**Included in Application (Insert X)**	**Not Included in Application (Insert X)**
1.	**Written Informed Consent Form**. The consent form must include contact information for the applicant, the faculty supervisor (if the applicant is a student), and the IRB. Multiple informed consents may be required if the research is multi-phase (e.g., survey followed by an interview for select participants – both phases require their own consent forms). IRB information is reflected in the text below. Please include this statement at the end of all consent forms:	**x**	

	There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu		
2.	**Written Informed Assent Form** (see instructions on inclusion of IRB contact information above)**. In some cases, verbal assent is acceptable – in these instances, please provide a script and/or describe procedures for attaining verbal assent.**	**n/a**	
3.	**Recruitment letters or flyers**	**x**	
4.	**Instructions to informants**	**n/a**	
5.	**Interview guide**	**x**	
6.	**Compensation information**	**n/a**	
7.	**All data collection instrument(s)**, e.g., test, survey questions	**n/a**	
8.	**Description of any experimental manipulation**	**n/a**	
9.	**Information sheets or debriefing method**	**n/a**	
10.	**Letters of IRB approval from cooperating institution(s)**	**n/a**	
11.	**Letters of correspondence from participating institutions that authorize this research within their setting(s)**	**n/a**	

Section VII: Final Instructions:

- Once the application is completed, send the completed form as an email attachment to: irb@lesley.edu

- Applicants are requested to send the application electronically, with all accompanying documents, in a **single file**, with the following format for the file name:

  [Last Name of Applicant] IRB Application [Date Submitted]

- For revisions, please use the following format for the file name:

  [Last Name of Applicant] Revised IRB Application [Date Submitted]

Appendix A: Sample Semi-Structured Discussion Guide for Focus Group Session 1

1. Can you introduce yourself briefly with regards to your professional experiences?
1. How many years of professional experience do you have?
2. What are your areas of specializations/interests as a mental health counselor?
3. How would you define the term "resilience" ?
4. How do you perceive resilience within the context of your work as a counselor?
5. Can you give me an example of resilience MHI you have witnessed?

Appendix B: Sample Semi-Structured Discussion Guide for Focus Group Session 2

1. Can you point out any areas where you would like more clarification?

2. What are your thoughts about the preliminary findings presented? Do you have any reservations about their accuracy or validity? Please explain your perspective.

3. Have you encountered similar experiences or situations that align with our preliminary findings? If so, can you share your personal or professional experiences?

4. Are there any additional factors and/or variables that you believe were not adequately covered in the preliminary findings? What should be considered for a more comprehensive understanding?

5. How do the preliminary findings align with your expectations or prior knowledge about the topic? Did anything surprise you or seem contradictory?

Appendix C: Recruitment Message Sent to Listserv

Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Study on Resilience

Hi, this is Jane Doe and I am recruiting mental health counselors to participate in my doctoral research on resilience at Lesley University. Your unique perspective and insights would be invaluable in contributing to the research.

The study involves two focus group sessions over a span of eight to twelve weeks. The first session will be conducted in person, take about 90 to 120 minutes and you will get the chance to talk about your clinical impressions of resilience. Session two will be conducted via Zoom and take 45 to 60 minutes. In session two preliminary findings of the first session will be presented for your validation, verification and/or correction.

By taking part in this study, you can help shape more understanding of resilience in clinical mental health and its application in clinical practice. Your insights can contribute to advancing knowledge in the field of mental health and potentially enrich our conceptual understanding of positive mental health. You will also be able to engage in meaningful discussions with other professionals.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information about the study, please reply to jdoe2@lesley.edu, and I will provide you with further details and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for considering this opportunity, and I look forward to the possibility of working together.

Jane Doe

Appendix D: Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in the research project Perspectives of Resilience in Mental Health Counselors. This research study intends to explore ideas about resilience of mental health counselors practicing in the Greater Boston area. Your expertise and experience as a mental health counselor with a minimum of two years of clinical experience qualifies you for participation. Engaging in this research activity may prompt personal reflection, leading to individual insights and growth, and may contribute to knowledge about resilience.

Your participation will entail engaging in two semi-structured focus group discussions with a maximum of 10 participants. Session one will be conducted in person, in my private office in Cambridge and last between 90 to 120 minutes. Session two will take place via Zoom, last between 45 to 60 minutes and be scheduled within eight to twelve weeks from the first session.

The first session will involve hearing from you and other participants about your impressions of resilience related to your clinical experiences. The second session will involve a presentation of preliminary findings for your validation, verification, and/or correction.

Both sessions will be audio/visual recorded to ensure the accurate capture of the discussions. Audio/visual recording will commence once participants give verbal acknowledgment that they are ready at the start of each session. Participants may choose to switch their video off during the virtual meeting and/or remove any form of identification from their screen before the audio/visual recording commences for session two. All information shared and discussed throughout the entire research project will have to be maintained in strict confidence within the group.

- You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation at any time without facing negative consequences.
- Your identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym, your identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to the data collected.
- All of your questions will be answered at any time, and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or to discontinue your participation.
- Participation in this research poses minimal risks. The main activity involves engaging in group discussions exploring your perspectives on resilience.
- If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the lead researcher, Jane doe, by email at jdoe2@lesley.edu or Lesley University sponsoring faculty Dr. Frances at fran@lesley.edu.

You have the right to privacy. Your records will be kept private and confidential ***to the extent allowed by law****. Numerical identifiers or a pseudonym rather than your name will be used on study records. Your name and other facts that might identify you will not appear when this study is presented or published.*

I am 18 years of age or older. My consent to participate has been given of my own free will and that I understand all that is stated above. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____ _____ _____
Participant's signature Date Researcher's signature Date

_____ _____ _____ _____
Participant's signature Date Researcher's signature Date

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu